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# THE WRECK OF THE ALBION



J. ROUTLEDGE & SONS, THE BROADWAY, LUDGATE.



THE  
WRECK OF THE ALBION:

*A Tale of the Sea.*

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GEORGE ROUTLEDGE AND SONS,  
THE BROADWAY, LUDGATE.



# WRECK OF THE ALBION.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE PIAZZA.

IT had been a day of unusual loveliness. The sun was fast sinking in the west, leaving here and there its parting beams, to play a while with the rustling leaves of the forest, or kiss the waters of the dancing brook.

On the crest of a gentle rise of ground, not far from the city of New Orleans, stood the mansion of Charles Leneger. The house itself was not at all striking in appearance, save in its air of comfort and contentment, which could scarce fail to arrest attention. On the broad piazza sat its owner, a man far past the meridian of life. At the first glance, one would believe him to be the embodiment of kindness, the personification of the golden law, "Do unto others as you would that they should do unto you;" closer observation, however, would betray an expression of the mouth, and a glinting of the eye, that might cause a shrewd reader of human nature to say to himself, "beware!"

Mr. Leneger was a true disciple of King George III. Through the entire struggle of the Revolution, he had remained a firm believer in the coercive policy adopted by England against her colonies; and when that struggle, which, for eight long years, devastated the land with fire and sword, had ended, and the thirteen States were *free*, his ungenerous nature assumed that it was a feeling of generosity in England, which conceded American Independence, denying that the valiant conduct of the sons of America had enabled them to command their terms. This unfair sentiment at once revealed his disloyalty and his want of generosity. He was too supremely selfish to feel magnanimity even to a foe. He

had never married, and what little affection he could entertain was centered in the person of his ward.

Ella St. John had but a faint recollection of the gentle being who gave her birth. Her father had been the school-mate of Mr. Leneger; and, although differing strongly in politics, they had ever remained steadfast friends. On his deathbed, Colonel St. John had given to his friend the entire charge of his little daughter, stipulating no wish, except one, as to the regulation of her future life, but leaving all to the judgment of the man in whom he placed confidence, believing that he would feel and do for her as if he indeed held the responsible place of parent.

In appearance, she was a girl seldom to be met with. There was no commanding feature or extraordinary special gift of countenance. It was the unison of the *harmonies* which caused the beholder to gaze upon her with admiration. Resolute in what she knew to be right, she yet yielded when advised by those older, and more versed in the tangled and intricate mazes of life's journey. Her nature seemed to court love as its food, and to yield it both as a duty and a necessity of her being.

"Ella, my dear," exclaimed Mrs. Adams, Mr. Leneger's housekeeper, entering the room in which the young lady was sitting, "you are wanted down stairs."

"For what, I wonder? It is really too bad to be interrupted in my story."

"What do you find so interesting?"

"A tale of the sea, Mrs. Adams; of a noble ship being caught in a gale of wind, with all her sails set, and how, by the presence of mind of her commander, she was saved from wreck."

"You are evidently intended for a sailor's wife, Ella, for no book will interest you unless it smacks of salt water."

"As for that," replied the young lady, with a laugh, "I can not say; but, most certainly, I *do* admire the life that sailors lead. My reading has informed me of many of the orders given on shipboard, which I can repeat. For instance, I can tell you why the top-gallant bowlines are let go when the tacks and sheets are raised: but, how to *execute* the order would be quite another thing, and one I would not understand."

"Experience, only, will teach you," replied Mrs. Adams; "and if you like, I will speak to Mr. Leneger, to have you ship for a short voyage."

"I thank you, I do not think it will be necessary, for I have, by my books, the advantage of learning the experience of others. It is pleasant to sit in an easy-chair and read of the dangers attending the mariner in his wanderings over the trackless deep, but it certainly must be quite the reverse to be with him in person, and experience the storms and terrors of the sea. But, shall I tell you why tacks and sheets are raised when the bowlines are let go?"

"You may, if you please; but I can assure you I will not understand the meaning of one word you say. Yet, tell me, Ella, that I may judge how well you remember what you read."

"The reason, then, why they are let go, is, because, when the sails are what is called 'aback,' if the braces are not quite taut, the whole strain of the top-gallant sail, and also a great part of the topsail, would come upon them; also, that time may be given for them to be cleared away, before the yards are hauled. Now, Mrs. Adams, after that, you dare not say I am no sailor, and that all I want to perfect me is actual experience."

"Very well recited; but, tell me why you are so fond of nautical reading? Your father was connected with the army, and his tastes were all for the field; you, I should think, would rather read of wars and sieges than of winds and waves."

"In reading of battles," replied the girl, in an animated voice, "you are excited; but by the contest of human passions—of man arrayed against man. With the sea, oh, how different! for there the hand of God is manifested in the dashing waves, the shrieking shrouds and the howling tempest. It seems to me a contest for mastery between the Omnipotent and his creature. He sends the hurricane, sweeping death and destruction to the sailor, who smiles at its fury, as the vessel, shorn of her sails, and with plenty of sea-room, scuds before the blast, until the storm is over. Oh! Mrs. Adams," she continued, rising from her seat, and showing by voice and action how deeply the subject interested



her, "if I were a man, nothing should prevent me from becoming a disciple of Neptune. The simple order of 'Away aloft!' has in its decision, its brevity, a very charm, and would make me fly to my station as fast as feet could tread ratlin."

"Ella, you are an enthusiast, and, as I have said, evidently intended for a seaman's wife. However, much as the subject may interest you, we must speak no more about it to-day, for Mr. Leneger will become impatient."

"True," replied the joyous girl, going toward the door; "I will run down and see what the gentleman wishes, but at some other time I will play sailor again, and tell you what a 'gab-rope' is, and a 'monkey-yard,'" and, playfully kissing her hand, she sought the side of her guardian.

"I have been dilatory in obeying your orders," she said, as she seated herself by his side, "but I know you will not chide when I explain the cause."

"And what may that be, my merry prattler?" he asked.

"I was engaged with the book I received yesterday—I found it such a charming sea-tale."

"Sea-tale!" he muttered, in an altered tone, and slightly frowning, as if the mention of the name brought other than pleasing thoughts. "Why is it, Ella, that your tastes run in such a channel? Read of your father's life, child, of glorious war, and let the thoughts of the uncertain element be with them who are related to it by birth and education."

"Am I wrong, sir," she timidly asked, "in loving to read of the ocean? If so, I will most certainly forego the pleasure."

"No, Ella; I can not say that you are wrong; but, it is very unusual for a young lady to be interested in what she knows so little about. Had your father been a sailor, instead of a soldier, then I should not have been so much surprised; but, we will talk no more on the subject. I have sent for you to converse on matters which deeply affect your welfare."

"What are they?" she inquired, with surprise.

"Of your future settlement in life," he answered. "You have arrived at that age when it becomes necessary for you to choose a companion who will be in all respects worthy of you. The subject has been long contemplated by me, and you may think it strange that I have not, until the present

time, mentioned it to you. The reason is, that, as your father placed your happiness in my charge, I have carefully watched for the advances of some young man in whose charge I could safely place you, feeling not the slightest anxiety that the future would disappoint my selection."

"But, I hope, sir, I am to be somewhat consulted in the matter?" she exclaimed, proudly.

"Most certainly," he answered, smiling. "Yet, you are aware that *my* age, and the position I hold toward you, entitle me to either give, or withhold, advice. Is there no one, *Élla*, among all your admiring followers, who finds favor in your eyes?"

"No one," she answered, slightly blushing at the question.

"I will say, then, there is one whom I should like you to look upon with favorable eyes—one, to my mind, in every way worthy of you. He is *my* choice." This was all uttered in a tone more of command than of advice.

"And who, may I ask, is this gentleman?" she answered.

"Mr. Tindale, the sugar-broker. He is a man of great wealth and influence, besides being descended from one of the oldest families of Louisiana."

"I do not doubt the gentleman is all you represent," she answered, with some surprise. "I have known him but a short time, and yet, now you speak of him, I remember his visits have been, of late, quite frequent, and his manner marked with rather more than a friendly intent."

"All of which I am aware of," replied the guardian. "Although you have met but seldom, he has made known to me how much he felt interested in you. Although I have known him for years, our relation has been of a purely business connection. It was a transaction of a commercial nature which first brought him to my house. During that visit he saw you, and, a short time after, mentioned how much you had pleased him, and asked my consent to visit you. I gave it at once, as I saw how much such an associate must advance your interests. You will, then, remember that his future visits are to *you*. Will you not try to bring yourself to see him in the light of a lover, as well as an admirer?"

"I shall not force my nature to do any thing repugnant to

it," she resolutely answered; but added, quickly, seeing that her guardian was much disturbed, "yet I will see him, but I fear I never can bring myself to love one so much older than I."

"I certainly wish you to gratify my wishes in the matter, Ella," replied her guardian, decidedly. "In after years, you will bless me for the interest I now take in the matter. But here comes the very person," he exclaimed, as the gentleman in question was observed coming toward the house.

"How are you to-day, Mr. Leneger? I hope to see you well, Miss St. John?" were the greetings, as he ascended to the piazza.

"Both well, I thank you," replied Mr. Leneger. "But you have not walked here from the city?"

"No, I sent my man further on, and concluded to remain here, with your permission, until his return."

"We are glad to see you, and would be pleased to have you remain with us until morning, if you will."

"Nothing would give me greater pleasure, I assure you; but I have a press of business which will allow of no relaxation at present," he replied, adding: "still, I hope to avail myself of your kind invitation before long, and leave the noise and bustle of the city, to spend a week in this most charming and retired spot." Turning to Ella, he continued: "I am confident you are acquainted with all the pleasant rambles and romantic spots of the neighborhood, therefore I must beg you will become my cicerone. I could not well select a more charming guide," and he bowed gallantly.

Ella smiled, and simply bowed her acquiescence. How many young ladies would covet romantic walks with *such* a companion? was the question which almost found utterance at the moment. Mr. Tindale was a person of about forty years of age, possessed of no attractions of person or manner. It is true, the wealth he had amassed, and the respect he commanded, would have rendered him a "suitable match" to a lady of mature years; but wealth offered no inducement to one who already had an abundance, and the commercial value of the man of forty to the ardent and loving nature of the girl of eighteen was, unquestionably, far below *par*.

Ella soon made her escape from the society of the gentleman, and sought her room to quiet her perturbed spirits. Almost immediately after her departure, Tindale asked :

“Have you broached the subject?”

“I have.”

“Well, what is the answer?”

“By no means hopeful, I fear.”

Tindale looked somewhat discomposed, but answered :

“That does not surprise me. You must, however, use your authority, if persuasion will not answer. You surely have motive enough to urge you on.”

“I know—I know,” was Mr. Leneger’s hurried reply. “But I can not yet bring myself to force measures upon her that I know would be distasteful. In my conversation, I spoke quite decidedly, and as she, poor child, has never as yet heard aught but kindness from my lips, it must have astonished her much.”

“You are well aware, Mr. Leneger,” replied his companion, dropping his voice to its accustomed prompt business tone, “of the papers I hold against you, owing to the failure of your last year’s crop, together with the other reverses you have of late experienced ; so that, did I wish it, it lays in my power to make you a ruined man. I am well aware of your ability to cancel the debt, should time be given you, but I shall use the power I now have to compel you to assist—nay, more, to insure my marriage with your ward ; for a failure on your part to do so, I shall certainly strip you of all your possessions. We have spoken of this before, so let the subject drop.”

“At the close of our last conversation,” Mr. Leneger said, much excited, “on this most disagreeable subject, you did not ask a decided answer for the space of a month ; that month is not yet up, and I have already spoken to Ella. Embarrassed as my circumstances are, and much as I would wish the canceling or deferment of the payments I have to make, yet *threats* will not aid you, nor hurry me. Beware, lest I answer you now, and bid you do your worst ! Ella, thank God, has property of her own, and, humiliating as it would be to me to become a dependent on her bounty, still, if you talk of employing such very stringent measures, I shall wash my hands of the whole business. You will find, Mr. Tindale,

that, old and proud as I am, I have still determination left to prevent me compromising my self-respect."

"I do not mean to threaten you, my friend," replied his companion, evidently impressed by the planter's manner; "I simply mention the case as it is. You, sir, could not endure to lose your wealth. I doubt not but it would cause your death. It is a hard thing for a man, who has once commanded the position you now hold, to lose all, and have society point their fingers at you as a ruined man—to see your rich friends drop off, one by one—to be pitied—to hear the condolences, such as 'poor fellow'—"

"Enough, sir. I will answer you at the expiration of the month, and, until then, I will hear no more of it."

He arose as he spoke, and, extending an invitation to Tindale, they entered the house.

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## CHAPTER II.

### THE WIDOW'S SON.

REMOTE from the Leneger mansion a mile or more, in a luxuriant growth of wood and vine, nestled a small but extremely pretty cottage. Around the front porch grew a profusion of rose-bushes, and, climbing to the top of the low piazza, twined the honeysuckle and other graceful creepers. The narrow path, extending from the door to the whitened paling that separated it from the highway, was tastefully laid out in parterres of flowers, indicating that the hand of woman had been their keeper. Still further back was the closely-kept green-sward, thickly studded with fruit-trees.

In front of the door sat a lady attired in mourning, enjoying the delicious breeze of that beautiful afternoon. Motherly in her appearance, and dignified in her bearing, she at once impressed even a stranger agreeably. At the time we introduce her, she was busily employed with her needle; but, upon hearing the gate open, and the hurried approach of footsteps, she threw it aside, and arose to welcome her visitor.

"Why Ella, what has brought you here to-day? Pray sit

down I am always glad to see you, for your visits relieve the monotony of my rather lonely life."

"I have come to you for advice, Mrs. Wilder," exclaimed the young lady, entering at once upon the subject which lay so heavily upon her mind. "I trust you will not consider me too troublesome, for I always have to pour my joys and sorrows into your sympathizing ear. I have nobody but you, besides Mrs. Adams; and in this case, I am not so sure that she would be the one to advise rightly, in this, my first *great* trouble."

"Well, Ella, what is now the matter?"

"Mr. Leneger has to-day spoken to me upon a serious subject, and in a manner more decided than he has ever yet addressed me. He wishes me to make up my mind to marry, and has saved me the trouble of choosing, by selecting the person whom I am to receive as my future husband."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, and to the choice he has made I can never be reconciled."

"Who is the person, Ella?"

"His name is Tindale, a sugar-broker."

"Ah, I have heard of him."

"Pray tell me, is he a good man?"

"I can only speak from hearsay, not from experience. Report has it that he is a man of unscrupulous character, where his will is thwarted, not hesitating to employ any means to accomplish his purposes. Still, he is very rich, and the world accords to him its *respect*. He has largely to do with numbers of vessels which leave New Orleans, and my son tells me that some business transactions which he engages in are not in accordance with a strict character for integrity or propriety. Mr. Leneger, however, must know him well; and I think his love too great for you to allow your happiness to be intrusted to the keeping of a man utterly unworthy."

"But my guardian never, until to-day, addressed words to me approximating to harshness."

"He has *ordered* you to marry him?"

"I can't say that it can be called a direct command."

"My advice to you, Ella, would be to carefully note the man. Woman, it is said, can discern character with accuracy

Do not judge him harshly, if he does not come up to your standard of excellence. Treat him with the respect due his years, and with courtesy as your guest; but, should he wish to press his suit and hurry matters, then come to me, and we will counsel further."

"Thank you, Mrs. Wilder. I will try to act upon your instructions," replied Ella, as a load of anxiety seemed to lift from her heart.

The two ladies remained sitting in silence for some little time, each occupied with her own thoughts. Ella finally raised her head from its reclining position, and asked:

"Mrs. Wilder, when do you expect your son to return, for he has been from home a long time, has he not?"

"Yes, it is now nearly a year. His voyage has been longer than usual, owing to his cargo being consigned to several ports."

"It is a long time since I have seen him—not since I was his little playmate, frolicking about on yonder green-sward. I don't think I should recognize him were we to meet. When did you say he was to return?"

"He wrote that he should be in with his vessel a week ago, but as yet she has not arrived."

"Do you not feel alarmed at his remaining over his time?"

"Oh, no; for, with a sailor, who is under the government of wind and wave, he can not always come and go as he may wish."

"How much I would like to see him, and hear him tell of his wanderings, and of the wonders of the ocean. Do you know, Mrs. Wilder, that I am quite a sailor myself?"

"I have noticed that you have shown marked attention whenever I have spoken of the wandering life my boy leads, or when I have recounted the history of the many curiosities he has from time to time brought home. But, Ella, you may believe me, there is more pleasure in listening to matters pertaining to the ocean than in experiencing them in person."

"Did not my tastes run in the channel they do," said Ella, "I should consider it remarkably odd to find, in any of my friends, a fondness for nautical reading. Did it extend as far as mine, I should call it a *study* of navigation. Would you believe, Mrs. Wilder, I have even gone so far as to work out,

by figures, how to find the time of sunrise and sunset, and also many other things hard for a female to understand."

"I don't think it strange, although I admit it is rare; and yet, why should you not be fond of reading of old Ocean? But your young eyes can see further than mine. Look down the road and see who that person is coming toward the house."

Ella looked as directed, and saw a young man approaching with rapid strides. His garb bespoke him a sailor. Mrs. Wilder arose in some excitement, remarking:

"Oh, if it should but prove to be Robert! It *must* be him! It is my boy, once more restored to me in safety!"

"Dear mother," exclaimed Wilder, as he bounded up the path and reached her side, throwing his arms around her, and imprinting a kiss upon her cheek with the warmth of devoted affection, "here is your Jack Tar, snug in port once more, all right in body and spirits. But excuse me," he added, as his eye fell upon the young lady, "I thought you were alone, mother."

Mrs. Wilder hastened to introduce them.

"It is many a year since we have met, although I have seen Miss St. John a number of times since the days of her childhood. I am most happy to renew the acquaintance," he remarked, while his face glowed with a frank enthusiasm.

"Thank you," replied Ella; "but you have me at a disadvantage, for I do not remember having met you of late years."

"It was from a distance," he replied, with some embarrassment. Then turning to his mother, he entered into conversation with her, inquiring with interest about every thing appertaining to home.

Robert Wilder and his mother had resided in the cottage ever since the death of his father. Well had he filled that parent's place by the care and comforts with which he surrounded his mother, while she looked up to him with a pride and affection second only to the love she bore her deceased husband. She might well be pardoned for the feeling of pride with which she regarded her son. In personal appearance few persons possessed more grace and manliness. Five and twenty summers had he seen, yet the storms of his vocation had left their impress upon his features without marring



their harmony, rendering him in appearance somewhat older. His dress, of the kind usually worn by persons of his rank aboard ship, was arranged about his person with the studied yet careless grace so remarkable to seamen.

Ella, seeing that mother and son had much to say, arose to retrace her steps homeward. Robert begged to accompany her, but, declining his offer, and bidding them adieu, she ran down the walk, and was soon lost to sight.

"Miss St. John is indeed a lovely girl," he said, gazing after her retreating form.

"You may, indeed, well say so, Robert. She is one seldom to be met with. It is the hope of my life to see you, my son, choose such a partner to take the place I now fill, when I shall be laid by your father's side."

"Do not talk thus, my mother," he said; then, in a more joyous tone, added: "I must say your choice would be mine; and why may I not try and win Ella herself; for as to her duplicate, I do not really think one exists?"

"It would be the height of absurdity—I was going to say, presumption."

"And why, I would ask?"

"Simply because it would be an *impossibility*."

"Why, mother, nothing is impossible, when the will to accomplish is only strong, and determinedly carried out."

"You can not foresee, Robert, no matter how good the resolution, what circumstances may arise—and they present many a barrier impossible to surmount."

"Very true," replied Robert. "But, mother, I will confide to you a secret, which will give you some surprise. I have loved Ella ever since the moment I arrived at the age to know what love meant, and I formed the resolution to win her, if I could. On my way home, I have been engaged in deliberating how I should make my first approaches, and formed plan after plan, only to be dropped as soon as thought of; so, at last, I have concluded to wait the chance of circumstances, and seize the most favorable. I wish, dear mother you would give me your aid and counsel, and then my success need not be despaired of."

"As to aiding you, Robert, that is not in my power."

replied his mother, looking sadly at him ; " but my counsel you shall have, and I beseech you to act upon it. As I have already said, could Ella be your wife, nothing would cause me to feel more real joy ; but the thing can never be—it is simply beyond your power, or hers, combined, to bring it about. My advice is for you to forget her—to forget this love you have allowed to take root within your heart. Return to your vessel, mix in all the excitements of your vocation ; but think not of her whom you can *never* wed. Embrace the many opportunities you have, as commander of a ship, to visit among refined and cultivated people, and from among the many ladies you will come in contact, select a wife. I know your choice will be a wise one."

" I can not forget Ella, mother. I have no wish to marry any other, save her. As to returning to sea again soon, that is also out of my power, as my ship is laid up for repairs, which will be no short job. I must see Ella, and I—"

" Stop!" interrupted his mother ; " say nothing rash. You seem to think your love as warmly returned as felt, when you two have not met since her childhood. She knows nothing of the feelings you entertain. You must not let your love blind your reason. Think how mortified, how foolish you would feel, to visit her, only to find she *cared nothing for you!* Besides, Robert, Mr. Leneger is a man of strong aristocratic pride ; do you think he would consider you a desirable match for his ward ? But, to end this useless discussion, I will tell you something, my dear son, which will at once end your hopes, although it pains me to do so."

" Well, what is it?" he asked, looking anxiously at her.

" Ella, from what I can gather, is already affianced."

Not a word did Robert reply. His broad breast rose and fell with the feelings contending for mastery, and his head gradually sunk upon his hands. Mrs. Wilder regarded him in silence a moment, and well knowing the anguish she had inflicted, arose, and laying her hand upon his shoulder, said :

" Be a man, Robert! let not this disappointment weigh upon your spirits ; but live and forget!"

" You ask in vain. Forget her!" he replied, bitterly.  
" Your advice shall be taken, so far that I will cease to *hope!*"

"May God help you and bless you, my son! But come, let us go in, as the evening meal is ready;"—and so saying, they entered the house.

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As Ella sauntered slowly homeward, she could not help thinking how different would have been her feelings if her guardian had chosen such a man as the widow's son for her life partner. She had been favorably impressed with Wilder's appearance; the free and easy grace of his manner had both pleased and surprised her; in him she recognized a true man. But, determining to obey the one who had been to her as a parent, unless his commands should prove too arbitrary, she proceeded on her way, trying to shut out thought. Her absorption did not allow her to observe a man who sat on a rock at a turn of the road, until close upon him. Raising her head, and uttering an exclamation of alarm, she started back a few paces.

"Heave ahead, young lady!" he growled, rather than spoke, in a voice whose tone seemed to have been borrowed from the many tempests through which he had passed. "Tom Swift don't carry the prettiest figure-head in the world, but the ugly don't go any deeper than the skin; so you can fill away, and keep on without finding me a snag to run against. It ain't no use your giving your helm a sheer, for you'll sail by me with a fair breeze."

"I am not afraid of you," replied Ella, reassured on finding she was addressing a sailor, and the very kind of a one she had been long anxious to meet. She determined to enter into conversation with him, and, if she could, prevail upon him to remain over night at her guardian's house, where she could listen to his story at her leisure, for she felt sure he abounded in "yarns."

"I'm not afraid of you one particle," she answered, looking at his honest, weather-beaten face; then added, "If you will promise to remain seated just where you are, until we get better acquainted, I will sit and have a talk with you."

"You're a trim little body anyhow," he replied; "and I'll promise to lay at anchor until you bid me heave it in."

"You are a sailor, I judge?"

"Yes, Miss."

"How long is it since you returned from sea?"

"Yesterday."

"And what brings you here, so far from salt water? I thought you old salts could not be induced to go further from the ocean than would allow you to keep your larboard or starboard eye on it."

"And what do you know, Miss, about larboard and starboard?"

"Oh, I am a sailor in *my* way, and can tell you many a thing about a ship."

"I rather like you, Miss, for that," he said, bestowing an admiring glance on her. "As to your first question, of how I tacked out so far in these parts, you must know I'm *human*, Miss; and you mustn't think because I'm aboard ship so much, that I don't like to lay my eyes on the fields and woods and hills of the country."

"Have you no friends?" she inquired.

"I have, and many a score, for that matter; but they are scattered, Miss, in every part of the world."

"Then you know no one in this neighborhood?"

"Yes, Miss—a Mr. Wilder, by name."

"Ah!"

"You know him?"

"Yes; I left his house but a few moments ago."

"Then I am on the right course. And how long a pull to get there from here? for I am getting a little old, and find I can't stand on as long a tack as I once could."

"About a quarter of a mile—just round that turn of the road. But this Mr. Wilder—where did you ever become acquainted with him, and how do you like him?"

"I thought you said you knew him?"

"I knew him a long time ago. I renewed the acquaintance only to-day."

"I'm glad to hear he's home, for I am wanting to ship with him. I've sailed with him, Miss, many a voyage; and a better seaman than he is never trod the deck of a ship. I don't know the man that wouldn't go with him again, that ever sailed with him once. You can take a chap, Miss, who has sailed, ever since his birth, as a blockhead, and put him under Mr. Wilder, and if he's with him long enough, he'll make

a new man of him. You should see and hear him when a storm's on hand. I have sailed, man and boy, hard on fifty years, under many a gray-haired captain; and when I first shipped under Mr. Wilder, I thought him something young-like; but I soon found out that he knew more than all the rest."

"Then, if you liked him, as you say, why did you leave his ship?"

"Because I was a fool, and men are apt to do foolish things very often in their lives. You see, Mr. Wilder runs what is called a regular course—that is, going from one port to another, and back again; and after a bit, I made up my mind I wanted to see some other ports; so I left him, and have been away hard on two years."

"As he has but just returned, it may be a long time before he starts on another voyage, and would you be content to wait on shore until he is ready?"

"I don't know how that will be," replied the man, rising at last from his seat.

"Mr. Wilder has hardly had time to see his mother yet," hastily remarked Ella, for she had taken a fancy to the man's honest face, and was bent upon his going home with her. "You know," she resumed, "Mr. Wilder has not seen his mother for a long time, and they must have much to say to each other. Had you not better go with me? for, I can assure you, you will be equally as well cared for."

"You are very good to ask a stranger to your house; but don't you suspect I might not be honest?"

"I don't think, were you otherwise than honest, you would have been retained in Captain Wilder's employ; besides, I think you carry a good recommendation, as to character, in your face."

"Thank you, Miss, for your good opinion. I guess I'll go with you," he added; and they both started toward the plantation mansion.

"What did you say your name was?" she asked, after they had proceeded a short distance.

"Tom Swift, Miss."

"Tom, you were saying you thought the Captain rather young when you first sailed with him: how was it you learned

to form such a great opinion as to his superior abilities as a seaman?"

"Why, Miss," he replied, hesitatingly, as if not liking to speak upon this subject, because it somewhat reflected upon his own knowledge of working a vessel, "it was simply a matter of reefing topsails in stays."

"Will you tell me all about it? for you must know, Tom, I am very fond of listening to sailors' yarns."

"Well, you're a queer body, Miss, sartain!" a pleased smile spreading over his hard, weather-beaten face. "And so long as you must know, I'll tell you. I was standing one day, leaning against the mizzen-mast, humming over a bit of an old song, when up walked the Captain to where I was standing, and asked me how I thought the weather would haul. You see, I was a favorite with him from the start. When I told him, he asked me what I was singing; and perhaps you would like to hear it, Miss?" added Tom.

"By all means," answered Ella, smiling.

"Well, then, this was it," and he began, with a deep but not unmelodious voice, the following stanza:

"Away aloft," when the helm is put down;  
 "Lower away the topsails," as the mainyard flies round;  
 "Trice up," and "lay out," and "take two reefs in one;"  
 For all in one moment this work must be done.  
 "Then" man your head-braces, your halyards, and all,  
 And as you "hoist away the topsail," you "let go and haul."

"What fault could he find with that?" asked Ella.

"He said he knew of a better way; so I asked him what it was. Says he, You had better lower away the topsails when you raise tacks and sheets, and lay the yards square. To haul the mainyard at the proper time, and not care for the men on it, if, he said, the topsail braces are kept taut. See the reefs taken in, snug and tight; hoist the topsails when the men were *off* the yards, and haul off all, as we would do. I see at once, Miss, that he understood himself, and I never give myself another thought, from that day to this, of his want of years."

By this time the house was reached, and Ella noticed, much to her chagrin, that Tindale was still there. He immediately communicated the unwelcome news that he purposed remaining the rest of the evening. Mr. Lenerer did not evince much

surprise at seeing Ella's companion, when he found him to be a sailor ; but, willing to humor her tastes, entered into conversation with him ; while Tindale forced himself upon Ella, who had thrown herself wearily upon a seat.

"A singular companion you have chosen for your walk," he remarked, as he seated himself beside her.

"It is a chance acquaintance I picked up on the roadside, upon my return from a short walk," she replied, with dignity. "I held some little conversation with him, and found him plain and honest ; so I have asked him to the house."

"I should have been most happy to have accompanied you in your stroll, had I known you purposed going," he said.

"I really, sir, was not aware that you purposed remaining with us so long," she replied ; "I concluded your visit to be upon business, and was sure my presence could be dispensed with."

"I am tied down too much to business ; in fact, the very word is unpleasant to me. I often sigh for the green fields and wild woods of the country ; and long for the day when, with a companion suited to my tastes, I shall lay aside forever the cares that now beset me, and spend the rest of my life in making those around me happy—more especially her who shall unite her destiny with mine. I am well aware, Miss St. John," he continued, "that my person is rather plain ; nor are my manners altogether suited to the society of the young and gay. My age might also prove an objection ; but, should I be so fortunate as to induce some lady to place her happiness in my keeping, I feel positive she never would repent the choice. Wealth I possess in abundance, and with it, I could pave her path through life with golden joys."

"But joys of such a nature," answered Ella, hardly knowing what to say, and yet feeling called upon to speak, "are not permanent ; they please the eye and gratify the pride but fall far short of bringing what the heart longs for, and which is so essential to the true happiness of wedded life."

"That may all be true ; but I hope you are not so romantic as to advocate 'love in a cottage?'"

"I am an advocate for pure, unselfish love, be it in the palace or the cottage," she replied. "Oh, how much more happy is the woman wedded to the object of her choice. ever"

though humble and lowly be their home, than the one linked to a man she can not love, were she surrounded with all that gold could give. Indeed, how false it is, Mr. Tindale, to gild the surface of our lives, thinking that by it we can gloss over all the ills of life, and arrive at the source of true happiness."

"Upon my word," he said, smiling at her enthusiasm, "but you entertain views all do not hold." Then, changing his tone, he added: "But you are right. Let us in life supply the heart with its true food, and we shall attain happiness."

Could this man, Ella thought to herself, mean what he said?

Tindale was upon the point of renewing the conversation, when Mr. Leneger joined them. How far the sugar-broker would have been tempted to speak on the subject uppermost in his thoughts, can not be said. As it was, however, he knew that he had spoken so pointedly, that Ella could not well misunderstand what was said was but an introduction to formal offer of his hand to herself.

"On my word, Ella," remarked the guardian, "but your sailor companion is rather an intelligent man, after all. Rough in voice and uncouth in manner, he yet possesses much information gathered from travel. I asked him in to pass sentence on that picture which you lately painted."

They entered the parlor, where they found Tom looking very earnestly at the picture in question.

"Well, what do you think of it?" asked Ella.

"It's a pretty picture, Miss; but—"

"Well, what is it, Tom? Point out its defects," said Mr. Leneger.

"As to the ship herself, she looks like a neat craft; a little too high astern is all I see out of sorts; but, by the looks of those clouds, and the way the sea seems rising," said he, pointing out the two objects specified, "and by which the lady means to have a gale springing up, for I see men on her yards, she carries too much sail; besides, her canvas ought to have been stowed long ago."

"Please tell me which sails she should have set, for I can easily paint them out," remarked Ella.

"Well, Miss, if I can make out the bearings correctly, the wind is east and by south, or dead off land, if that dark



stretch here away," he pointed to the back-ground of the picture, "is meant for that. Now, Miss, the ship is carrying too much sail, as I said; and my advice would be, to have the three topsails and the jib stowed, and for the matter of that, her mainsail had better be furled; for, Miss, no seaman looking on this picture, begging your pardon, but would see it was faulty—that is, if I take the wind right, which I would say was puffy from the looks of this painted water."

To Mr. Leneger this language was not all intelligible, but Ella insisted upon Tom's pointing out the errors once more, so that she could fix them in her mind distinctly, although she insisted upon it that Tom had the wind blow much harder than was intended.

After he had finished examining the picture, Tom was shown to his supper. When the family had partaken of their meal, they again entered the parlor. Ella, after remaining with them for a time, excused herself, and went in search of Mrs. Adams. As her footsteps died away in the distance, Tindale again abruptly returned to the subject uppermost in his mind:

"Since our conversation this afternoon, I have myself conversed with Ella, and from the tenor of her remarks, I take she will not very willingly consent to become my wife."

"Ah!" exclaimed Mr. Leneger, in surprise, "what was her answer?"

"It is useless for me to repeat the conversation which passed between us. Suffice it for me to say, that both her words and manner lead me to suppose she will reject my suit. My remarks were very pointed, and I saw she understood for whom I meant them; and she in like manner gave her answers. Had I made an out-and-out proposal, I should now be under the mortification of having been refused. The month I gave you for reflection is only a useless waste of time, and I must have your answer this very night. If it is favorable, I will give you at once, in black and white, an agreement to this effect: The payment of the first debt, now overdue, I will never claim, and the day that sees me married I will receipt to you for it. From the second payment, I will deduct twenty-five per cent., and wait for the balance till your present crop, or even your second, is gathered. With

his offer you will still retain your property, and I shall consider myself fully paid—yes, even in your debt.”

For a long time the planter remained lost in thought. A fierce struggle was taking place between the duty he owed his ward and the recollection of the only promise exacted by the dying soldier of him, and his own pride and avarice.

“I have a promise to exact, and you must agree to it, or else I shall let you beggar me,” he said, after a long silence, and with pain stamped on every lineament of his face.

“What is it?”

“For the space of three months, you must not show your face to Ella.”

“Very good—I will promise.”

“Write the agreement.”

The necessary implements being at hand, it was soon written, and handed to the planter. A human being was bought and sold.

“The original plan I spoke of better be adhered to,” remarked Tindale—“that of sending her to Baltimore!”

“I ask time for that very purpose, and have arranged my plans. My old friend, Captain Williams, sails with his ship, the *Albion*, in the course of three weeks. I shall arrange to have Ella go with him. He is a safe man and his craft is a staunch one.”

A rustling at the window, near where they sat, caused both to start, and glance anxiously in that direction.

“We have been overheard!” exclaimed Tindale, rising and looking out, as also did the planter.

After gazing for some time, an old house-dog issued from among the bushes, and made toward the other end of the building.

“Pooh, ’twas but the dog,” said Leneger, and both drew a long breath as though very much relieved. Reseating themselves, they remained closely absorbed in conversation, until the hour of retiring arrived.

## CHAPTER III.

## PLOT AND COUNTERPLOT.

"How did you pass the night, Tom?" inquired the young lady the following morning, as she started to take her customary walk, and seeing the sailor seated on the lower step of the stoop.

"Very well, thank you, Miss," he replied. "But, if it ain't asking too much, I'd like to walk with you, to get the kinks out of my old body afore breakfast."

"Most certainly you may. I intended asking you," and they started.

"Miss, who's that chap—I beg pardon—I meant the gentleman who stopped at the house last night?" he asked, as they proceeded on some distance.

"His name is Mr. Tindale, a very rich man, who resides in the city," she replied.

"What kind of a man is he?"

"Report speaks well of him."

The sailor shook his head.

"Why do you do so?" Ella asked, noticing the action.

"Because I don't like him."

"Why?"

"Can't say, Miss; it's a feeling I've got. I don't like the cut of his jib. Do you like him?"

"I respect him as a friend," she replied.

"Miss Ella," he began, in a voice whose tone carried so much earnestness, that it caused her to look up, "you won't think hard of an old man if he makes a little free on so short an acquaintance, but what I want to ask you is, are you going to marry that man?"

"Why no, Tom," she answered, with a laugh; "what induced you to ask such a question?"

"I saw him talking with you, and I know he'd have no objections if you didn't."

"I am aware of that fact, but is that all that induced you to ask the question?"

"Perhaps it isn't; but I can't say any more about it."

"Do you go to Captain Wilder's to-day, or will you spend it with me?" she asked.

"I shall go, for I must find out how soon he starts. What do you think of the Captain?"

"He is a fine-looking man, and is, I know, a good son his mother loves him dearly."

"And well she may," answered the seaman, "for a better young man can't be found. I wish, Miss, that when he marries, he may find as good a lady as you are for his wife."

"I am sure I thank you, Tom, for your flattering opinion of me; and, for the young man, I only hope he may find a far *better* companion for life than I would make."

Tom continued talking, interspersing his queries now and then with some yarn, mentioning Wilder as often as possible. It would seem as if the sailor was trying what he could do at match-making. Thus they familiarly conversed, until their return.

After the morning meal, the sailor passed round to the front of the house, where Ella and her guardian were seated. At the end of the porch he noticed a piece of paper lying under a bush, where it had evidently been carried by the wind. Picking it up, he turned it repeatedly from side to side, then with a shake of the head, muttered:

"This is a sort of reckoning I can't make out; but, perhaps it's what I want, so I'll take it down to the Captain's." Thrusting it into one of the capacious pockets of his seaman's jacket, he approached the front of the house.

"I come to say good-by, and thank you for your kindness," he said, as he came up.

"Why do you go so early, my man? I should be pleased to have you stay longer," replied Mr. Leneger.

"A sailor can't stay long, sir, in one place, but keeps shifting his berth till death bids him cast his anchor in his last harbor. Good-by, sir, and you, too, Miss."

Ella arose, and going down the steps, gave him her hand. He took it, and raising it to his lips, said, while his eyes filled with tears:

"Should you hear any one say, Miss, a sailor's got no heart, don't you believe them, for the sake of the old man

who holds your hand. I love you, Miss, as well as if you were my own child, though I ain't known you long, and I pray God may bless you, and break the dark cloud that's coming in your seaboard. You'll see me, I think, soon again," then letting his voice sink to a low tone, added: "Never look over a ship's taffrail to see her cutwater, and when there is plenty of sea-room, I'm always in favor of scudding." So saying, he turned and hurried away.

Ella remained standing where he had left her, wrapt in thought. What could he mean? "A dark cloud rising in her seaboard?" Then again, his advice, which she understood to mean, first, always to expect an event to come from the right quarter, and never to look in the wrong place to find a thing. As to the latter part of the advice, it seemed to mean always to make the best use of one's time, when the moment offered. How all this was to apply to her case, she could not tell. She continued pondering, until aroused by the call of Mr. Leneger.

"Ella, I intend sending you to Baltimore," he said, abruptly.

"Mr. Leneger!" she exclaimed, in astonishment.

"It is so," he replied. "I have thought of doing so for a long time, and have at last considered it best."

"For what purpose?"

"For several reasons. You will be much improved by the society you will there mingle in. You also require one year's more close application to books, before you assume the responsible position we each sooner or later are called upon to fulfill in life. I have consulted with a friend, and he thinks it also best for your future interest to go. A vessel will sail in a short time direct for that city, and to-morrow I will secure your passage."

"I am well aware," she replied, "that you, my dear guardian, are constantly alive to my interests, and are eager for my advancement; but I can not see the necessity or propriety of sending me for a year to school. You are now requiring the hand of one who loves you to be constantly near to attend to your wants to minister to you — when sickness shall afflict you. Oh, my dear guardian," she continued, laying her hand confidently on his shoulder, and adiling with

sincerity: "do not let this notion you have taken drive me away; let me stay here and be with you. May I not stay?"

The strong man hesitated, moved as he was by her gentle appeal; but it was only for a moment. Pride came to render his resolution firm again.

"My child," he answered, "you may be all you say—nay, I will admit you *are*; but there is one thing I possess which you can not have until time brings it, that is, *experience*. With it on my side, you must admit I am the best judge of these matters. I wish you to go to Baltimore. You have always obeyed me in whatever I have advised, knowing I have only your good at heart; let not this present step be the exception."

"I shall obey you, sir," she meekly replied, fixing her eyes on the ground; "and yet, I will be candid in saying I do most certainly feel rebellious."

"Before the time shall arrive for you to sail, you will discover how wrong you are in that feeling."

"What is the vessel's name I sail in?" she asked.

"The *Albion*, and well does she deserve the name, for a stouter craft, or a more loyal Captain, are not met with on the high seas."

"And am I to go alone? Can not you go with me?"

"Not at the present time; but rest assured that you will be equally as well cared for as if I were with you. I have some business to arrange, and as soon as that is done I shall follow you, for I intend residing North this coming winter. You perfectly understand it, Ella—you sail in the course of a few weeks, a month at the furthest; so, like the good girl you have ever been, let me see you acquiesce willingly."

"But am I to have no companion until you come?"

"None that I now know of, though you will find several friends on board the ship who will see that you spend your time pleasantly. Your studies will absorb much attention, for you must promise to apply yourself ardently for the year to come. Milly shall go with you as your attendant, and you will find her a faithful servant."

"The matter about which you spoke to me this morning is, then, relinquished, I am led to believe?"

"You refer to the suit of Mr. Tindale?"

"Yes, sir."

"By no means," he replied, positively. "As soon as you complete your year, we will speak of it again; his business calls him to Baltimore often, and during his visits he will call on you."

Ella made no reply, but entered the house to ponder on the alarming change in her affairs. Her first thought was of seeing Mrs. Wilder again, to inform her of this new trouble.

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Upon leaving the house, Tom proceeded rapidly, until he was out of sight, when, relaxing his pace, and letting his head fall on his breast, he seemed lost in thought.

"But that's a precious job," he muttered to himself. "A scaman's curse light on them for a double-faced pair of devils. A lucky stretch I made of it when I brought up under the lee of that window, and heard their plans about the girl. But, Tom Swift," he continued, after a short silence, "you ain't the man to see a mean trick done if you can help it. But, how to get under way I don't know. If she did but only love the Captain, I'd heave them around, face to a parson, and make a splice, and so run them aboard in that way; but the worst on it is, she ain't seen him but ouce, and don't seem to care for him, either."

Thus he continued to talk until Wilder cottage was reached. Seated by the door was the young man and his mother.

"And so you are getting tired of your present vessel?" said Mrs. Wilder.

"No, not tired of her, for I feel much attached to the old ship, but I want to visit other ports; in fact, it is now absolutely necessary. Coming home so frequently I should be very likely to see Miss St. John, and it would only revive the feeling I have promised you to try and forget."

"But, Robert, you must not lose sight of *me*. Remember you have a mother who is always eager to welcome you home with affection. How dreary I should be, waiting month after month—perhaps for *years* for your return." She was moved to tears, and Robert pressed her hand in silence. Their attention was arrested by approaching steps. "But who have we here?" the young man exclaimed, as his eye fell on the figure of the scaman.

"A sailor, who knows how to knot or reef-point, and pass a gasket, and is sorry to find he is already hull down in the seaboard of your memory."

"But one who is lifting fast," replied Wilder, speaking after the seaman's manner; "and now that his courses show, I would by his name is down on the ship's books as Tom Swift."

"You've made out my bunting aright, sir," replied the man, grasping the hand of his former commander; and removing his tarpaulin, he made an awkward bow, accompanied with a scrape of his foot, to Mrs. Wilder, inquiring after her health.

"My mother is well," answered the young man, "and so am I, Tom; but what brings you in this part of the world?"

"I shipped, sir," replied the sailor, "at Boston, for this port of Orleans, where the vessel was to load for Liverpool; but I knew you loved a short stretch out, and filled away for here."

"I am glad to see you, Tom, and what can I do for you?"

"Take me aboard your ship, sir."

"That I most willingly will do; but you will be obliged to wait longer perhaps than you care to, for she is undergoing repairs."

"That's bad, sir, for I ain't the man to lay around port long; but I've made up my mind to go with you."

"Did you leave the city this morning? I myself came only yesterday."

"I up anchor, and made way on yesterday, sir, but something better than half a mile, I take it, from here, I met a young lady, who took me in tow, and I stayed the night at her house."

"It must have been Miss St. John," said Wilder, turning to his mother; and then, again addressing the seaman, asked:

"Did you learn her name?"

"Ella was the first, but the last I don't remember."

"And you stayed at Mr. Leneger's all night?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, Tom, how were you treated?"

"I was treated well enough, but it ain't so with all."

"What do you mean?" asked Wilder, while his mother also looked up from her work.



"You see, sir," began the sailor, "I've taken an uncommon liking to the young lady, and I reckon she did to me, and so I asked some questions that perhaps I hadn't ought to. I found out there was a chap at the house who wanted to raise the rest of his life in her company, and she hadn't any notion that he should. Howsomever, I found out that Mr. Leneger wanted it *should* be so; and, *more than that*, sir, was shaping things to *make* it so. I was asked in the parlor to make out the bearings of a painted ship, and, after having a long yarn to spin, I went out. I sat me down, sir, under a window, before turning in, and was about leaving again, when I heard voices, and found out, before many minutes, that the two men were planning something about Miss Ella. This, sir, made me listen, and I heard them bargain that if Mr. Tindale would not make Mr. Leneger pay some money he owed him, he should marry Miss Ella. They had some writings between them. What is on this piece of paper?" he asked, as he drew from his pocket and handed to Wilder the slip which he had found underneath the bush.

The young man glanced at it, and then handed it to his mother. After she had read it, she said, solemnly:

"Robert, this must not take place. It is simply a sale of flesh and blood—a barter of happiness for a lifetime. I would not believe Mr. Leneger capable of such an act; but, as to Tindale, he is a man of unprincipled character. It is like him. I shall see Ella if I can, and warn her of what they contemplate."

The opportunity was never offered.

"I echo your words, mother; they *shall not* do so vile an act," said Wilder, his eye flashing fire. Turning to Tom he added, abruptly, and in a tone of command: "Come with me!"

After proceeding until beyond the eye and ear of his mother, he stopped.

"You have known me long, Tom, and I have all confidence in you. I will make you a confidant. Miss St. John I have loved long and fondly, and once held to the hope of winning her love in return. But that dream is over," he said, mournfully, removing his heavy sea-cap, and pushing the heavy hair back from his brow. "I have promised my mother to forget my

aspirations, and will try to do so, if it brings death. But this great evil I can not see done without an effort to save her. This right I possess as a friend, and, as such, I will act. You have shown much ready wit in days past, and also a quickness to act; can not you help me now with a suggestion?"

"Indeed, I can, Captain," quickly replied the seaman, apparently glad to see the young man enter with so much will into the very thing he intended to try alone. "I *can* help you, Mr. Wilder."

"Then speak at once."

"I heard them say that Miss Ella was to go to Baltimore."

"Ah!"

"Yes, sir; and that, too, in something less than a month."

"And the ship's name she goes by—did you hear that?"

"It was the *Albion*."

"Her Captain?"

"Is called Williams."

"I do not know either him or his vessel," remarked the young man, after a moment's pause.

The seaman, seeing his companion at a loss how to proceed, replied:

"You have said, sir, that I know a thing or two, and mayhaps, if you'll let me pull stroke-oar a while, I'll fetch up against some plan."

"Proceed," was the quick command.

"I heard of this ship afore I cleared for here, and as I was asking about her officers, I found out that she is in want of a first mate. Now, sir, as you are out of the command of your vessel for a while, you might try for that berth; and may I play a game of tag with sharks, sir, if you don't get it. On the voyage out you can see the young lady, and show her, in black and white, how matters are, and have time to fix things to her liking. You won't be gone so long but you can be back to take your own ship again; and then, sir, I'll sail with you till God fouls my anchor, so as to stop my cruise of life forever."

"Your plan is good, Tom, and I'll act upon it," replied Wilder.

"Do so at once, sir," returned the seaman. "Although it sometimes hard for a ship to get a good officer in these

parts now-a-days, I would advise you to make fast to the berth at once, because it might be taken, and you would scarcely ship before the mast, even to do her such a service."

"Very true, Tom. On the morrow we will go to the city to seek the Captain. What kind of a craft is she—that is, provided you have seen her?"

"She's tidy enough," replied Tom; and with him that was a description of a vessel that filled his eye.

"You will keep this a secret from even my mother," remarked Wilder, as they returned to the house; "for she might think it, perhaps, a foolish undertaking; but we will save Miss Ella from the power of this Tindale yet."

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## CHAPTER IV

### THE FIRST OFFICER.

By the early dawn the inmates of the cottage were astir, and, after partaking of the morning meal, Wilder and the sailor started for the city. During the walk very little was said. Numerous were the attempts made by Tom to open a conversation, but the brief responses of Wilder soon convinced the sailor that his superior had no the inclination to talk. The promises the young man had made the previous day regarding Ella seemed to impress him with their grave responsibility. The station of first mate on board the ship in which she intended sailing, and which he was now starting to secure, might have been filled, as such an office very seldom remains open for any great length of time in a city so large as New Orleans. If such was the case, his determination was to go as a passenger, rather than have the vessel sail without him. Reaching the outskirts of the city, they shaped their course directly for the levee, where Wilder, having secured a boat, seated himself in the stern-sheets, while Tom took possession of the oars.

"Give way, man, give way!" ordered Wilder, dropping, as if by habit, the late familiar tone and manner, as he felt

himself once more floating on what, with a sailor, can almost be called his native element.

The man, as if use had made this change of conduct a matter of course, uttered no reply, but by a powerful application of his muscular arms to the oars, sent the boat swiftly toward the vessel.

"I hope, sir," he at length said, respectfully, for he felt as if Wilder was his officer now in reality, "that you'll not forget to have Tom Swift's name among that ship's crew," motioning with his head toward the *Albion*, which lay at her moorings, a short distance ahead.

"I will not forget you," replied the young man, "for I feel as if I should require your services again, in maneuvering for me on dry land."

"And do you know, sir, that's the very thoughts that are getting in my head this moment? I don't know, Mr. Wilder, but it's my opinion, we're going to fetch up at some port we little expect to at this time. I'm a rough-spoken man, sir, and never was inside of a school-house in my life, and don't know any more about letters or learning than a monkey does the difference between a bucket-rope and a rope's-end; but I've got a thing or two stowed away in my head-piece which will leak out, and as I said, sir, we'll fetch up at some port, either with or without this ship, that we never cruised for."

"You think the vessel will not reach Baltimore?"

The seaman merely shook his head, and letting his oar-blades float on the water, glanced behind him to ascertain how far they yet were distant from the ship. A boat propelled by four men had passed them but a moment before, and as the seaman was about to resume his oars, Wilder bade him look at the figure of one of the passengers, and notice if he did not resemble Mr. Leneger.

"That's him," replied Tom, after fixing his eye on the person indicated; "but he's stirring early this morning, and you won't board, sir, while he is there?"

"No, we will have to wait," replied the young man, "for I should not be able to see the Captain until he leaves. But give way again; we will amuse ourselves, meanwhile, by a look at the shipping."

For full an hour were the young man and his companion

obliged to wait until Mr. Lencger reappeared on the ship's deck, and descended into his boat. Every thing had met his approbation, and a passage secured for Ella and her maid. After floating on the current until the boat containing the lady's guardian had withdrawn from sight, Wilder again gave the order to proceed. The ship's side was soon reached. Here Wilder ordered the seaman to await his return, and clambered to the deck.

"Is your Captain on board?" he inquired of the man on watch.

"You will find him in his cabin, sir," was the answer.

Thither he repaired, and found himself in the presence of the person he was anxious to see.

"Captain Williams, I believe," he said, removing his cap, and bowing politely as he spoke.

"That is my name," replied the Captain, looking up from a chart he was studying. "What is your pleasure?"

"I learn, sir, you are deficient of a first officer, and present myself as an applicant for that office."

"You are young, sir, but *that* is not against you, for some of the best seamen I have ever met were not thirty. You are less than that by some years, I should say."

"My age, sir, is twenty-five. As to my capabilities, these papers will testify."

The Captain, glancing over them with a careful eye for some time, passed them back, and motioning Wilder to a seat, said:

"They speak well of you, sir. I am in want of a first officer, and one on whom I can implicitly rely, for I am getting well in years. I think you are the man for me. Before speaking more definitely, I would like to test your qualities and promptness by asking a question or two. If you are a true sailor, you will not feel, by my so doing, that I doubt for one moment your abilities."

"With pleasure, sir; I will answer any question you may ask. I do not say 'I will if I can,' but speak most positively that *I will*, for a ship was my cradle, and I love old ocean as well as the landsman does the woody hills of his native place."

"Spoken like a true seaman, as I see no reason to doubt

you are. Now mark what I say: You are in command of a vessel, and have lost all your anchors but one, and even that has but one arm; you wish to come to an anchor; how will you let it go, Mr. Wilder, to insure its taking ground?" and he gazed hard at the young man as he put the question.

"That is easily answered," replied Wilder, without a moment's hesitancy. "First, I should cock-bill the anchor before going in, and hang it from the cat-head by a hawser through the ring, and reeve the buoy-rope through a block on the bowsprit; then, sir, I should shorten sail, and when the ship had gathered sternway, ease the anchor down square by the hawser and buoy-rope, with the fluke forward; then, sir, when it reached the bottom, I should veer the cable, and, as soon as I found it held, unreeve the hawser and stream the buoy."

"Right, Mr. Wilder. You will answer to command any craft that floats, and glad, yes, sir, I am proud to have you my officer. But, you will humor me by answering one more question?" he asked, apparently to please himself.

"With pleasure, Captain."

"Your ship now is supposed to be lying close to a lee shore," he began, again narrowly watching the features of the young man. "It blows too heavy for you to warp off, and the shore lies too near for you to weigh and make sail in the manner usually adopted. Now, sir, how would you go about leaving your anchorage?"

Before making answer to this inquiry, the young man spent some moments in silence. At length, as a smile passed over his features, he replied. "You ask me a question, which, for a time, would puzzle older heads than mine to answer without a moment's thought. My plan would be this: "I should first pass a stream-cable forward on the side of the tack which I intended to stand on, and shackle it to the bower cable in or outboard, as I should consider the most convenient; then, sir, I should have the men stationed in readiness to make sail, and I need hardly add, to take such reefs as would be deemed necessary. Then, man the topsail sheets and halyards, first, however, having braced the yards nearly a point forward. I then should wait until the wind lulled, and seize ~~the opportunity to veer~~ gently on the cable,

heaving round on the stream until I had the wind nearly abeam, when I should sheet home and hoist the topsails. When this was accomplished, every thing should be made ready to successfully *slip the cables*, man the lee braces, mizzen sheet, and foretopmast staysail halyards; then, sir, brace up, hoist away, and haul aft. And to finish my work, in a few words, I should man the fore and main tacks, slip the cables, and haul aboard. Captain Williams, have I answered you satisfactorily?"

"Mr. Wilder, your answer may be gathered, when I say you are my first mate."

He arose, and shaking the young man warmly by the hand, motioned toward the necessary papers to sign, and a few moments later served to place Wilder first officer of the good ship *Albion*.

"You no doubt have had many applications for the berth you consider me capable of filling, and I noticed, as I approached, a boat leave the ship's side, which perhaps contained an applicant," remarked Wilder, during the course of conversation that ensued.

"No, sir," replied the Captain. "The gentleman you saw was Mr. Leneger, who intends to send by me his ward, Miss Ella St. John. His purpose in visiting me was to secure her a passage. Perhaps, Mr. Wilder, you are acquainted with the lady?"

"I have seen her," carelessly replied the young man, "and report speaks of her being a superior woman."

"And it says true, for a more lovely woman can not be found. You must have a care of your heart, for her eyes are a more formidable battery to the courage of a young sailor than those of a man-of-war."

"Fear not for me, sir; like the majority of seamen, I have been knocked about so much as to have very little heart left, or if I have, rough weather has, like my face, made it hard. But, from your manner of speaking of the young lady, I should judge you well acquainted with not only herself, but with her guardian?"

"I am, Wilder, and toward Mr. Leneger I am attached by the most pleasing recollections, together with sincere friendship. His hospitable mansion is always thrown open

for my accommodation. Mr. Leneger is a man of true worth—too high-minded to stoop to any thing dishonorable.”

“I have no acquaintance with the gentleman,” simply replied Wilder, not caring to undeceive the Captain. “But I must retire for the day. Will you require my presence to-morrow?”

“I think not, sir,” was the reply; “you may leave me your address, and when I wish to see you, I will send you word by my boy.”

“Before leaving, I wish you to have a seaman, whom I can recommend, numbered among the ship’s company. You have not your crew all chosen, sir?”

“I have room for your man. What is his name?”

“Tom Swift; do you wish to see him?”

“No, sir, your recommendation is sufficient.”

Bidding his superior a good-day, Wilder was soon seated in the small boat. To the numerous questions of the seaman, Wilder’s replies were characteristic of the station he now filled, and without many remarks, after the shore was reached, they proceeded homeward.

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## CHAPTER V

### AT SEA.

THE moment of starting had arrived, and the ship awaited but the arrival of Ella and her guardian. Wilder, to all outward appearances, was calm, yet his breast was torn by contending emotions. His orders were issued in a decided, ringing tone, and all, even to the oldest seamen, felt that they possessed in him a man capable of commanding the ship, did aught befall their Captain.

As the boat containing the fair passenger touched the vessel’s side, and Ella was assisted on deck, he walked forward, so as to prevent her noticing him.

“To you, Captain Williams,” said Mr. Leneger, as he was about leaving for the shore, “I assign the charge of my ward until her arrival at Baltimore.”



"And rest assured, all the comforts my ship contains shall be at her disposal," replied the Captain. "She will have friends meet her, and relieve me of her charge, as soon as we reach that port?"

"Yes, sir," replied Mr. Leneger. Extending his hand, he bade Captain Williams good-by, with the earnest wish for a safe and speedy passage.

Ella descended to her cabin after parting with her guardian. Her feelings were too deeply excited even to allow of her gratifying her curiosity in seeing how a vessel was got under way. She had a foreboding that all was not right, though nothing had transpired especially calculated to excite her alarm.

The crew, meanwhile, were waiting the order to get under way.

"We but wait your order, sir," said Wilder, addressing the Captain.

"Get your anchor, sir; we will be moving."

"Ay, ay, sir! All hands up anchor!"

The change produced on the vessel's deck was instantaneous. Those of the crew who were already on their feet hastened to their posts, while many, who were lying under the shade of her masts or bulwarks, sprung hastily to their feet. There was no confusion, no jostling against each other; all seemed to know their place, and at once sought it. The tramp of many feet, the clanking of the windlass, the rude refrain "Yo-heave a'ho!" timing their exertions with their spikes, made the deck merry in an exciting degree. Wilder stood by, observing all closely, until the voice of an under officer called out:

"We're brought to, sir!"

"Heave round," was the order.

"Ay, ay, sir! heave round it is."

Again the windlass was in motion; the measured push and pull was resumed, together with the song.

"We're short, sir."

"Let go the bottom; heave round lively, lads."

The anchor was soon hove in and cattd, and the vessel began slowly to drop down the river with the current. She glided by the shores, with their banks here and there enlivened

either in the wild unbroken mazes of the American forest, or by the tilled fields and comfortable homes of the planter. Wilder stood aft, a silent observer, now and then glancing his eye over the vessel to see that all was in order, his thoughts fixed on duty and—on his passenger. The open waters of the Gulf were at length dancing beneath the cutwater. The sails were loosened from the yards and spread to the breeze. Wilder had given his orders rapidly, his powerful voice reaching every part of the deck. The men were aloft like so many spots, high in the air. The faint cry from the highest rigging and spars, the hoarser tone from those nearer the deck, "All ready aft, sir," "All ready forward," "Ready the fore-yard," continued, until every sail was heard from. Naught remained but the final order, "Let fall," which was not long in coming, when the gallant vessel began plowing the waves toward her distant port.

"Mr. Wilder," said the cabin-boy, touching him at the same time lightly on the arm, "Captain Williams wishes to see you."

Without replying, he turned and sought the presence of his superior.

"I have been trying to induce Miss St. John to come on deck," said the Captain, "and have told her I had in my first officer a man who would be more calculated to amuse and interest her than myself; but she complains of sea-sickness. Poor girl," he added, after a pause, "I am afraid this leaving home weighs heavily with her, for her countenance wears a troubled look."

"And the cause warrants it," hastily replied Wilder.

"Do you know aught of it?" asked the Captain.

"It is, doubtless, what you have just mentioned—leaving home," answered Wilder.

"There is a query in my mind," said the Captain, abruptly turning the subject, "why you, sir, after commanding a vessel should consent, nay more, seek for the position you now hold. Stop, sir, do not misunderstand me," he quickly added, as he noticed the angry flash of the young man's eye. "I know you must have ample cause, but I say it looks strange, that is all."

"Let it look as it may," replied Wilder, angrily, "there is

a good reason why I am on this deck. Although, at present, my lips are sealed, at some future time—perhaps before we part from this voyage—I will tell you. You do not doubt my honor in the slightest degree, Captain Williams?”

“By no means,” earnestly replied the Captain. “I did not make this remark simply through curiosity, nor that I doubted or suspected you guilty of some act which had caused you to lose command of your vessel. Let us be friends, Wilder, for we have one common enemy to contend with,” he pointed to the dark green waters of the Gulf, “and on board, only confidence and good feeling should find a place.”

“Most gladly, sir, do I endorse your words, and do not wonder at your just astonishment in finding me in the station I am. Some day you shall be informed of the cause, and then you will justify me for doing as I have.”

The extended hand was warmly taken, and in that grasp was cemented a friendship which died only with the end of life. After a few commands had been given, the Captain sought the cabin, leaving to the young man the guidance of the vessel.

When the sun arose the following morning, the ship was far out on the waters of the Gulf of Mexico. The land was to be distinctly traced on the northern seaboard, and the *Albion*, with all the canvas set that could be made available, went dashing along, as if none on board were more anxious than the ship to reach the destined port. Wilder was standing gazing out on the broad expanse of waters, when the voice of Captain Williams arrested his attention.

“Well, Wilder, we are once more at sea, and it makes me feel young again to smell nothing but fresh air and see green waves after lying at anchor so long.”

“It is pleasant,” replied the young man, “to be relieved from constantly looking on nothing but mountains, hills, or valleys.”

“Your remark would cause a landsman to laugh,” remarked his commander, “for, certainly, they would say there was more monotony in looking at naught save water, than in the diversity which dry land affords in hill and dale.”

“I have no doubt but they would, sir; but it is not so much the view I speak of, as the feeling it inspires.”

“And that is—”

“*Freedom*, Captain Williams,” interrupted his officer. “It is the blessing of blessings, not to be lightly prized, and, when obtained, to be held as sacred as life itself.”

“I should say,” replied the other, with somewhat of severity in his tone, “that your ancestors were not loyal to their King in 1776, if they inculcated such a high idea of ‘freedom’ within your breast, and that you, in 1812, did but follow their example.”

“You are perfectly right, sir,” respectfully yet proudly replied Wilder. “They not only espoused the cause of the colonies, but by their individual efforts aided the noble work of severing forever the iron rule of England.”

“You say forever,” calmly remarked the Captain; “I am not sure that a government of such a kind as these States have adopted will last for a very lengthy period. You are perhaps right, Mr. Wilder, in saying that England will never again control your country’s destinies; but, mark me well when I say, that differences may arise between sections and States, that may hurl you from the lofty heights you have already reached, and the fair fabric over which the Stars and Stripes now float so proudly, may be dashed to pieces on the rocks of civil discord.”

“Never, sir, never!” replied the young man, with much warmth. “Our country may become divided—though, God grant such may never be the case; but, that flag, sir, with its rising stars, can never be abased, and the true sons of America will stand by it while there is a rag left to flutter in the breeze. Captain Williams,” he continued, solemnly, “may I never live to see the day when the hand of my countrymen shall so far forget their God, and the memory of Washington, as to turn their swords against their own nationality, and accursed be the men who initiate civil discord within our midst.”

“You are a true lover of your country; and for your sake, as well as the thousands of noble men America calls her sons, I hope such an event will never transpire. But we will let the subject pass. The wind is coming more from the west than it did, and we can make more sail. Mr. Wilder, you will have the studding-sails set, both sides.”

“ Hands trim and make sail—studding-sails, both sides. Away aloft! Main clew garnets and buntlines, spanker-brails! Up mainsail, brail up! Weather-braces, lifts, and trusses! Raise the fore-tack; round in!”

While these orders were being executed, Wilder stood closely inspecting the seamen. When all was completed, he ordered.

“ Boom topping-lifts for guys, topmast and top-gallant studding-sail halyards. Haul taut; rig out, trice to hand.” Then, pausing again for a few moments, he added: “ Hoist away!” and the sails went out together.

A smile of satisfaction passed over his features as he saw with how much promptness the men executed his orders, and was convinced that if the Captain had been careful in choosing his mate, he had selected his crew with equal care. His brother-officers were men well versed in matters relating to the working of the ship; but as it is not always the case that seamen are gentlemen, or men read in matters foreign to their vocation, Wilder had allowed no degree of intimacy to spring up between them; his manner was polite, and the ordinary conversations of shipboard freely discussed; but no idle word or rude jest would he utter or listen to from them. The young man felt himself, in all points excepting that of age, the equal of his Captain. He had been in command of a vessel himself, and but for the object in view, would not now have been found filling the station of second officer. After having seen the order executed, he turned, and noticing that the wheel was in the hands of Tom Swift, he approached the sailor:

“ We go through the water at a fine rate,” he remarked.

“ And I hope, sir, we’ll keep it up till we reach port,” answered Tom.

“ The fears you felt the other day are passed regarding the ship’s safe arrival?”

“ I only wish they were, sir,” replied the seaman, with a shake of his head; “ but there’s no use in trying to let them go, for here they are, and here they are likely to stay,”—he touched his head as he spoke.

“ What are your reasons for thinking so, Tom? You surely must have some?”

“ That’s the very thing I can’t make out, though I’ve been

puzzling my headworks for over a week to get at it. Now, sir, this simple matter of setting them studding-sails made me feel only the more certain that this ship's getting tired of sailing on top, and has made up her mind to go to the bottom to take a rest."

"But that the mere setting of that canvas caused you such feelings is nonsense!"

"Not so, Mr. Wilder, if you please, sir; but when the sun rose, as it did this morning—"

"And that was as clear as a bell," interrupted the young man.

"True, sir," replied the seaman; and then, as he removed his heavy sea-cap, and allowed his gray hairs to fall around his weather-beaten brow, he added: "The sun rose, I admit, sir, fair enough; but these hairs tell a story of experience which you, sir, have never had. I beg your pardon for saying so, Mr. Wilder; but God has different ways of telling men the same thing. You, sir, can take a short tack in reaching the matter through a book; while men like me have to make a long stretch to come at it; but we find out things by a way that books don't tell of. When a young sailor wants to find out how the weather will haul, he takes a look at the barometer; but to old heads like mine, a look up at the heavens tells him plainly how the wind will blow. Remember, Mr. Wilder, we poor unlearned seamen judge from the signs God himself has made; while smarter men, as they call themselves, look for the same in their own handywork."

"You are right, Tom, in the main," replied Wilder, thoughtfully; "but tell me why you think we may have a change in the weather?"

"Before the sun peeped, if you had been on deck, you would have seen a red sky, and that stands for no more or less than bad weather."

"But I can not see how that has any thing to do with the extra canvas I ordered to be set."

"And I can't myself," replied Tom; "but it's a-coming, sir, as sure as I've got hold of this wheel."

The words of the seaman seemed to leave an effect on Wilder, who walked away, and leaning his head on the taffrail, once more was lost in thought.

The day wore on. The young man resigned the deck to the command of the next ranking officer, and went below. Tom again took the wheel. Ella had at length ascended to the deck to breathe the fresh air, and to divert her mind from unpleasant thoughts. Glancing around, her eyes fell on the figure of the seaman. She started as she recognized him, and instantly approached.

"Why, Tom, are you here?" she said, as a smile fitted over her countenance.

"I said we should meet again, Miss," he replied.

"And very glad am I you have kept your promise," she answered.

"Have you been well, Miss Ella?"

"Thank you, Tom, well in body, but sick at heart."

"I don't wonder," he answered; "but the fresh air will soon make you strong again."

"Did you ever study this instrument?" she asked, after a pause, pointing to the compass.

"I never studied in my life from books, nor ever made port in a school-house; but I do study from God's signs, and they are better than all the books ever printed."

"From what you say," she answered, showing a wish to enter into a controversy with the sailor, "I infer that you conceive knowledge obtained by experience, or as you call it, signs—far more reliable than that found in the printed page?"

"Yes, Miss."

"But books are principally written from the author's own knowledge, either obtained by study or practice."

"That may be so. But what book is there that tells a true story of this?" He swept his arm around the seaboard, and pointed to the waves.

"You refer to both wind and water?"

"Yes, Miss, I do; and when old Tom Swift wants to find out what kind of weather's hatching, he looks for the signs God has made, and not to what man has made or written—though it ain't because I can't read."

"I must say that you are, notwithstanding, partly wrong," she replied.

"How so?" said the seaman, looking quickly up, and giving the wheel a turn.

“ If all we knew was learned only by experience, very few would be thoroughly informed.”

This reasoning Tom comprehended, and felt its power; yet, not liking to yield the point without a struggle, answered :

“ But, Miss, what a man sees he knows for sertain; and what he reads out of a book he has to believe, I suppose, right or wrong. Now, Miss, suppose a man, before he shipped, had learned the name of every thing on board a ship, as well as its place, and how to make or take in sail—would he know, when he came to do it, how it was done ?”

The sailor seemed to regard the case cited as a poser, judging from his manner. He ran his hand across his forehead, as if the idea had exhausted all the energy his brains could muster.

“ Experience is necessary in many cases,” replied Ella; “ though it is not required for us to possess it in being informed on many subjects. Can you understand the meaning of my words ?” she asked, fearful her language was beyond the comprehension of the sailor.

“ I can make out your meaning clear enough,” he answered. “ But I’m blessed, Miss, if I could spin a yarn in that kind of talk if I tried a thousand years.”

“ I was saying,” she resumed, smiling, and looking around at the officer near her as if to ascertain whether she was doing right to hold conversation with the man at the wheel, “ that it is not necessary to have actual experience in order to become acquainted with all subjects. I might know how this ship is built, and yet could not give directions how to construct it. By books we have the information gained by others, or else their experience, for no one would attempt to write on any subject unless more or less acquainted with it. Now, Tom, I will ask you a question, which you can not answer. Do you understand that compass you have by you ?”

“ Can I box a compass do you mean ?” he exclaimed, somewhat indignantly. Well, Miss, hard on fifty years, man and ooy, have I been on shipboard, and it’s a poor sailor I should be if I couldn’t tell by what point a ship’s steering.”

“ That is not my meaning,” she replied. “ There is no doubt but that all its points are familiar to you; but what ?”



mean you to understand is, can you tell *why* its needle always points toward the north?"

"No, Miss, I can't, that's a fact," he answered, after some moments' thought, and looking somewhat like a man fast getting in a tight place.

"Then you see, that, with all your experience, it has not informed you of that fact, which I have learned through books. But, it would take me too long, Tom, to tell you how the compass was discovered, and the reasons for its pointing always as it does; so I will merely say that it was known first, as far as we can trace it back, among the Chinese, some where about two thousand six hundred and thirty-four years before the birth of Christ. It was first called among you sailors by the name of the 'sailing-needle.' Who first marked the points I can not say, for no book I have ever seen could inform me. Why you always find the needle pointing as it does, is owing to what is called the magnetic currents which pass from the south to the north pole, in and around the earth. You see, Tom, that books have taught me that which I should never else have known."

The maiden could not check a slight show of merriment which the puzzled looks of the seaman called up. He would first look at the compass and then at her. At last, as if his brain had conjured up a happy thought, he replied, somewhat indignantly:

"Well, Miss, all that don't do a man any good, after all. A compass is a compass, and it always points one way, and the less a man knows about such things the better, for it's trying to find out the secrets that God has kept to himself."

"With some your inference is satisfactory; but we generally find that the more a man knows the more he is prized by his fellows, and if he will as freely give his information, he is doing his generation a service. I disagree with you when you say God intended to keep it as a secret to himself, for we can find out the causes that produce a thing without profanely striving to penetrate too far to the hidden mysteries of God. But, we may speak more of this, perhaps, some other day, although," she added, smiling, "your old salts are hard to be convinced of a matter which is not, as you call it, 'plain sailing!'"

She moved toward the vessel's side and stood looking at the bubbles glide swiftly astern. After the lapse of some time she raised her head and said, as she moved past the sailor:

"Good-day, Tom, and keep a bright look-out to windward."

"Never fear for that, Miss," replied the seaman, in his usual rough voice; "where there's a clear chart its plain sailing. A short trip I hope we'll have if the wind holds as well as it blows now, for the old ship seems as glad to get away from the land as any fish that swims. Good-day, Miss."

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## CHAPTER VI.

### TAKING IN SAIL.

THROUGH the entire day the vessel kept on her way, urged on by the extra canvas, leaving a train of glittering foam in her track.

Wilder, when not actively employed in giving orders regarding the working of the ship, stood leaning on the rail of the quarter-deck, gazing idly into the water. The solemn prognostications of Tom had not failed to make an impression on his mind. When some sudden puff of the wind would throw the spray from the ship's bows with renewed force, he would nervously look aloft, then quickly sweep the horizon with his eye, as if expecting the appearance of the thin shadow of the white squall.

The first streak of light which threw its rays across the dark and angry-looking waters of the gulf on the following morning, appeared over a heavy bank of clouds, or what, to speak in nautical terms, is called a "high dawn." It spoke to all who saw it, as positively as if told in so many words, a change which, judging from the faces of the ship's people, none seemed to relish. To corroborate the appearance of the seaboard, the sky above wore that dark-blue color, which it never assumes without carrying out what it fosters. The

studding-sails had been taken in for the night, but had, at the first dawn, been reset, as the ship still held the course of the preceding day.

"I hope, Mr. Wilder," said Tom, as his officer passed him with the quick, nervous walk he had kept up some time, "that a word of advice from an old scaman like myself will give no offense."

"And that advice—what is it?" asked Wilder, turning quickly and facing Tom.

"That the ship be eased of some of her canvas."

"I can not give the order," replied Wilder, "without the sanction of Captain Williams, who has gone below without deeming it necessary to give such orders."

"But, had he looked here away," answered the seaman, holding on the wheel with one hand, and pointing with the other toward the direction he wished to indicate, "he would have seen a thing or two brewing in that streak of dusky clouds."

"Captain Williams is too true a sailor to overlook the signs of wind and waves."

"Very true, sir, but old age blinds many a good seaman's eyes."

"I shall see my superior and communicate my views, for I think with you, Tom, we have too much sail, with the signs of heavy weather so plentifully scattered around us."

After the lapse of some moments the young man reappeared on deck, followed by his commander, who, as he glanced around, and saw the evidences already spoken of, and the somewhat anxious looks that rested on the features of his men, calmly remarked to his officer:

"It is prudent to act on your advice I see, Mr. Wilder, and you will have the studding-sails taken in."

"None others, sir?" asked the young man.

"For the present I think it will not be necessary."

"Wilder bowed, and turning gave his orders in quick succession:

"Hands shorten sail—studding-sails downhaul! Away aloft! Top up the lower booms!" Then, as he saw the lower studding-sail tripping-lines, topmast and top-gallant studding-sail downhauls, boom jiggers and after guys were

manned, he again spoke: "Haul taut, trip up the lower studding-sail: *shorten sail!*"

The men sprung under the determined tones of their officer, quickly to their duty, and the inactivity, which, but a moment before had reigned on deck, gave place to what, to unaccustomed eyes, would have been deemed dire confusion. The voices of the men responded from the different stations they occupied, signifying that the last order had been executed and they were awaiting the final command. The enormous sheets of duck fluttered wildly as they descended, and soon the ship was reduced to the impulses of her heavier, and, as a matter of course, more secure canvas.

For an hour after giving his orders, Wilder remained without uttering a word, but his countenance showed that he was by no means dead to the interest of either the ship or her crew. Banks of dusky clouds began to chase each other across the heavens, obscuring the sun; while the wind, as it freshened, caused the waves to rise and break with a soothing sound, wooing, as it were, the mariner to their chilly depths.

"Mr. Wilder," said the cabin-boy—once before referred to—who had approached unnoticed to where Wilder stood.

In this boy the young man had taken a deep interest, though having seen him but so short a time. It seemed that necessity had driven him on board the ship; he had told his story, and Wilder had determined to have him transferred to his own vessel when he returned. He was a fair youth, too fragile to encounter the boisterous weather and rough treatment he would be apt to meet in his present calling. Of pleasing manners and a modest behavior, he had found a way to the heart of most all that ship's company. The fear produced by the appearance of the sea and clouds induced the boy so far to depart from rule, as to speak when not spoken to.

"Well, sir, where have you been that this is the first time you have shown yourself to-day?"

"I have been sir, attending to the lady, whose time is taken up with her servant, who is suffering from sea-sickness. But, will you not please tell me, sir, what were you thinking of, for I had been standing here full ten minutes, and you never saw me?"

"Of the weather," he simply replied.

"Does it tell of a storm?" he anxiously asked.

"Hark ye, my young fresh-water fish," spoke the gruff tones of the old sailor; "you want to heave ahead too fast. Take a lesson aloft, in the way of looking down on deck without your head swimming, or stand on a foot-rope—which is all a'twixt you and the other world—without a shiver, and then come to me and I'll teach you signs. Think ye Mr. Wilder's got nothing to do but answer your questions—you, who can't take a sheet-bend, or a carrick-bend, or, for the matter of that, can't lash your hammock up with a common marling-hitch, nor kackle the eye of a stream-cable? Away with you, and try to knot your hammock up with the hitch I told you of, and then stow yourself in till the blow's over."

The boy cast an imploring glance toward the second officer, and started to do as bidden.

"Let the boy remain," answered Wilder, "for he now learns some of his hardest lessons. The signs indicate a storm, as you have rightly surmised, and one of more than usual severity." He looked anxiously overhead as he spoke.

"I see nothing so very uncommon in them, sir."

"Because your inexperienced eye can not fathom their hidden language. Look over the wide expanse of water, and tell me if you can not see the troubled look it wears, as if in mockery of the sudden destruction it soon will deal with no niggardly hand to the poor mariner. Look again, and see its rising power—at its tossing waves, capped with those ridges of seething foam, which it offers as poor Jack's winding-sheet when he sinks forever beneath the surface of its chilling depths. Soon we will have no child's play to contend with, in your black mass."

These words had been partly spoken to the boy, and partly to himself. There seemed to be a gloom gathering over the spirits of the officer, unconsciously to himself. But, not so with the seaman; he instantly observed his commander's manner, and replied, in a fearless tone:

"And where's the sailor aboard this ship that won't meet it like a man? If it's God's will, sir, that Tom Swift has seen his last cruise, he'll lay at the bottom of old ocean as quiet as he ever lay when a youngster in his cradle."

"And you will have many a messmate, Tom," remarked Wilder.

"But, mayhap it will be all for the best yet, and I wouldn't et it make you moody, sir."

"Nor would it, of itself, did this ship hold a Captain who attended to his duty," he answered, hastily. "It seems that Captain Williams intends leaving all entirely to my guidance, although I dare give no command for he gives no orders. So here we are, with all this canvas still set, and the waters looking so angry."

"Had'nt you better send the boy to him, sir?" asked Tom.

"It is not my place to send or run, with every little change that occurs at such a time as this, to his cabin. There is a duty he owes not only to the lives of those around him, but to the owners of this ship, to be and remain on deck. Boy did you see him before coming up?"

"I did, sir."

"And what was he engaged in?" he asked.

"I left him studying a chart, sir."

"I may be wrong in speaking of my Captain as I do," he remarked, addressing the sailor. "But tis no time now for a seaman to remain below, learning the secret of some foreign sea. Here is his place, on this quarter-deck. But I must not spend my time talking, when action is required, and that at once." So saying, he left them.

On reaching the cabin, he found the Captain deeply engaged in perusing the chart the cabin-boy had mentioned. For some moments he remained unnoticed.

"Ah, Wilder!" he at length said, looking up, "is that you?"

"It is, sir," was the short reply.

"What is the matter?" asked the Captain, remarking his manner.

"You will not think me encroaching upon your authority," answered Wilder; "but, Captain Williams, this ship must pry less sail."

"Has the weather changed much?"

"It has, sir."

"Then put the vessel in readiness to meet the change, and

I shall leave all to your judgment ; for, Wilder, I am getting old, and I find my memory fails me at times. To this cause you must attribute my absence from the deck, for you surely should not have been put to the trouble of seeking me. Away, as no time is to be lost, for look, how the barometer has fallen," he remarked, glancing to where that instrument hung.

Wilder needed no second impulse to urge him to place the ship in proper condition. Reaching the deck, he found the men had gathered in groups. By the gloom pictured on their countenances, and their hushed conversation, he plainly read how keenly alive they were to their critical situation. All eyes were at once directed upon him, and Tom, feeling like a privileged character, said :

"Do we take in sail, sir?"

Without directly replying, Wilder at once commenced giving his orders, in a voice as calm as if the ship floated on the placid bosom of some river.

"Shorten sail, my men. Get the jib-boom and dolphin striker in! Have the gratings, tarpaulins and battens ready for hatchways, and pass the life-lines along deck. Heave round the pumps, and see to it that they are clear and ready for working. Lash those boats fast, and have half a dozen axes ready under the poop. And you," he said, turning to Tom, "lay your ship's course, and keep an eye to windward."

The orders were executed as fast as the men could accomplish them. Soon all was in readiness for the coming struggle, and the ship placed under no sail excepting double-reefed topsails.

At this instant, when the storm might be expected at any moment, Ella appeared on deck. Wilder was forward, attending to the arrangement of many things which required securing before the tempest struck, and, of course, did not see her.

"I heard the order given to lessen sail, and could not overcome my desire to see the coming tempest. Oh! it does look dark and foreboding," she said, as she saw the clouds.

"'Tis but the shadow of what it will be," replied the old sailor at the wheel.

"And you think the ship will live the gale out?" she asked.

"I hope so, lady, though I don't know much about this craft."

"How long before we shall feel its fury?"

"That's hard telling. It may come up slow, or it may come fast. Those clouds don't look right," he added, after a moment's pause, glancing at the dense, black mass of vapors, that hung like a funeral pall along the entire north-western seaboard.

"Tell me, Tom," she eagerly asked, noticing how troubled the seaman looked, "tell me why you do not like the way those clouds look—tell me the worst?"

"They are too dry looking. If the wind would but fetch a little rain along, it would not blow so hard. I was down on a cruise, years back, in the West Indies, and for some two weeks we lay knocking about with very little breeze. One day, a short time before night set in, a small white cloud hove in sight out of the sou'-west. We had just made all snug on board, when the wind hit us. It blew, at first, a stiff gale, Miss, but, as night came on, it let go all, and may I never see such a hurricane again! The air was all on fire like, and, as our Captain called them, the meteors were shooting all around. Off towards the east'ard, the heavens looked as if a large fleet of ships were lying, with their masts on fire, which kept shooting up overhead the whole of that awful night!"

"I have heard of those awful hurricanes, but did you ever hear of one where two winds met?"

"I can't say as I have, Miss, and I don't think as ever two winds do meet, coming head on each other."

"By head on, I suppose you mean where the winds meet coming directly from a point of compass immediately opposite each other."

"Yes, Miss."

"I can tell you of one that I distinctly remember reading of. But am I not doing wrong in taking your attention by my conversation?"

"A man don't steer by his ears, Miss, nor hear with his eyes; so I can listen to you, and keep an eye to windward, and my hands on the wheel at the same time."

"When Columbus was on the point of departing fromabella Island, and while all his vessels were ~~set~~ in the



harbor, one of those meetings of winds, of which I spoke, occurred. It was about the middle of the day, when the wind commenced blowing softly from the east, increasing in strength every moment. While those on board the vessels were using every effort to prevent them from driving with the wind from that direction, another tempest was seen coming from the west, urging before it a dense volume of cloud and vapor. On, on came both, as if eager to engage in their awful struggle for the mastery. At length they met. At one time, the clouds were piled up high in the sky; at another, they descended low to earth, filling the air with horrid darkness, more impenetrable than the obscurity of midnight. The earth and heavens trembled under the deafening peals of thunder. The natives thought the end of the world had come, and fled to caverns for safety, for their frail houses were prostrated, and the air was filled with the trunks and branches of trees, and even with fragments of rocks, carried along by the fury of the tempest. When the hurricane reached the harbor, it tore the vessels from their cables, whirling them round and round, dashing them against each other, sinking three, and tossing others, mere wrecks, upon the shore. The swelling surges of the sea tossed their hoary heads, in many places, two, and even three miles upon the land! The poor Indians thought that their Deity had sent this fearful tempest, spreading ruin and desolation among them, as a punishment for the cruelties and crimes brought in their midst by the white man, and, in their ignorant minds, declared that these people had the power to move the very air, the water, and earth, to disturb their tranquil, happy life and homes, and desolate their island. We find, Tom," she continued, "that the ravages of hurricanes are more felt in the Isle of France, the Empires of Siam and China, and, to a great extent, throughout the West Indies. But, inform me by what signs you tell of their approach, as, but a short time ago, you said you read of changes in the sea and air by signs."

"The month of August, Miss," replied the seaman, looking somewhat uneasily at the fast-gathering clouds, and speaking in a quick, nervous manner, "brings them about the Indies, and they generally heave round when the moon's in her first

change, or first quarter. The sky looks troubled like, and the sun is very red, and always with a dead calm. Round the mountain tops, if any are in sight, there ain't a sign of mist, which always lays moored around them. The stars at night shine brighter than at other times, and the old ocean throws out a small groaning, with a hollow, rumbling sort of a noise, rising, sometimes, in large waves, without there being any wind to kick them into making such a fuss. When these signs show themselves, Miss, all poor Jack's got to do is to trim his ship to meet it, and pray for plenty of sea-room. I feel on an even keel," he added, "since this vessel was put in her storm rigging."

"Since it has been done, we have conversed some length of time, and yet the storm seems no nearer."

"Yes, Miss, so it's turned out; but, mayhaps, it might have come on before we were ready to meet it; it's only waiting for a good start."

Wilder had completed his task, and now returned to the after part of the ship. His attention had been so entirely taken up in observing the evidences of the storm, that he was within a short distance of the lady before he noticed her presence.

"Mr. Wilder!" she at last exclaimed, in astonishment, "you here, too? I was congratulating myself in finding *one* friend, and I now see I have two."

"And no doubt, Miss St. John, your astonishment is equally as great, to find me away from my own ship, and second in command here," he replied.

"By no means," she answered, smiling. "You sailors, they tell me, are whimsical men, doing pretty much as you see fit."

"And so the world has it with most all classes of society. But the cause of my being on board this vessel is"—he paused abruptly, then added, "that Tom and I could not bear to remain off the water so long a time as it required my ship to be repaired. But you would do well to be advised by me, and go below, for this tempest may be on at any moment; it is almost a miracle it has held off so long."

"I am assured it would be best to do as you say, but I would wish to see this wonderful manifestation of the power in the winds and waves."

"At the risk, perhaps, of your life," replied Wilder.

"If the danger was as great as that, I should be mad, indeed, to remain; but the storm is far off yet."

"It will strike us almost at any moment, and with lightning swiftness—ah, Tom! a shift of wind," he added, as he felt the air suddenly strike him on his right cheek.

"I think, sir, we'll get it more from the sou'-west afore it strikes us fairly," replied the sailor.

"Forward there—a small pull on the lee-braces—steady, so Keep her a good full, Tom."

"Ay, ay, sir."

"We shall have all the harder work of it for this shift," remarked Wilder, while an extra shade of anxiety rapidly shot across his countenance.

"Are we below the south point of Florida yet, sir?"

"Not yet."

"That's bad, sir, for we may get on a lee-shore."

"I do not much fear that, for we can lay her close enough to weather the Keys."

"The storm's on hand, sir!" exclaimed the seaman, who had been glancing back every few moments.

Wilder turned quickly. One glance was enough. Springing to where the young lady stood, he grasped her with his left arm, saying, at the same time:

"'Tis only as I expected—how improvident!" then raising his trumpet to his lips, he shouted: "Hold fast all! For life or death, men, *hold!*"

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE STORM.

HAVE you ever seen roused from its lair the hungry tiger, or awakened from its sleep the loathsome serpent, or seen springing from its leafy cover the enraged lion, when night had drawn her darkening vail over the surface of the earth? 'Twas thus, with savage and terrific power, yet awful grandeur, the storm rushed in. Without any immediate sign

except those which had hung, for so long, on the Western seaboard—with scarcely a note of warning of its rapid onset, the storm-king awakened from the silent recesses of his cavernous depths. The great winds rushed from their ocean caves; the vivid lightnings flashed and darted across the inky sky; the thunders bellowed as if rejoicing in the appalling scene. Dense and sullen vapors rolled themselves, volume after volume, mass after mass, out from the hollows of the air; while the sky, which could here and there be seen for a moment, was overspread by a deep and rayless gloom, along which, chasing themselves, hurried dark and frowning masses, hurling and smiting each other as if in combat. The ocean crests came roaring and plunging madly on, tossing the white foam from their summits with every swell, while, with an awful voice, boomed over the unfathomed depths like a requiem. As the winds increased, the waves gathered volume, at first jostling one against the other, but at length mounting pile upon pile, till they formed themselves in large mountains of water, rearing their grim and chilling walls high against the pitiless sky. The stormy petrel were gathered by thousands, sporting in the deep, watery valleys, or resting on the snowy tops. Not a drop of rain had fallen to break, in a measure, the violent wind. The vessel groaned and shook with every fresh exertion; but she proved herself in all respects a staunch craft. As Tom had predicted, the wind slowly began to draw from the south, till, finally, it chopped round suddenly to that quarter. The ship was exceedingly crank—so much so, that when she luffed up in the wind, her bulwarks were under water. The sea continually washed over her from stem to stern, and Wilder found much difficulty in preventing himself from being carried along with it. He was ever calm and thoughtful; and, except when immersed by the waters, kept his eye fixed on every part of the vessel, aloft and below. Tom still held his place at the wheel, and with the assistance of two of the crew, laid the vessel's course as close to the wind as the sails would draw. The faithful fellow could not be prevailed on to quit his post, though Wilder had repeatedly told him to take some rest, not in the way of going below, for none thought of that, but in placing him at some station less arduous than the one he filled.

Night came on slowly, bringing with it a more intense gloom. But few of that ship's company had ever witnessed such a tempest. The scene was truly appalling. The tremendous roar of the ocean, the howling of the tempest and the heavy sea, which at times broke as high as the fore-yard, appeared to herald a coming ruin.

When the storm had first struck them, Wilder had, together with the lady, been carried by the force of the wind and waves, until they were stopped by encountering, with much force, the mizzen-mast. Securing a firm hold, Wilder waited a momentary lull of the tempest, to make a rush for the cabin-door, and place his fair charge in safety. As the form of the girl rested in his arms, her heart beating against his, and her face wearing such a look of confidence, he could scarce refrain from giving way to his feelings, and murmuring words of endearment, even with death staring them in the face; but duty, his promise to his mother, spoke in the silent voice of conscience, and he refrained. At this instant the wind died down, but only to gather strength for a more severe blast. Wilder, letting go his hold, succeeded, by using his utmost strength, in dragging rather than leading Ella to the cabin-door, through which he thrust her, and instantly closed it, while an audible "Thank God!" burst from his lips. Night came rapidly on, and Wilder, as he listened to the wind, as it whistled and shrieked through the rigging, felt the chilling sensation of fear slowly steal into his soul.

"You are still at the wheel?" asked Wilder of the seaman.  
"The night is so pitchy dark I can not see you."

"Ay, ay, sir! Tom Swift don't leave this spot till daylight."

"And once more I ask you if you feel that the doom of this ship is sealed?"

"Yes, sir, I do."

"I had hoped not to-night, but nothing short of a miracle, I fear, can save us."

"She may live through till daylight, sir; but, if the sea keeps up this kind of a fuss, she can't stand it long; Mr. Wilder, she strains heavily."

"There is a moon about ten o'clock, but with these clouds it will show little light."

"I wish, sir, we were clear of land to loo'ard."

"Were it not that at any moment I might be required, I would go below, and, by the reckoning, see exactly where we are."

"How do you head?" he inquired, after a short pause.

"South-east by south, sir."

"You can not lay her any closer?"

"Not an inch, sir; I have to keep her just so."

Slowly wore away the night. A little after midnight the wind blew not quite as strong and more steady, yet by no means had the tempest spent itself. The sea still continued to run mountain high, and the pumps showed that the ship had taken much water, but not enough to create any immediate fear. With anxious hearts, all waited for the light of day. At length it came, but what a dismal picture it presented to view! The waters seemed stirred from their very depths, and as the ship glided swiftly on, pieces of the wreck of some unfortunate vessel would flit past them, to be seen for a moment, then again to lose themselves in the gloom beyond. Wilder had visited the cabin and learned its inmates had passed a sleepless night. Captain Williams communicated to the young man his fears that they were nearer shore than was safe.

Perhaps an hour had passed after Wilder had again reached the deck, when, as if by magic, the heavy veil of mist and fog cleared away, and, to the utter astonishment and consternation of all, they found themselves on a lee shore, off the south-west coast of Florida.

"I am afraid of that, sir," ventured Tom.

"Ah! a lee-shore!" exclaimed Captain Williams, who had just ascended from below. "Can you make more sail?"

"The wind is too violent, sir, and blows from a different point this morning than it did yesterday or last night."

"You can not get the ship in stays?"

"No, sir; she will not stay; her bulwarks are under now, when she luffs."

"How sets the tide?"

"I think it could be made to catch us under our lee-beam."

"Then, sir, to work. I leave all to you, and remember, on you rests the safety of not only the ship, but, what is of far greater importance, of our lives."

The vessel, owing to the shift of the wind, was sailing on her larboard tack, and to accomplish the only means of saving all from a watery grave, was to get her head round on the starboard tack. This could only be accomplished by wearing. Very much ground would of necessity be lost by the evolution, and by the manner of the ship's crew could be seen the intense anxiety manifested for its successful accomplishment. To add still more to their peril, the distant sounds of breakers were borne to their ears. Wilder saw plainly what he had before him, and without waiting to reason the chances, at once commenced the task. One thing was much in his favor, and that was, his perfect knowledge of the coast on which they were.

"Lay aft and man the braces—lively all—see every thing clear forward to wear ship—steady—ease her—shiver away the maintopsail—up with your helm—haul in the weather fore-braces—gather in the after yards."

The ship was now headed *for* the shore, running directly before the wind. Tom stood by his post, his brows knit closely together, his lips firmly compressed, while his hands grasped the wheel with such force that the blood seemed ready to start from under the nails. The scene was awful. At that moment, Wilder, who had stood with perfect calmness, watching the effects of his order, noticed the vessel luff. To act again was the impulse of a moment.

"Brace the mainyard sharp up—haul in the larboard fore-braces—down with the foretack and haul aft the sheet—right your helm there—steady so—haul taut the weather-braces and belay all!"

"The tide takes us, sir, under our lee-beam!" shouted Tom, after the lapse of a short time.

"We are saved, then, thank God!" fervently ejaculated the young man.

"Not yet, sir," spoke the deep voice of the seaman, "unless the ship can take a leap in the air."

"Breakers! breakers! dead ahead!" shouted a voice from the fore-castle. The appalling cry yet seemed to linger around the ship, when again it was repeated:

"Breakers on the lee-bow!"

The cries aroused Wilder at once to the urgency of the

occasion. Seizing his trumpet, he shouted his orders to the crew, who stood gazing with beseeching look, as if in him they saw the only man on whom their safety depended.

"Stand by your braces! Hold your vessel in command now if ever, Tom! Forward, some of you, and try our water!"

As the lead was hove, the voice of the sailor called out: "Watch there! watch!" and the next moment, in louder tones: "By the deep, seven!"

"'Tis well; heave again!" calmly ordered Wilder.

"And a half, *five!*" called the piercing cry of the leadsman.

"She shoals fast, Captain Williams," remarked the young man.

The Captain, who was momentarily becoming more and more excited, seemed to lose at once all command of himself; and forgetting that he had given the management of the ship to Wilder, shouted, in frenzied tones:

"Clear away the best bower! See all ready forward to anchor! *Let go!*"

"Hold on all, I bid you!—hold on *every thing!*" shouted Wilder, in a voice that instantly stopped the execution of the order given by the Captain. Again the voice of the leadsman arose, telling the water was rapidly growing less and less deep, and thickening the dangers that surrounded them. As the eyes of the men would glance at their youthful officer, they noticed him calmly watching the line of breakers, which was momentarily becoming nearer and nearer. A murmur of discontent arose, and low as it was, his ear caught the sound.

"How now, grumblers?" he said, in a clear voice, while his manly features were flushed with anger, and his eye made them quail. "How now—would you rebel? Away to your places, or by the God that hears me, I will send you quickly to his presence. Think ye I do not know this shore, or that I care so little for my life as to wish to throw it away on yonder devil's back, as it is called?" He pointed to the breakers ahead. "When the moment comes, I tell you, if the ship works well, I will show you them astern. But you want work, and you shall have a job that will quiet you to execute." He paused for a second, glancing his eye ahead, then quickly unning it over every part of the vessel. "Up jib, and down



mainsail!" he thundered. Then turning to Tom, who, he noticed, shook his head, quietly remarked, while not a trace of the passion he had so lately plainly shown was visible—"We *must* try it."

"She will hardly stand it, sir!"

"She must and shall, if the sails are blown to threads, or we are lost. Her topsail will not keep her up to the wind!"

"But this sea runs so high, sir, she will hardly, with all that extra canvas, come about."

"Then our last hope lies in club-hauling. But try her, Tom; we have not a moment to lose, for if she will but tack, I can soon get her out of these soap-suds." Then, raising his trumpet, he ordered: "Stand by to tack ship—lee-braces, brace up sharp—ready about—down with your helm, hard!"

The noble fabric, as if aware of her danger, labored hard to bring her head up in the wind; and at last, under the power given her by the extra canvas, she fell off on the other tack.

This course was kept until the foaming line of breakers was again seen looming up ahead, when she was tacked again.

"Lay her *close*, Tom. For your life, do not fall off a fraction," said Wilder; "and if you keep yonder outer end of foam on a line with the top of that headland, we will soon be in open water."

The seaman did as bidden, and soon the waters of the gulf were tossing them on its bosom.

"We have escaped *that* death," said Wilder, as, with a deep-drawn breath of relief, he turned toward his Captain.

"Wilder, you have prolonged our lives," said Captain Williams, shaking the young man warmly by the hand.

"I have, so far, been able to; but I am afraid the end has not yet come."

"We have now sea-room plenty, have we not?"

"Yes, sir; but no ship can stand long such a sea as *this*."

"I have no fears for the *Albion*; she is strong enough yet to weather out many a blow."

"Be not too sure of that, sir. You see one pump is *at work* now."

"But the water does not gain any."

"Not as yet, sir ; but each wave that strikes only increases the leak."

"All that remains for us to do is to use our utmost exertions, and then, if the old ship gives out, may God have mercy on our souls !" said the Captain.

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It was about the middle of the afternoon. Tom had left the wheel for a short time. The tempest still continued in its violence, and the ship flew with great swiftuess before it. Wilder had walked forward when he felt the ship slowly settle more and more to leeward. Glancing hurriedly back, he observed that the men at the helm had allowed the vessel to fall away, and were now luffing her sharply up, the lee-rail being entirely submerged, while Tom was springing hurriedly aft. Further and further settled the ship ; not a moment was to be lost.

"Let fly every thing, my men !" he shouted.

This was at once done, but to no effect. Instead of righting, she continued going over until she lay on her beam-ends.

"Cut the lanyards of the weather-rigging, and let the masts go over the side ; cut the lashings of the booms, and clear away the boats. Heave the deep sea-line, and see if you can find soundings. Lively all !"

The line was hove, but no soundings found. The masts were cut away ; and as the wreck cleared the ship, she slowly righted. The extra strain this accident had given her opened wider her seams, and it was soon ascertained that three feet of water was in the hold. She moved and rolled heavily through the sea. The storm, as if it was now satisfied in accomplishing its purpose, began visibly to abate ; and in a brief period, not a breath of wind was to be felt.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## THE WRECK, AND THE ESCAPE.

"IT is all at an end with the *Albion*, Captain Williams," remarked Wilder, as soon as he was convinced that all his efforts would be of no avail in stopping the leak.

"Does the water gain fast?"

"It does, sir, very fast. I have the pumps going, and the extra men are engaged bailing."

"You had better see that the boats are got ready, and have as much water and food placed in them as they will hold, with our extra weight."

The young man at once set about his task, and soon they were ready. In the largest, he placed extra rope, pieces of canvas, etc., which articles he well knew would be of vital importance to them when they would at length be obliged to leave the ship. The sea was now running down, and lugged along in heavy round rollers; its caps were all gone; every moment saw it becoming more smooth. It was the determination of all to remain on board until the last moment, and to use every exertion in keeping her afloat, so as to allow the waters to subside in their roughness as much as possible. The reckoning had shown the exact position of their whereabouts, which was off the north-east coast of Cuba. The only anxiety Wilder had was, whether or not the boats would prove staunch enough, if heavily laden, to stand the rolling sea. Leaving every thing on deck in the state we have described, Wilder's next thought was to seek the cabin, and hasten its inmates to prepare for leaving the vessel. Upon entering, a scene of most dire confusion presented itself. When the vessel went over, every article, excepting those which strictly belonged to the ship, and which were lashed fast, had been precipitated to the lower side, and now lay piled promiscuously one on the other. The young lady sat holding on by a rail of brass that stretched across the extreme end. Intense fear was depicted on her countenance.

"Oh, save me—save me, Mr. Wilder!" she cried.

"I shall use every effort in my power, rest assured," he earnestly replied. "But, though our danger is fearful, and the ship may go down almost at any moment, you yet have time to select a few articles to take with you in the boat. Arouse the girl, and let her see to the selection. We will remain on the deck until the last moment, but we can not expect the ship will float much longer. Hark! you can hear the gurgling of the waters distinctly."

"I hear them. But what shall we do? How shall we escape?"

So beautiful did she appear in her utter helplessness, that, once more, Wilder could scarcely refrain from catching her to his heart, and telling her how *he* would protect her at the peril of his life. By a strong effort he restrained his feelings, and replied:

"I have provided ample means for that, provided we can launch our boats without having them stove to pieces against the ship's side."

"Are we to trust ourselves among these waves in so frail a thing as a small boat?"

"And have not such boats often before been made use of successfully, and with a sea running as high as this?"

"I have heard so, but it is a fearful risk."

"The main risk lays, as I before said, in getting them launched, and we all in them. After that, with care, good management, and only enough weight in them to let them set high, and yet be well balanced, we shall, with God's help, do very well."

"Then let us start at once."

"We have yet a little time. I wish to let the waves calm as much as possible."

"Mr. Wilder, there is hard on four feet of water in the hold!" at that moment shouted Tom.

The young man responded at once. Bidding Ella to select what she required, and at once to arouse Milly, her serving-maid, he commanded her to stand in readiness until he sent Tom after her. He then sprung from the cabin. Ella proceeded to awake, from the exhausted sleep into which she had fallen, her attendant.

"Come, Milly, we must leave the ship."

"Hab we dun got to Baltimore, Miss Ella?" she dismally asked.

"No, not yet; come, rouse yourself."

"Laws, Miss, dar's nuffing de matter, is dar, honey?" eagerly asked the now thoroughly awake and affrighted negress.

"I will tell you when we reach the deck. Put together whatever clothes you require as quickly as possible, so we shall be ready at the moment Mr. Wilder sends for us."

"Laws-a-massy, how de ship keeps a bobbing. W'ar are we gwine to stop, Miss Ella? I's best take de whole of dem."

"No, no, Milly; you must select as few as possible; the strongest and plainest would be best."

"Dat are is a shame, to go and leave dese fine dresses for some udder pusson. Now, dar's de dress you gave me right spang new, and dar's dis udder one I hain't had on yet—de Lord how de ship goes. Better take one or udder of dem, Miss Ella—dey won't take up much room?"

"Do as I have told you, and quickly!" sharply replied her mistress.

The selection had hardly been made when the seaman entered and bade them follow. On reaching the deck, Ella, for the first time, saw the ship shorn of her beauty. In place of her towering masts, her graceful spars and snowy sails, together with the apparently tangled net-work of stays and rigging, nothing now remained but the dismantled hull.

"What hab dey been a-doing with de boat, Miss Ella?" was the first question Milly asked, after her eyes had seen the havoc the storm had made.

"Ask no questions, but follow me," was the reply.

The swell of the ocean had greatly subsided, yet it still ran high. A seat had been lashed securely to a rope, and arranged in such a manner that Ella could be fastened in, so as to insure her safe descent. The ship's boats were all launched, and the entire crew, excepting those Wilder had selected to go with him, were aboard. At the moment when Ella was about being transferred from the deck to the boat, she stopped, and, as she turned, exclaimed:

"I have forgotten my father's picture and *must have it.*"

will detain you only for a minute," and she hurried to retrace her steps to the cabin.

"For God's sake, Miss Ella, come back before it is too late!" shouted Wilder, in a tone of consternation. "Ah, by the heavens above us, Tom, we are sinking! Away with you—do you hear? Away to the boat while you may yet be saved."

"And you, sir?"

"Will save her or go down with her! I say away!" and, seizing the man suddenly, he threw him over the side into the boat.

"But for your mother's sake," implored the sailor, in a voice that seemed to issue from the waters.

"Pull, Captain Williams, pull while you yet have time, and tell her Robert Wilder met his death as a true seaman should. May God bless you all!" and he rushed toward the cabin.

Reaching it he glanced hurriedly around, but could see nothing of the young woman. When she descended, her first search was in the inner part of the cabin which she had occupied, but, not finding it there, she had crossed to where, in confusion, lay the articles the storm had displaced, and there found the picture. It was while she was thus bent, and hidden from sight, that Wilder came rushing from the deck. Before he had emerged from the inner cabin she had reascended to the deck. Almost frantic with grief, the young man searched every part of the little room, calling her name, but received no answer. At length, warned by the water which washed the floor, and feeling convinced that she was not there, he sought the deck. As he reached it, the vessel gave a sudden lurch, then, rearing her bows high in the air, was about to take the final plunge, when, standing on the fore-castle, her arms outstretched, her hair floating wildly in the wind, a calm resignation stamped upon her countenance, stood the object of his search. Hastily divesting himself of his jacket, he strove to gain her side; but, as he reached the mainmast, the ship's bows began to sink, slowly at first; then, as she groaned and shook in every timber, she sunk quickly from sight, carrying down the only two living beings on her deck. Wilder, in that fearful moment, never lost his presence of mind; but, as he continued to go down, deep in those

unfathomed depths, he struck out in the direction in which he knew he would be most likely to meet the drowning girl. Remaining below as long as possible, he was, at last, forced to ascend for breath. Hardly had he turned in an upward direction, when his outstretched hand encountered a garment; grasping it tightly, he ascended as fast as the powerful stroke of his arm would force him. Coming to the surface, he found that he had grasped the shawl Ella had wound around her at the moment she was carried down by the sinking ship; but, alas, its owner was not with it. The young man began to feel all his efforts to save her had been useless, when her head appeared a moment above the waters, but a short distance from him. Then she sunk again from sight. The sailor struck out for the spot and disappeared. Soon he emerged, bearing the senseless form of the maiden in his arms.

The boat had been kept as nearly over the spot where the wreck went down as possible. The quick eye of Tom saw Wilder when he first arose, so that when he again appeared with the maiden, the small boat was but a few feet distant. Soon the strong arm of the seaman lifted the insensible form in the boat, and the next moment Wilder himself was drawn in.

"I am afraid, Tom, I found her too late," exclaimed Wilder, as he bent over the inanimate features of Ella. "How willingly would I sacrifice my life, if hers could only be restored."

"Your fears are groundless, I think," replied Captain Williams, "for I can discover some pulsation around the heart."

"May God grant it," fervently ejaculated Wilder.

Long and untiring were the efforts of the three in restoring the lady to life. At last they were rewarded by seeing her give a slight shudder. Gasping once or twice, she breathed regularly but faintly. A rude bed was arranged; in it she was laid, while the sympathizing sailors insisted on having their coats used as covering. Wilder was bending over her, when she unclosed her eyes with a vacant stare. She murmured some words, inaudible to all except his ear.

"Robert, dear Robert! Never to leave me again! How

near we were to death—death!" and she repeated the word several times, while a shiver ran through her body.

"Does she speak?" inquired the Captain.

"Poor girl," replied Wilder, "her mind wanders."

But he treasured up in his heart the words, "Robert, *dear* Robert!" They made sweet echoes in his soul.

"I have seen the last of my vessel, poor thing," remarked the Captain, a short time after, Ella having, meanwhile, sunk into a quiet slumber.

"You have, indeed, sir," replied Wilder; "and you must have felt much attached to her."

"I *loved* her," answered the Captain, earnestly. "Yes, I loved the old ship. She has been the personification of a true material affection. Oft has she encircled me with her white arms, and borne me thousands of miles upon her bosom, and now I have seen the last of her. Like a true craft, she has gone to take her long, last, ocean sleep. Mr. Wilder, with her ends my life on the ocean. But 'tis time we thought of action: how shall we shape our course?"

"I have no fixed purpose, sir; what would you advise?"

"To make at once for the nearest land, and, after feeling ourselves once more on solid earth, then arrange how we shall return to the States."

"I find that we drift toward the east rapidly," remarked Robert.

"So much the better, as we will be more likely to reach one of the small islands that abound so plentifully in this attitude."

"I have heard that some of them are perfect fairy spots, and not inhabited. If it so happen that we strike one of them, we might live very well till some vessel took us off."

"But, should we be so lucky as to reach one of those spots, you must recollect it would be entirely out of the way of vessels, and we might be obliged to remain so long that the romance would change into an irksome reality."

"Very true, sir; but, with the boat, I could take part of the men, and by carefully finding my way from one group to another, at length either fall in with a ship, or reach some place where they are in the habit of stopping."

The remainder of the ship's boats were ordered to follow



in the wake of the Captain's launch. Its crew consisted of the Captain, Ella, and her attendant, Wilder, Tom, and three others of the ship's company, who had been chosen for their strength and trustworthiness.

Milly, who had entirely recovered from her sea-sickness, and, in a great measure, her fright, soon commenced asking Tom questions, somewhat to his annoyance. His orders to "put a stopper in her head" she did not seem to heed, but continued talking.

"I tell you I don't know, and there's an end on't," he growled, to some interrogative of hers.

"Well, dat ar' de queerest! Don't know war we's gwine to? I reckon if I'd been a-sailing about as much as you's been, I'd know sumfing 'bout it," retaliated Milly.

"It's a pity you didn't wear long-togs and warn't quite so black, that the man at the helm could see you on the look-out some clear, starlight night," replied the seaman, with much disgust.

Milly always had been a favorite servant at her master's house, and, although by no means forward to those of Mr. Leueger's standing, was apt to use her tongue freely and saucily to those she knew held some subordinate place. Tom she considered a sailor servant, and she was not long in forming a resolve to tease him whenever opportunity offered.

"I's as good as some folks, if I *am* black, and don't want to be told a thing more dan once to learn it. Why don't de sea stop dis rolling and tumbling? De wind ain't a-blowing."

"Because it don't choose to," gruffly replied the seaman. "You had better sit still, you, whatever your name is. You can turn your head without moving your whole body, can't you?"

"I's been in a dug-out a heap of times, and I reckon I knows how to sit in a boat as well as any one."

"Well, sit still, then, and put a stopper in your mouth-piece. I've got enough to do with this oar, without spending breath talking to you." With this the conversation ended.

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Again the shadows of night were fast gathering round them. Wilder, with the Captain's assistance, made the boat as comfortable as the material at hand would allow. The

men had ceased their exertions with the oars, and, having been divided into watches, were coiling themselves to sleep excepting the one who was on duty. Wilder sat leaning his arm on the gunwale of the boat, with his eyes either fixed on the waters, or watching Ella, who still lay in her sleep of deep exhaustion. Silence reigned around, broken only by the splash of the water, or the deep breathing of the men.

"Mr. Wilder?"

"Well, Tom, what is it?"

"Are all asleep aft?"

"I believe so—why?"

"I've got something to say to you I'd not like any to hear."

"Out with it, Tom."

"It's going to blow again, to-morrow."

"What! you have not again a presentiment?"

"That's the name they call it—yes, sir, I've got that thing."

"But, that thing, as you call it, only tells you of a good sailing breeze, I hope."

"I'm afraid it's going to be a little more than this boat can stand."

"Pooh, Tom, what has got into you lately? You are like an old woman among us, always some bad news to tell. I am inclined to believe, as you do, that the wind will blow fresh to-morrow, but not so hard that this boat is not strong enough to stand it. You must not let your fears, of whatever nature they may be, become known to the men, for it would do no good."

"Ay, ay, sir! I'll take care of that. Good-night to you, Mr. Wilder."

"Good-night, Tom."

## CHAPTER IX.

## THE ISLAND.

SLOWLY wore away the hours until the dawn of the following day. All, excepting those whose duty required them to watch, had slept soundly, for the dangers and excitements through which they had passed had completely worn out both body and spirit.

With the sun, as Tom had rightly judged, rose a stiff breeze; and Wilder, having rigged a mast, consisting of an oar, and extemporized a small sail, the boat went swiftly along. Thus they continued for some time, until it was found prudent to unship the mast, and once more have recourse to the oars, as the wind continued to freshen every moment. On the features of all, save the female portion of the boat's company, rested a look of anxiety. The men knew the exact strength of the boat, and how much of a sea she was able to stand; if the wind should increase it would make a sea too rough for the boat to live in.

"The wind blows rather too fresh for us, Mr. Wilder," remarked the Captain, in an undertone.

"Rather, sir," was the rejoinder, in the same cautious manner.

"Yet I do not think it will increase much more."

"It can not, sir, and we live through it. You will notice our boat takes in water now, whenever she strikes any of the larger waves; it keeps one of the men bailing constantly."

"I am glad so far Ella seems not to have noticed it, for the young lady, although weak and helpless, has recovered her reason."

"Be not too sure of that, sir. Miss St. John, ill as she is, allows very little to escape her notice."

"You appear to know the lady well on so short an acquaintance," remarked the Captain.

"I merely judge, sir, from the extreme watchfulness she has shown, and the manner in which she bore up under the dangers we have passed through."

"She is a brave girl, Wilder."

"Indeed, she is, sir; and, what is better, as good as she is brave."

"You must be careful, or the young lady you have 'left behind you' may hear of what you say," replied the Captain, giving way to a momentary joke.

"I must arrange matters differently in this boat, else we stand in danger of being swamped," Wilder said, quickly, as a huge wave struck, and left considerable water after it. "Have you a boat's anchor forward?" he inquired of Tom.

"There's one here, sir," answered the seaman.

"Lash your oars, bottom-boards, and any other loose wood-work you can find, together, and hang the boat's anchor to them; then span them with the boat's hawser, and pitch them overboard."

"Ay, ay, sir!" answered the men, and commenced executing the order.

"My lads," he continued, "pass the other end of the hawser around the boat outside, and guy it down in places by passing the bight of one of those spare ropes over the bows, and slipping it aft under the bottom; take a piece of that canvas, and lay it over the forepart of the boat, and lace it down outside to the hawser; raise the after part up a little by sticking a stretcher under it; bring the breakers well up, run a piece of rope through the becket, so as to form a life-buoy, and see to it, Tom, that the boat is kept bailed out. I think now," he added, turning to the Captain, "that the sea will be kept from breaking *into* the boat, and we have a shelter from the weather."

"You are a thorough seaman, Wilder, and seem to know how to meet every emergency."

"I have tried to learn my vocation well, and was much favored on the start in being under the tuition of a Captain who well understood his duties."

"The wind does not increase any," remarked the Captain.

"I think it has reached its height."

"Did you put a compass in the boat?"

"I did, sir, but this morning I found it broken; so much so as to make it useless."

"That is bad, indeed, for we are now at a loss how to direct our course."

"I have a small pocket chart, which will give us some slight cue to our whereabouts."

"We must try to manage as best we can, and trust the rest to Providence. Have you examined our stock of provisions?"

"I have, sir, and have an unfavorable report to make. During the haste to leave the ship very little of food or water was placed in the boat, and the men and myself are on short allowance now."

"I was not aware of that. Let my proportion be equal to yours in future, for if an example is to be set, the Captain is the man to do it."

"Very good, sir; yet I hope it will only be for a short time. Land can not be far off, and a few days, perhaps a few hours, of good weather may bring it in sight."

Through the rest of the day and the following night, the wind still blew a heavy breeze, but, owing to the precaution taken by Wilder, the boat shipped very little water, and all felt more hopeful. Continued exposure and anxiety began to show itself on even the persons of the hardy seamen. On Ella, who had only partially recovered from her near approach to death, its effects were more sadly discernible. Wilder watched every change. Gladly would he have borne all for her. As it was, he dropped words of cheer, and bade her hope that, ere another sun had set, they would see land.

The sun arose without a cloud on the following morning. As its golden beams touched the waters, they reflected them back in their thousand tiny mirrors, seeming, as it were, to laugh and rejoice over the wreck and destruction they had so lately caused. A gentle breeze arose, and the sail being spread, the boat went on its way—we may truthfully add, it knew not whither.

Night succeeded day without the much wished-for land appearing in sight. The last biscuit had been shared. To quench, in a measure, their burning thirst, the men dipped their clothes in the water, and put them on wet. A huge shark had joined their company, as if he hoped, before long, to see some of that precious freight thrown overboard. The seamen, whenever he ventured near, would strike at him with

an oar, or boat-hook, uttering, at the same time, a suppressed oath, for, even much as they suffered, no word of a character which would be unpleasant to Ella's ear was spoken louder than a whisper.

"How long have we been in this boat?" inquired one of the crew.

"This is the seventh day," replied Tom.

"And over two have I been without a mouthful."

"We can't stand it much longer."

"That's a fact—but say, Tom."

"Say ahead, Jim."

"I've been a-thinking, that if it hadn't been for the young lady we've aboard, this boat would have gone down."

"How so?"

"Well, you see, *she's* too good to be drowned, and it's nothing more nor less than *her* prayers that has kept us afloat. I tell ye, mates, when I saw her stand on the fore-castle of the old ship, with her arms stretched out, I expected to see her start for heaven direct."

"I believe you're about right, Jim; she's an angel in my mind, and I only wish we could fall in with land or some craft for her sake. Do you know, mate, I thought the old *Albion* would take a look at the bottom afore we started, and I told Mr. Wilder so."

"What made you think that, Tom?"

"That's what I can't make out. It's a kind of dead reckoning, but I've heard of such things happening to men of better learning than I, and they call it some name I don't remember; but none of them can tell any more about *how* it comes than I. Lads, take a look a point off our weather-bow, and tell us what you make out thereaway."

"It looks like land," one said, looking fixedly at the point indicated. "And it is land, Tom."

"Land ho!" shouted the seaman, rising slowly, through weakness, to his feet.

"Where away?" asked Wilder, also rising.

"Here away, sir, off the weather-bow."

"I see it, Tom! I see it! Miss Ella, we are in sight of land!"

"Thank God," faintly murmured the exhausted girl.

“ Bless de Lord for de sight uh land, and when I’s fair dun got out of dis boat, you’ll never cotch me gwine sailing again,” chimed in Milly. Then adding, as if to enumerate her disasters: “ De fust thing is I gets sick, and can’t stop throwing up; den I is weak as a kitten; den it begins to blow, and every thing goes hazing round de cabin; den de ship begins to sink, and take my nice dresses down wid her. But, bress de Lord, never mind dem *now!* We’s soon be on de solid land again. Mr. Wilder, hab dey any houses whar we’s gwine? for poor Miss Ella, de dear honey, is dun wore out.”

“ I’m afraid not, Milly, but it will not take long to make your mistress comfortable when we arrive,” answered the young man.

The boat was now headed directly for the land, and, with the combined aid of sail and oar—for the men seemed to recover new strength—went swiftly through the water. In due time it was reached, and the weary, shipwrecked party stood on solid ground.

The island was one of the Bahamas, which number in all some six hundred and fifty; yet, out of that number, but fourteen are of any considerable size. Unlike the majority of its companions, the soil was not arid and rocky, but was covered with a rich, deep sod, on which grew, in abundance, all the fruits commonly found in the tropics. Upon close examination, it was found to have been formed by the industrious coralline insects, which secrete the impurities of the water, and, depositing them, form the substance known as coral.

The first thing our little party turned their attention to, was to securely fasten the boat, and remove the goods inland. This done, instant measures were taken for the construction of a shelter for Ella and her servant. The canvas, which the forethought of Wilder had provided, was now brought into requisition, and soon a comfortable tent was formed. Tom was of great service; by his strenuous exertions, every thing was arranged for the coming night.

“ I say, mates,” he said, after completing his task, “ heave away with you, and let’s have a look at this bit of ground we’re on.”

His three companions assenting, they started on their tour of discovery. After passing through a comparatively clear

spot of ground, they entered the more luxuriant part of the forest.

"Now hunt around, mates, for some fresh water, and then we'll see what kind of eatables they raise here."

"Here you are then," at that moment called out Jim, "but it's only a small stream, and we'll have to play well-diggers before we can get enough for all hands."

With their combined efforts, a large hole was quickly dug, and protected by driving stakes firmly in the ground. They soon had the satisfaction of seeing their labors rewarded, by the water rising clear and cool, till in a short time the hole was full. Their attention was now given to finding how plentifully the island was stocked with food. Fruit was soon found in great abundance. A few oranges and pineapples were gathered, while a rich harvest of bananas, plantains and papaws soon completed their load.

"I would like to know whereabouts on the high seas this bit of land is to be found," remarked Tom, as the trio seated themselves before returning to the shore.

"Can't say, Tom," replied one of the men.

"Mr. Wilder will have it figured out before another sun down. It's my opinion he's bound to take a sail afore long."

"Well, the sooner we start, the better," answered the man.

"Hist, Tom Swift," spoke Jim, cautiously.

"What's up?"

"Look aloft there!"

"Where away, old fellow?"

"In that tree-top."

Tom looked as directed, and discovered something moving around among the foliage, but it was so well screened from sight, as not to allow the men to see what it was. A few moments elapsed, when the leaves were pushed aside, and on the outer limb of the tree appeared a small ape, around whose eyes was a bright ring of tan color. It descended from the tree, when the men tried hard to secure the little creature, but it was too quick for them and scampered off.

"I don't much think we'll starve to death, 'cause, if the worst comes to the worst, we can live on fruit, and roast monkey for a change," remarked Tom.

Leaving the men to find their way back to the shore, we



proceed with our story. Wilder had determined upon confiding to Captain Williams the story of his love, and also to show him the paper which Tom had found, as well as to repeat what he had overheard. As yet, no opportunity had offered. Had he attempted it while in the boat, the quick ear of Milly or some one of the crew would have overheard. After arranging for the night, he set to work to find out on which of the numerous islands they were, and the nearest way by which they could find means of escape.

"Well, Wilder, have you found out on what part of the earth's surface we are?" inquired the Captain, as he noticed the young man look up from his chart, as if satisfied.

"A very small part, I take it, sir," he replied.

"Yet large enough to be one of those fairy spots you spoke of," he answered, smiling.

"There is rather too much of stern reality in this to allow us to imagine we are encroaching upon the haunts of the fairies," said Wilder, also smiling.

"And yet, we have one fairy among our company, who, if glances speak, and I can interpret them aright, would have no objection to a mortal dressed in sailor rig, having been first mate of a certain ship before she went down."

The Captain smiled rather mischievously as he spoke

"You have reference to me, I suppose?"

"Exactly."

"And the fairy is Miss St. John?"

"Precisely."

"I am sorry," said Wilder, "to dissipate your sagacious inferences; but, as the lady started North with the intention of marrying some other man, I can not lay claim to her favors, I fear."

"What do you mean?" rather anxiously asked the Captain.

"It is as I have said, sir. She herself was not aware of the object of her voyage, and would not have known it at all, had I not informed her."

"You told her! How came you to be possessed of the knowledge denied to her? I supposed you to be a stranger to her."

"You were mistaken, sir; I had known Miss St. John for some time."

"I do not know what to think, Wilder, of you and your statements. Mr. Leneger I have known for a long time, and never has he deceived me. I have confidence in his word. You, my boy, I had never seen until you set foot upon the deck of my vessel. Still, I believe you a man of undoubted veracity; in fact, I love you almost as much as if you were my son. Your courage, your firm and skillful management of the vessel, and of the sail-boat, have prolonged my few remaining days. But, Mr. Leneger told me that he sent his ward to Baltimore for the purpose of enabling her to complete her education, by one year's application to study. Now, you say it was his intention to marry her off. Do you know to whom?"

"To a Mr. Tindale."

"Did I understand you to say that it was without her knowledge or consent?"

"It was, sir. She knew nothing of it."

"But, how came you to know the facts of the case?"

"The seaman who shipped with me became accidentally acquainted with the intrigue which was to place Miss St. John in Tindale's power."

"Tom Swift, you mean?"

"The same, sir."

"Wilder," said the Captain, fixing a calm eye upon the man, "have you proof of what you say?"

"I have, sir," replied the young sailor, at once producing the agreement, and giving a history of events with which the reader is already acquainted.

Captain Williams remained an attentive listener, until the young man had finished. It was some moments before he spoke. At length he said:

"Wilder, we must talk of this again, for I must have time to think. Believe me, however, when I say, I am your friend, and can and will second you. But, we will return to what we were first speaking of. Have you discovered where we are?"

"I am unable to point out the exact location, as this chart has not all the islands down, but memory supplies the deficiency, for I have sailed these waters often. As near as I can estimate, we are either between the Gulf of Providence

and the Great Bahama Bank, near the Holy Ghost Islands, or a little to the eastward of them. At any rate, I have our locality so nearly found, as to enable me easily to make my way to where vessels will be likely to be met."

"Which would be toward the coast of Florida?"

"I think not, sir."

"Is it not the nearest point?"

"There is very little difference in the distance between it and Cuba; and I am of opinion, that the chances for inducing a vessel to come so much out of its course as to stop for us, are better in the latter than in the former place."

"But, you do not intend sailing directly for Cuba, without stopping at some intervening island?"

"By no means. I must use the utmost caution, in making my journey successful. Should I take a direct line, which I could do without falling in with any land, I would have no security against change of weather. In the other case, I could make the shore during hard weather, and thus progress in perfect safety. I must leave as soon as the men have recovered their strength. I am desirous of returning to New Orleans, to take command of my vessel; this, together with seeing Miss Ella home as soon as possible, are my reasons for haste in the matter. The fruits and birds which the island produces will keep you all until my return."

Ella was seen approaching, her hands filled with the fruit of Tom's gathering.

"Sec, Mr. Wilder, what a feast we have," she said.

"And to whom are we indebted for these luxuries?" he asked.

"To faithful Tom, who seems ever on the alert to contribute to our comforts," she replied.

"You are feeling much better?"

"Much better, I thank you, for the refreshing draught of water, and the little of this delightful food I have eat, has quite revived me."

"Have you seen Tom since he first brought these fruits?"

"I have not. He had scarcely laid them down, when one of the men called out to him to come quickly, adding the remark: 'Oh, what a whopper!' and I saw all four start and run for the shore."

While she was speaking, Tom and his companions were seen approaching through the trees, dragging some heavy weight after them.

"As large a turtle as ever I saw caught; and a precious job we had to flap him on his back," said Tom, as he came puffing along, tugging at the load on the sand.

"You are certainly a good forager, Tom."

"A what, Miss?"

"I say, you are good at supplies."

"If looking around will find something to eat, Tom Swift ain't the man to starve to death for the trouble. But, Jim was the first to make out this four-legged snuff-box, and we had to crowd on all sail to overhaul him, afore he got in water deep enough to float him off. But, now that we have got the chap, how are we to cook him?"

"Never fear but we will find some way," said Ella. "Milly is a very good hand at preparing food, and we will turn it over to her."

The seaman gave a shrug of his shoulders, as if not very well pleased at the idea of Milly officiating, but made no reply. The fact was, he had a supreme contempt for the black race, and had taken an uncommon antipathy against the present representative of the nation.

Night was rapidly approaching, when Wilder, bidding all good-night, sought his repose.

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## CHAPTER X.

### A STRANGE DISCOVERY.

THE following morning, after partaking of their meal, Wilder proposed that they should explore the island. Ella, being much refreshed by her night's rest, was to make one of the party. The company proceeded inland—Tom leading, stopping now and then to gather some of the numerous wild flowers that so plentifully strewed the way. After half an hour's walk, they suddenly emerged upon the borders of a

little lake, surrounded on all sides, excepting the one by which they had approached, by great ledges of rocks, that rose perpendicularly to the height of over two hundred feet. These ledges sloped away gradually, on each side, until they met the waters of the ocean.

"What a beautiful spot," remarked, Wilder.

"It most certainly is," replied Ella. Turning to Tom, she requested that he would ascertain whether the water of the lake was salt or fresh.

"It's as salt as the ocean," replied the man, after a few moments' absence.

"Why do you ask?" inquired Robert.

"To convince myself that I was right in my conjectures."

"And what where they?"

"That we stand not on solid earth, but upon the creation formed by insects."

"Then this is a coral island?"

"It is; but see, Tom is motioning us to come that way," and she ran to his side.

"What have you found?" she inquired.

"That we are not the first people, Miss, that have been about these parts. Look heraway, to windward of that first tree, and you will see the wreck of a house."

Ella distinctly saw the remains of some kind of a shelter, built by human hands. Going up to them, she discovered the letters "J. C." deeply cut in the bark of a tree which grew close by, although it was evident many years had passed since they were first engraven there.

"Tom, this is singular, and I feel there is yet something to find; search around on the side you now are, and I, with Mr. Wilder's assistance, will inspect this side. Should you find any thing, let us know. This has aroused my curiosity, Mr. Wilder," she said, "and I shall search until I find some clue of these letters, to reward me."

"Here looks like a path, though it ain't been walked over for many a day, Miss; suppose you take a look at it."

Ella passed to the spot indicated, to behold the remains of a narrow pathway, evidently worn by human feet.

"This certainly is getting interesting," remarked the young lady.

The whole party now struck out on the path, proceeding slowly, that nothing might escape their notice. They soon reached the foot of one of the cliffs. Here the path appeared to lose itself abruptly against the rocky base. A few feet above ran a narrow ledge. To this the seaman instantly mounted, and cautiously proceeded onward, until a cave was discovered, at the mouth of which he found the broken handle of a knife, on which were cut the two letters discovered on the tree. He reported this to the rest of the party, when Wilder and Ella quickly ascended to the ledge. The entrance to the cave was quite narrow, and had been worn smooth.

Entering it, it opened out into a large room, perhaps some twenty or thirty feet wide, by fifty deep. At first it was so dark as to allow the party to see only a short distance before them. Gradually, as the eye became accustomed to the place, they could see dimly the full extent of the cavern. Tom Swift had, from his entrance, commenced to feel his way in the dark, and had reached nearly the further end, when his hand suddenly rested on the whitening bones of a human skeleton. Uttering an exclamation of surprise, he retreated hurriedly.

"What is it?" asked Wilder.

"A human being, sir, as I'm one!"

"A human being!" repeated the young man, with much astonishment.

"Not a live one, sir, but the remains of one."

"Did you see them?"

"No, sir, but I *felt* them, for I put my hand on a skull! But, we can see them now, sir, for the eye is getting used to the dark."

All proceeded to the spot. On a rude cot lay the skeleton. Between the fleshless fingers were remnants of the covering of the bed, or pieces of his own raiment. The knees were drawn up, and the jaws tightly closed, showing that death had been made painful by suffering. The clothes that had served him as a covering were gone, save the piece the dead fingers still grasped.

Scattered around the room were pieces of boards, which Swift, upon close inspection, pronounced as belonging to a ship's boat. On the projecting point of a rock Ella noticed what to her looked like a bundle of papers, or a book

Calling Tom's attention to them, he seized the package, which proved to be a roll of parchment. Wiping off the dust and mould, he handed it to Ella. Nothing more being found, the party set out on their return. Milla and the three seamen had preceded them, and prepared their simple repast. After partaking of it, Ella urged Wilder to examine the parchment. The company all being anxious in regard to it, seated themselves around Wilder as he carefully opened and inspected it. The writing was in the Spanish language, with which Wilder was well acquainted. In many places the marks were nearly obliterated, so as to render the reading difficult. On the back were written these words :

"Within this roll is briefly written the history of a life rendered useless by the ambition of others, who trampled in the dust the hopes of one of their fellow-beings, and drove him, at last, to this lonely spot to die." Opening the paper the young man continued as follows :

"I feel the hand of death upon me ; its chilling presence pervades my being, and yet I am not afraid to die. Death to me will be kindly sent ; it will end a miserable life. I am by birth a Spaniard, and am yet a young man. Do not judge me harshly, or think I am an outcast. Briefly have I written the story of the short but stormy passage of my life.

"As I have said, I was born in Spain, but removed with my father in early youth to Cuba. Wealth, at one time, our family possessed, but, by numerous reverses, we lost it, until I was obliged to seek employment. By strict application to business, I at last found myself in prosperous circumstances, and all bid fair for the future. It was during a visit to the distant home of one of the wealthiest planters on the island, that I first saw the lady Inez. She was beautiful, and as pure and good as she was beautiful. I loved her, and as I prolonged my visit from day to day, at last discovered my love was returned. Oh the joy, the happiness I felt during the brief time we were affianced ! We looked forward to the moment when we should be man and wife, with feverish anxiety.

Inez was an American, but had resided on the island for many years with her parents. Her only brother was a planter living a short distance from New Orleans. I had been absent

for some time, when I again returned to the neighborhood of her home, and learned that preparations were then being made for a grand wedding at her father's house. Who could it be? Inez? The thought was like a death-pang. I sought and obtained an interview. It only corroborated my worst fears. Uselessly I plead with her parents, telling them of the love we had for each other, and besought them not to sacrifice their daughter's happiness in wedding her to a man she did not love. All was useless. My burning words were lost upon unfeeling souls. Proud themselves, they believed they were doing their duty to their child by marrying her to wealth and a name. At last my vehement manner and passionate words were construed into insults, and I was ordered from the house, while Inez was closely confined. The day soon arrived on which Señor Fernando Santos was to receive his unwilling bride. How the hot blood coursed through my veins! *Murder* was in my thoughts. I strove to gain admittance to the house, but found every avenue strongly guarded, for Mr. —" Wilder started, and paused abruptly. Noticing the glances of all fixed upon him, he said :

"The name is quite indistinct; we will pass it over—it is not of much consequence." He then continued :

"For Mr. — knew full well I would endeavor to be there. By the confusion within, I could judge when the bridal party passed into the largest room, where the man of God awaited them. The silence that followed told my heart what was now taking place; and then, as the joyous laughter broke out afresh, I heard in it the knell of all my hopes: Inez was the bride of another! Maddened now to despair, I rushed from the place, nor did my flight stop until this island was reached.

"In conclusion, I would ask of those who read these words to have my remains, if any exist, buried near where they will discover the ruins of a rude house, and beneath a tree, on which are cut the letters J. C. Should age have defaced their distinctness, I would ask the favor of you to cut them plain. Farewell, and may you learn a lesson from my wretched end, never to interfere with the happiness of others, but, on the contrary, to do all that lays in your power to advance it!"



Wilder ceased, and sat thoughtfully looking at the manuscript.

"What a sorrowful end!" exclaimed the Captain.

"It was, indeed, sir," replied Wilder; and then added, in an undertone: "Look at the name; I hesitated to speak it."

"Ah!" exclaimed the Captain, in much astonishment; "but we will know more of this. You had better not allow Miss Ella to see it at present."

"I think with you, sir, I had better not."

"Is there no name attached to the writing?" he asked aloud.

"There is—Julian Cervantes, I think it reads."

Ella remained silent, for the narrative had made a deep impression on her mind.

"Has the manuscript no date?" inquired the Captain.

"I do not see any, although there has been something written below; but it is either defaced by time, or has been blurred by him after writing, so that I can not make it out."

"Is it written with pen and ink?"

"He has evidently used a pen, made, perhaps, from some bird's feather; but the ink looks like the stain of bark, or wild berry."

"How long do you think he has been dead, judging from the appearance of the remains?"

"Some ten or twelve years, I should say."

After conversing for some time longer, Wilder arose, and set about making arrangements for the journey of the morrow; and, after seeing all complete, sought repose for the night.

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## CHAPTER XI.

### THE SMALL BOAT'S VOYAGE.

THE morning broke in all its splendor, and the boat waited only the presence of its commander to commence its long journey. Taking the young man's arm, Captain Williams led

him to a spot where their conversation would not be overheard, and addressed him as follows :

"You are on the point of starting on a voyage which is fraught with many dangers, and it may be God's will that we shall never see your face again. You have made me your confidant, and I know now what induced you to take the position you did on board my ship. The purpose was laudable and disinterested ; but, if I am a judge, you are both doing yourself and the lady great injustice."

"Please explain, sir," exclaimed Wilder, in some astonishment.

"You love each other—do not start—for it is plainly read in your every action, and acknowledged by the few words I overheard you utter when you refused to leave the deck of the sinking ship."

"Tis useless, I see, sir, for me to deny it ; but I have solemnly promised my mother to conquer the feeling, and forget that Ella is more to me than a friend."

"Twill be useless," resumed the Captain, "especially when you know your love is returned. I see no reason why your union should be objectionable."

"But I am not so sure Ella loves me. Notice, if you will, how she has avoided me since our arrival on the island."

"And also notice," quickly replied the Captain, "how she has watched you in secret. Wilder, before you embark, go to her and tell her all, and my word for it you will not be rejected. If you live to return, all will be well ; and, should you perish, she will feel more satisfied in knowing you loved her. Go at once, my boy, and then away to your boat ; and may God be with you in your efforts !" He turned and left the spot.

Wilder remained standing, not knowing what to do, until the voice of Ella broke on his ear. His mind was made up.

"I have come to bid you farewell, Miss St. John," he said, approaching.

"Why, Mr. Wilder, what do you mean—where are you going ?" she asked, in astonishment.

"I shall try and make my way toward some port, where the services of a vessel may be obtained, and you restored to your home."

"But can not we attract the attention of some passing ship without having you again venture on the treacherous water?" and she visibly shuddered at the thought.

"This island is not in the direct course of vessels. Should one pass, it would only be by accident, and only by chance would our signal be seen even then. I must go as I contemplate, or we may have to remain here for months."

"I do not wish you to." She spoke with deep feeling; a tear glistened in her eye.

"And does Miss St. John really care to have me stay?" replied Wilder, going nearer to her.

She raised her eyes to his, blushed deeply, but made no response.

"You were surprised," he continued, speaking low and earnestly, "to find me on board our late vessel; but if you will patiently listen, I will tell you why I was there."

"Proceed," she murmured.

"When I saw you on my return home, nothing was further from my thoughts than leaving my own ship for a moment; but matters connected with your own welfare caused me to pursue the course I have."

"You surprise me, Mr. Wilder, but pray explain."

The young man briefly told her what Tom had overheard, dwelling longer on those parts of the narrative which betrayed the unscrupulous actions of Mr. Leneger. At the close he said:

"You know now why I am here, and may surmise the feelings that lead me on. Miss St. John—*Ella*," he added, taking her hand in his, "when we sported in happy childhood, I loved you then with all the ardor of my boyish affections, and now my whole heart is yours. I told my mother all, and she assured me it would be useless to entertain the hopes I cherished, for you would never look on my suit with eyes of favor. I struggled to overcome my passion; and, perhaps, never would you have known that you had a sailor's love, if the events I have mentioned had not transpired. For *you*, *Ella*, I have striven to reach the summit of my calling—have tried to amass wealth, to gain a name; for *your* sake all my efforts were but to appear good in *your* eyes, and when I was bidden to forget you, for that you *were*

ready affianced, a dark cloud settled over my soul, where our image had before made all bright and cheerful. Oh! Ella, even now on this lone island, and here in this silent spot, with none save God to hear my words, I do most earnestly offer you my love. If it is unrequited, I shall but work the more faithfully for your rescue, so that I may lose the sight of your lovely face, the gentle tones of your voice, and, in the whirl of business, the howling of the tempest, strive to blunt the edge of my feelings, and to forget. Ella, answer unrestrainedly, as your inmost heart dictates."

"Robert!" the words were low, but thrillingly clear, "I truly give you my poor self, but it is a poor gift, I fear. For *you*, Robert, I have read of the sea, and become interested in all things relating to your calling; for *you* I have visited our mother, and learned to love her as my own. Robert, I love you!" She hid her face upon his breast.

Long did the lovers remain together in their happiness, and Wilder had no thought for the passage of time. The gruff voice of the seaman at last aroused them.

"Ahoy! Mr. Wilder, ahoy!"

"Well, Tom, what is it?"

"Bless my soul, but the Captain's made fast at last, I do believe," said Tom to himself, adding aloud, "the boat's waiting for you, sir, and a long sail we've got before us."

"You *must* not go, dear Robert." Ella clung to him passionately.

"Do not say so, Ella. Remember it is most necessary."

"I know," she answered, "and will say no more; but *Tom* must remain with me."

"I did intend taking him, but if you wish, he shall remain. You hear, Tom? Miss Ella insists you must not go!"

"And bless her heart," replied the honest-spoken seaman, "I shan't go. But I wish you much joy, and it does my old heart good to see it."

"See what?" they inquired in a breath.

"It's no use trying to blind me, like a ship in foggy weather, for I see how it is, and I wish you joy, and an open sea for your cruise of life, although, if you do get on a lee-shore, or among breakers, sir, I guess you know how to work off."

The farewells were spoken, and the boat, with all sail set,

started on its way. How sincere were the prayers that went up for the safety of that frail craft! How deeply alive all were in having the mission those brave men had started upon one of success! Ella, for some time, gave way to her grief, but she eventually resumed somewhat, her usual cheerfulness. On starting, the boat's course was laid for Exonna Island, which, as near as Robert could estimate, lay in about a south-east direction, distant over fifty miles. The time set down to complete so much of their journey was twelve hours, or, perhaps, less, if the wind blew steadily, and the sea did not rise. The men sat conversing on different subjects, while Wilder remained silent, save now and then to address them some order. Upon reaching the north-west part of the island, they coasted down its westerly shore, and, as no time was to be lost, kept on for Yuma or Long Island, a distance of some twenty-five miles further, which they reached at twelve o'clock on the first night. Here the boat was secured, and all lay down to obtain a few hours' rest. Long before the sun rose, on the following morning, the boat was again on her way. The wind blew as steadily as on the previous day, and all bid fair that the journey would prove safe and quick. Their course could now be determined accurately, as the islands they had passed were laid down on the chart which Wilder possessed. Their track lay across Crooked Island passage to Fortune Island, and thence to Aeklius Kay, a distance of nearly one hundred miles.

"What are you thinking of, Jim?" inquired one of his mates, called Hedly.

"Oh, nothing much," replied the man.

"Vast heaving, mate, for I know better," answered Hedly; "something's got foul in your head-rigging."

"Come, out with it, Jim," chimed in his other companions.

"Well, if you must know, I was trying to make out what kind of a fish it was that swallowed Jonah," he said.

"And who's Jonah?" asked one of the men.

"Why, you lubber, did you never read your Bible?" inquired Jim, indignantly.

"All right, I remember now. The fish was a whale," replied the other.

"I don't know 'bout that," said Jim

"But the Bible says so," answered the man, determined to show how much he knew of the subject.

"And it says, too, that it was 'a great fish,'" retorted the man.

"And if it wasn't a whale, Jim, what was't?" asked Hedly.

"Well, mates, here's what I think. You know a whale don't eat the same kind of food as a shark, but skims the surface that float on the top of the ocean, as well as those that are in it. Besides, he'd have a precious hard job to swallow a man neck and heels, without first chewing him a bit, and he ain't got teeth to do that with, though his gums are precious hard when he can bite a jolly-boat in two. But you see, lads, he's got a mighty small swallow for so big a fish, and I don't think a live man would set well on his stomach; it might give him a pain, like. I think, then, it wasn't a whale, but a *shark*."

"Pooh, Jim, you ain't right in your reck'nings there," replied Hedly.

"Reason's reason; and you can 'pooh' as much as you please," answered the seaman, rather angrily.

"You needn't get gritty because I don't think it was a shark," said Hedly.

"It don't make much difference to us either way, but, as I say, nature's nature, and God wasn't going to make a fish go so far out of his course as to eat what he didn't want, when there was one in the sea that would do it willingly. The white shark can take down a man whole, for I saw one once that weighed ten thousand pounds, and was told by a shipmate that he saw one killed, and when they come to cut him open, a whole horse was found in his stomach."

Wilder then addressed them, and the argument was dropped. The island last named was reached the next morning by sunrise, and, as their water-casks wanted replenishing, they proceeded inland in search of some. Wilder now determined to strike out boldly for Point de Mulas, on the coast of Cuba—never one hundred miles from where they then were—rather than proceed by Great Inague Island, which would be much the longer but safer passage. During their voyage thus far, not a single sail had they seen. On none of the islands at which they had stopped was a living creature met. It was

about the middle of the afternoon, and Jim, who was standing up in the boat's bow, suddenly noticed something in the distance. Shading his eyes with his hand, he gazed long and earnestly to windward. At last, turning, he addressed his commander:

"Mr. Wilder, will you take a look off here toward the westward; there's some small speck that looks like a boat."

Wilder instantly raised his glass, and, sweeping the horizon, discovered what appeared to be a raft, although not a thing could be seen on it.

"It appears to be the remains of some wreck, or else a raft," he said, seeing the inquiring look of the men. "Yet, I do not see any person on it. We will make for it—the poor creatures may be so much exhausted as not to be able to stand."

The sheet was hauled in, and the boat laid close to the wind. Rapidly she approached, and Robert, who continued gazing on it, saw a man raise himself with much exertion on his elbow, and slowly wave his hand, when he fell back.

"There are men aboard," he remarked, "and, poor fellows, they are very nearly gone."

"Perhaps some of our ship's company, sir," said Hedley.

"No, for they were provided with boats," answered Wilder. "I wish I knew the fate of our poor fellows," he added, after a moment's pause.

"They have done very well, sir, I think," answered Jim.

"What makes you think so?" asked his commander.

"Why, sir, their boats, though not as large as this one, were strong, and I saw them, I think, after the wind fell."

"Which way were they standing?"

"Due south, as near as I could make it, sir."

"And since then the wind has not blown hard."

"No, sir."

"Then I think as you do, that they are safe."

"I hope so, sir, with all my heart."

"These poor fellows, I suppose, were lost during that same blow."

"Likely, sir; but it's strange, like, they ain't fell in with any ship since."

"Perhaps, Jim, that hurricane blew all the vessels away from these waters."

"I'm sure of one thing, sir, there's many a one on the mud now that was afloat before that blow."

They soon reached the raft, and found it to contain three men and a boy. As Wilder conjectured, they were all in such state of exhaustion as not to be able to rise. Not a particle of water or food did they have, and, although quite unable to speak, their looks spoke as plainly as words for drink. The men were the rough, hardy followers of the sea, but the boy seemed different. His slight form, his ringlets of soft, flaxen hair, and the general outlines of his countenance spoke him of gentle birth. Carefully was he lifted and placed in the stern-sheets of the boat. A small quantity of water was given to each of the sufferers. Then the raft was cut loose and the boat once more headed on her way. With the utmost care Wilder administered to the sufferings of the boy, and was rewarded by seeing him open his eyes and look inquiringly round.

"Water, please give me water," whispered the little fellow.

The young man allowed him but a swallow, saying, compassionately, "you shall have more by and by."

"Where am I?" he asked again.

"You must not talk, for you have been very sick. You're safe."

A smile flitted over his wan face, and he sunk into a quiet slumber.

The men rallied much quicker, and Jim already had learned their history. It was one so often told, and can be described in the mournful, but, alas! too common ejaculation—"Fouled at sea!" The ship to which they had belonged was bound from Havana to Spain, and had been lost on the first day of the storm. Having a large number of passengers, the boats would not contain all, and those left had constructed a raft on which, when they pushed from the ship, were sixteen persons. The boats had all gone down within sight of those on the raft. All in them perished excepting the boy. He had come on board accompanied by his father, mother, and a nurse. The sailors said they were, from appearances, people of wealth and influence. Of the remainder of their companions, they had been washed off, or else, giving way to hopeless



despair, had thrown themselves into the sea, choosing at once to put an end to their sufferings by their own hand, rather than endure the awful agony each knew he would have to bear. After a sleep of some hours the child awoke, much refreshed and strengthened.

"Where is mamma?" he asked, of Wilder.

"Your mother is happy, my boy," he answered, evasively.

"But tell me, please sir, where she is, so you can take me to her, and then I shall be happy too!" As he spoke, he looked up in the young man's face, with such a longing, beseeching glance that Wilder scarcely could refrain from betraying his emotions.

Thinking it best to use no deception, he at once determined to answer the truth, hoping to soothe the outburst of feeling he knew would follow.

"Your mother has gone to a better country."

"Where is it?—what is it called?"

"I can not tell you, my boy, where it is, but—"

"Please tell me quick, sir!" he said, interrupting him in his earnestness to hear.

"She is in heaven!"

"Heaven!"

"Yes, my boy, heaven."

"But we have to die, sir, to go there?"

"We do."

"Then is my mother dead?"

"Your mother is dead."

"And father?"

"Yes."

"And nurse?"

"Yes."

The child seemed as if he could not comprehend his loss. At last the fearful truth burst upon him, and, with a heart-rending cry, he gave way to his feelings in uncontrollable agony. For a while it was thought best to say nothing to him, but Wilder could not long remain a silent spectator of such grief. Placing his hand on the boy's head, he smoothed back the hair from his pale brow, and said:

"My child, will you not let me be your friend?"

"Oh yes, sir," he answered, between his sobs, as the kind

voice fell on his ear. "Mamma, father, and all are dead, and I have no one left to love me."

"I will love you."

"But you can't love me as my mother did."

"Very true, there is no love like a mother's; but I will love and care for you, and I know of a lady who will also, for your own as well as my sake, love you tenderly."

"I will stay with you, sir, for I don't know where to go."

"Have you no aunts, uncles, or any relatives?"

"I never saw any, sir."

"Can you tell me where you were born?"

"In Cuba, sir, my mother told me."

"Tell me your name."

"Fernando Santos."

Wilder started, as if in agony.

"Was that your father's name?"

"Yes, sir."

"And how old are you, Fernando?"

"I am seven, sir."

"Now I will tell you that my name is Wilder, and I have little doubt we will get to like each other very much. Take a drink of this water, and eat this piece of bread, then I will cover you up that the water shan't wet you. In the morning you will feel quite well again."

Point de Mulas was reached, and yet, four hundred and fifty miles were to be traveled. Their course was now a safe one, as it lay directly along the coast of Cuba, and it was arranged to sail night and day that no time should be lost. We will follow them no further in their journey, but simply say that the port of Matanzas was safely reached, and hasten back to the island to see how the remainder of our shipwrecked party passed their time.

## CHAPTER XII.

## THE SEARCH AND THE ESCAPE.

"STRANGE, very strange," muttered Leneger, as he brooded over the distressing fears which haunted him now, day and night. "Strange that Tindale has not written me long before this. Ella must have arrived. It can not be that she is lost. And yet, that was a fearful storm; but the ship was a stanch craft, and a man who well understood his business to manage her. My fears must be groundless. Ah, Ben, any letters?" he asked, as his servant made his appearance.

"Four, sar."

"A letter from Tindale," he exclaimed, quickly breaking its seal. He read:

"The lady has not arrived; neither has the ship. Upon calling on the owners they inform me that little hopes are entertained of her safety. The terrible storm which revisited the waters of the gulf is known to have destroyed many vessels, and the *Albion* may have been one. Had you not better come on? P. S.—I open my letter to say that part of the *Albion's* crew were picked up by a vessel, and have just arrived. The ship was lost. No news of your ward."

"This is *rather* cool. Let me see what he says of Ella: 'No news of your ward.' Don't seem to have many regrets on the subject. 'Come on.' Well, I *will* 'come on.' She may be lost—*dead!* No, no; I can't believe that. Great God! It is not so, for then would I be little less than a murderer!" He paced the floor in his great agitation, the image of pain and remorse. At length he rung in his servant. "Go immediately to Mrs. Adams, and inform her that I shall start for Baltimore to-night. Let her have my trunk packed at once, and tell John to get the horse before the light wagon."

"Yes, sar," answered the boy, who quickly disappeared.

No surprise was manifested by Mrs. Adams upon hearing the order, for she was accustomed to Mr. Leneger's abrupt commands. A short time sufficed to see all in readiness, and

the carriage was driven rapidly toward New Orleans. Arriving at the city, it was found that early the following morning a ship would start for the required port. Mr. Leneger instantly repaired on board. In due course of time the vessel reached its destination, and Mr. Leneger, without loss of time, sought the presence of Tindale.

"Why, Leneger, how are you?" he asked, shaking him warmly by the hand.

"I am well in body, Tindale, but wretched at heart."

"That should not be."

"Should not be!" exclaimed the planter. "And pray, sir, I ask, do not circumstances warrant it?"

"True, Mr. Leneger. But we have good grounds for hope, as one boat's crew was saved, and we have reason to suppose the others may have been picked up, or reached some place of safety. Some of the rescued men are at present in the city."

"Ah, I am glad to hear this! Let us see these men at once!" was Leneger's eager response.

Without the loss of much time, they succeeded in finding one of the crew named Roberts, and from him obtained such information as led Mr. Leneger to hope for the safety of the Captain's boat. It was finally determined to dispatch a vessel for search among the islands. One was secured, and Mr. Leneger had the satisfaction of seeing it soon start on its voyage of mercy. In all this proceeding he acted without consulting his companion. Tindale seemed to take but little interest in the matter.

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We are again on the island. Tom had not succeeded in finding the passage from the lake to the open waters outside, and, slowly, day after day passed without any signs of the return of Wilder. The fearful idea that he might have perished was slowly finding its way to the heart of the fair girl, and its effects were plainly stamping themselves upon her features.

"Milly, what shall we do if Mr. Wilder is lost?" she said, one day, after watching that part of the horizon in which the expected sail would come.

"De Lord lub you, Miss, but you mus'n't gib way so."

"How can I help it, Milly?" she answered. "We have no one to look to for help but to him."

"Dar, Miss, don't go to crying, cause dar's no use ub it. I's sertain he will be here afore long."

"God grant it!" she murmured.

"You see," continued Milly, "it's a long way off to de place he started for, and nuffing but a small boat to go in. Den dar's de time he'd takc getting a ship to come here after us. So take dis and dat, and all de udder t'ings together, he ain't been so long, after all."

On the following morning, a signal that Tom had constructed was placed on the extreme point of one of the coral reefs, for even Captain Williams felt somewhat uneasy at the young man's absence. The island, which, on first landing, seemed so plicasant, was losing many of its charms, and the life they led, having no variety, was becoming irksome. All longed to be at home again, and every hour that passed without the expected sail appearing secmed an age. Tom was proposing plan after plan, but giving them up as fast as conjectured. At one time he wanted to build a boat, and start for suceor himself; but that idea was abandoned when he came to think there were no materials with which to construct a boat. Next it was a raft; but that was relinquished because it would be too unwieldy and unsafe.

On the morning of the next day, at an early hour, Ella sat, in company with Tom, at the look-out. Not a word had been said, for both were sad with waiting. Tom ceaselessly scanned the sea from south to west.

At length, something seemed to meet his eye, for he rose hurriedly to his feet.

"What do you see, Tom?"

"Can't say for sertain yet," he answered, shading his eyes with his hand. For a long time he remained silent, his gaze fixed on one point, and his form as motionless as a statue. At length, without any introductory remark, he bellowed ou as loud as his powerful lungs would allow: "Sail ho!"

"Oh, where, Tom, where?"

"Here, Miss," he answered, seizing her almost rudely by the arm, and pointing toward the south-west. "Look under the south edge of that long, white cloud."

"I see it, Tom," she said, after a pause; "but it looks to me as if it were going from us."

"No, Miss, it's coming this way; my eyes are better practiced than yours. It has caught the flash of our white canvas that has fluttered so long without any attention having been paid to its *distress*," said the old sailor, jovially.

"It will be a long time before it reaches us."

"Not very."

"Why, Tom? There is very little wind this morning," she replied.

"So there is on this island but the wind's coming up with that ship, and it won't be long before we shall know whether Mr. Wilder's aboard or no."

"Had I not better let the Captain know about it?"

"He knows already," answered that person, who had just mounted the reef. "That hail of Tom's would have apprised me of the fact, had I been on the other side of the island. Can you make her out, Tom?"

"I think it's a brig, sir; and she's standing under all sail for this island. I hope she will keep in the notion till she reaches here." To make himself doubly sure, Tom raised and lowered the signal. In a few moments it was answered by the brig's dipping her colors. "All right, Miss, she's bound for *us*; so let's pack up, and be ready to go aboard," said Tom.

When the brig arrived within a short distance of the island, she came up gracefully in the wind. A boat shot from her side. Before her headway was stayed, the ship fell away again with her larboard tacks aboard. As the small boat reached the shore it was met by the little party, and Wilder, springing from it, grasped the hands of the Captain and Tom with a hearty shake; then, stepping to where Ella stood, he drew her to his breast. Both were speechless from joy.

"Thank God, dear Ella, that I am with you once again," he at last exclaimed, as he gazed down into the depths of the soul that shone from her bright eyes.

"I do, Robert, and have prayed for your welfare long and earnestly. But tell me why you stayed so long?"

"I made all the haste I could, dear Ella, but I found it very difficult to find a vessel whose Captain would consent to

deviate one mile out of his course to call for you. There is *every* little heart in the men of money."

"They are prone to selfishness; but, no matter—you are with me once more."

"Let us make all the haste we can, for I wish not to detain the vessel one moment longer than I can help."

"Milly has all ready," she replied.

"And Tom, I declare, has every thing shipped," he said, as he glanced toward the boat.

Being all seated, the boat was headed for the brig, which was again approaching. Soon all were on her deck.

"Miss St. John, allow me to introduce you to Captain Wallace," said Wilder, as the Captain of the brig came aft. He was a young man of about Robert's age, prepossessing in appearance, and gentlemanly in manners.

"I take pleasure in making Miss St. John's acquaintance, and regret that Mr. Wilder did not meet me at first, on his arrival at Matanzas. You must have suffered much while on the island."

"Quite the reverse, I can assure you; it was rather pleasant than otherwise, although I found the novelty added much in making it so, for, toward the last, my spirits began to give way to impatience."

"You had a most miraculous escape."

"We did sir; but were you not out during the storm?"

"No, I had the good fortune of being snug in harbor at the time."

"We owe you much, sir, in coming out of your course to take us up, and you certainly have my poor gratitude to reward you."

"Pray, do not mention it. I only did that which each should do for the other."

The good ship sped on her course, and the island soon vanished into thin air. (Only one sail was in sight, far down on the northern horizon.

## CHAPTER XIII.

## HOME AGAIN!

"THAT fellow seems as if he wanted to run us aboard," said Wilder, as the strange vessel bore down toward them, apparently wishing to speak them.

"So he does. Ha!—there goes his signal."

"Ease your helm, and let her come up," said Captain Wallace, addressing the man at the wheel.

"Brig ahoy!" shouted a voice from the other vessel, as she was brought in juxtaposition with the brig.

"Ahoy!" "Where are you from?" "Matanzas." "Where bound?" "First Baltimore, then Liverpool." "Some way out of your course." "Yes, slightly." "Blown out?" "No, we have a party on board who visited one of the islands." "How many did you stop at?" "But one." "Pick up any shipwrecked passengers on it?" "Are you in search of any?" "Yes." "How many, and their names? Perhaps I can tell you something of them."

"Captain Williams, Robert Wilder, first mate, Miss St. John and negro servant, Tom Swift and three seamen, all of ship *Albion*," was the answer, accompanied by a full description of their persons.

"I'm sorry I can't help you. A safe cruise to you. Fill away, my men."

"And a snug harbor to you."

"I do not quite fathom the intentions of Mr. Leneger in sending that ship out in search of us," said Wilder, thoughtfully.

"They had a complete description of your persons," answered Wallace.

"Yes, and to obtain them they must have found some of our ship's crew. Had it not been for Captain Williams' advice, I should have gone on board."

"What was that advice?"

"To have Mr. Leneger suppose Miss St. John lost, so that



he may, by introducing her himself, effect the purpose in view."

"And a most excellent idea it is. But, the description of your party could have been obtained in New Orleans; so it is not probable any of the crew have been picked up."

"You are most certainly wrong, for, in the first place, the vessel we have just spoken I know well—she is from Baltimore; and next, you will remember, she was sent out by Mr. Leneger, so he must be in that city; but, still more conclusive is the fact, that none were inquired for except our boat's party."

"Truc, Wilder, I did not think of that."

We leave them at their guesses, which were many and not made without anxiety. What of the future?

---

Baltimore was at length reached in safety, and our friends again had the shelter of a roof over them. It was found, upon inquiry, that Mr. Leneger had returned to New Orleans, where Tindale was to join him in about eight weeks' time. Instant preparations were made for embarking once more, and, after bidding a farewell to Captain Wallace, all, except the seamen, who preferred to remain, again found themselves afloat.

Their passage was quick and pleasant, and the port of New Orleans reached without any incident worthy of mention. It had been determined that Ella, Captain Williams and Fernando, should go at once to Mr. Leneger's as the consummation of their hopes must be attained before the coming of Tindale. Tom was to accompany Wilder to his home, there to remain for further instructions.

Mr. Leneger, after his return from Baltimore, had lost much of his old brusque air. A feeling of regret for the past haunted him, waking or asleep. The absence of his ward wore heavily on his feelings. He loved the girl as sincerely as such natures can love, and the awful suspense he was constantly laboring under, the fear of her being lost, and the hope that the vessel would succeed in finding her, made every moment fraught with anxiety.

We again find him in his room. The door-bell rung, but he either did not hear it, or it failed to arouse him.

"Gemman in de parlor, sar, wants to see you, sar." exclaimed the boy, entering the room with a broad grin on his face.

"Who is it?"

"Don't know, sar."

Hurriedly arranging his toilet, he entered the parlor.

"Mr. Leneger."

"Captain Williams!"

He started in surprise, then rushing forward, seized the hand of his friend, and shook it long and earnestly.

"Thank God, old friend, that once more I see you alive."

"I am glad to see you, Mr. Leneger," replied the Captain but with an apparent reserve in his manner.

"My ward—Ella; where is she?"

"It is solely of her I came to speak."

"Is she alive, is she well?"

"To all these questions I answer, *yes*. But, before replying further, I have much to say to you." His manner was so serious, so earnest, so *commanding*, the planter felt, even before the words were uttered, that his visitor had come to judge. Williams deliberately proceeded to narrate to Leneger the latter's entire proceeding in the case of his ward—detailing with painful minuteness the bargain and sale, to Leneger's utter astonishment. How did Williams become possessed of all the facts in the case, even to the secret agreement? The Captain answered no questions, but pressed upon the planter with much severity. The sailor even knew the entire history of Inez, and of the melancholy end of the lover. It was a crushing, terrible, relentless *expose* of the planter's life of pride and heartlessness. He quailed before it, as one stricken with a secret terror—it was all so unexpected yet so just, so appallingly true. The Captain ended, at length, by a touching appeal, for his heart really was bleeding for his friend, whose misery was too unmistakable.

"Oh! gladly, Williams, gladly!" faintly uttered the conscience-stricken man. "But before I promise to restore her to you, I must have your most sacred promise that you will grant me the favor I shall ask, provided I can prove to you a few facts."

"I will."

"We will not converse more now, but to-morrow I will see you alone, and explain a few matters which will be to your interest to hear."

"Can I not see my ward to-day?"

"Yes, as I have your word; but I must introduce another to your presence first." Raising his voice, he added, "You may come in."

A door opened, and the boy entered. Going up to the Captain, he looked inquiringly in his face.

"Do you know this boy?" he asked.

"I should know that face," said Leneger, scrutinizing his features closely. "And yet it can not be! Child, your name; tell me your name!" he added quickly, and with exceeding excitement.

"Fernando Santos."

"And your mother's?"

"Inez, sir."

"My God, it is my sister's child!" and he snatched the boy to his bosom. For some time he gave way to his tears. As he gazed fondly on the child, he asked: "How came you here? and your parents, where are they? Are they well?"

"Mr. Leneger," replied the Captain "they are both dead!" and he proceeded to relate the event as it occurred, touching also upon the remains found in the cave. Its recital much affected the planter. It was some moments before he could sufficiently compose himself to ask again for his ward. The Captain gave a signal: the door again opened, and Ella threw herself into the extended arms of her guardian. We will not attempt a description of the meeting. It was both joyous and painful to both. Ella could but feel keenly that all the sufferings and perils she had been subjected to lay at his door; yet, forgiving, as the true woman ever is, all was forgotten in the joy of reunion

## CHAPTER XIV

## A FAMILY GATHERING.

NEARLY a week had elapsed, and Wilder had neither seen nor heard from the Captain or Ella. The young man began to fear that Mr. Leneger was still determined to adhere to his plan of marrying his ward to Tindale, and that he had taken means to prevent his learning the fact from either. The honest seaman was also becoming uneasy, and Robert found no little difficulty in preventing him from paying another visit to the house. The morning meal had just been finished, and Robert and Tom were conversing upon the all-important topic, when Mrs. Wilder, entering the room, with a smile upon her face, handed her son a letter, saying, "Here, Robert, is something for you."

"Who gave it to you, mother?"

"I can not tell, as I do not remember seeing the person before."

Wilder broke the seal. Glancing over the few lines it contained, he turned to Tom. "We will soon see how matters stand at the house," he said.

"Glad of it, sir," replied the sailor.

"This is a request from Captain Williams, desiring my presence at the house this afternoon, as Mr. Leneger wishes to see me. On the bottom of the page is written the word 'Come,' and I flatter myself it looks like Miss Ella's."

"And you will go, sir?"

"Most certainly."

The hours seemed never to pass so slowly, until the time arrived for Wilder to start. He had chosen from his ward robe an entire new suit of clothing, cut after the fashion of the sailor. His broad collar was turned far down, so as to exhibit his muscular neck, and was confined at the throat by a carelessly tied neckerchief. Bidding his mother good-by, he started with Tom, who insisted on following him.

Arriving at the mansion he was met by Captain Williams,

who, in few words, gave him to understand that all was well, and then ushered him into Mr. Leneger's presence.

"This is the young man to whom we owe so much," he said, with warmth.

"I am indeed glad to see you, Mr. Wilder; be seated," replied Mr. Leneger, motioning toward a chair, and then adding: "I have much to thank you for; but the simple expression is not enough—I must convince you of it by acts."

Wilder bowed.

"I am given to understand, by both herself and the Captain, that you love my ward. Is it so?"

"It is, sir," replied Wilder, "and I have the flattering assurance she loves me in return."

"You are almost a perfect stranger to me, Mr. Wilder, although I may have seen you in your boyhood; but I have frequently heard of your excellent mother. I am assured by Captain Williams that you are a young man of education, and well versed in your calling, which is one of the highest respectability. As to your standing, I am also assured of that by your being in command of a vessel, and in the employ of such men as you are."

"I am not what the world would call rich," proudly replied Robert; "but defy any one, high or low, rich or poor, to say a word against my character. Having no wealth to care for, my entire attention has been to jealously guard my name from the shadow of evil report. There are some men who pride themselves on their possessions, and think that the dazzle of their gold will blind the eyes of the world to their misdeeds." His listener rather winced under this remark, although Wilder at the time, had no intention of being personal; yet the words had hardly escaped him, when he saw how nearly home they applied.

"We will not enter upon that subject," Leneger replied, calmly. "There are many acts we commit, urged upon us by the force of circumstances, or our own ambition, which, in the course of years, or during a moment of reflection, we are sorry for; and yet many have not the moral courage to retract. I will not dwell on the circumstances connected with my intentions toward Ella, but must say I was mad, cruel, foolish, not to see how utterly miserable they would have made

her future life. Now, sir, what have I to do as a man sorry for a deed but to make restitution? Answer me, as God is your judge: do you love my ward with your whole heart?"

"As my Maker hears me speak, I do, sir," he replied, with warmth.

"And, sir, will your affections remain unchanged?"

"They will."

"I shall remember your promise. Now let me add on requisition, which is, that Ella shall reside in this house as long as I live, should she become your wife."

"I do most certainly promise you, sir, that nothing shall be done by me that will in any way conflict with your happiness," replied Wilder, sincerely believing that he heard aright, and that, at last, Mr. Leneger was to sanction the marriage of Ella and himself.

Going into the opposite room, Mr. Leneger reappeared, leading Ella by the hand. Wilder arose to his feet, and met, for a moment, the loving, trusting glance of the fair girl.

"Your hand, Mr. Wilder."

Taking the hand the young man extended, he gazed fixedly upon each, as if wishing to read their inmost thoughts. Then as a tear trickled down his cheek, he said:

"Spirit of my departed friend! thus do I obey your last request, the only one you, on your death-bed, asked of me, and which I swore to keep!" He placed Ella's hand in Wilder's. "Young man, I not only came near rendering this dear girl wretched for life, but also of making of myself a perjured villain. Take her, sir; love her for her own sake; watch over, comfort and protect her; and may God be with you, and guide you safely through life's journey!"

He ceased speaking, and fell exhausted in a chair, while a deathlike pallor overspread his face. Ella rushed to him, but he gently put her away, saying, in a husky voice:

"'Tis nothing, Ella, nothing but the end of the battle—the contest for mastery between pride and duty. They have made me the battle-ground; I was the stronghold they assailed, but duty has come off victorious, and has left me weak after the struggle. Pardon me, Ella, for all the suffering I have caused you. I have made all the restitution in my power. Go into the parlor, child; ~~I wish to be alone.~~"

Upon entering the room, our happy couple found quite a number of friends gathered; and, much to Wilder's astonishment, his mother was there. All were aware of what had taken place; no explanations were needed; joy shone on every face, but none seemed more happy than our honest old friend, Tom Swift. In a short time all sat down to partake of a bountiful supper, and then pass the evening, up to a late hour, in congratulations.

By Mr. Leneger's decision, the day of marriage was fixed to take place one month from that evening. He wished the ceremony over before Tindale arrived.

The month rolled rapidly away, and the day arrived that was to unite the destinies of Ella and Wilder. The marriage was conducted without pomp or show; only a few intimate friends of the family were present. Never had Ella appeared more lovely than on that day. Dressed in a robe of spotless white, and her beautiful hair plainly arranged with a few orange blossoms, she seemed the perfection of goodness and beauty. Robert had, with much reluctance, been induced to dispense with not only his sailor's suit, but occupation; for Mr. Leneger had conceived a warm friendship, almost merging into affection, for him, in the short space of that month, and would not hear of his following longer a seafaring life.

The sacred vows were pronounced, and the happy lovers were receiving the congratulations of their friends, when, suddenly, like a bird of ill-omen, Tindale appeared upon the scene.

"This marriage shall not proceed!" he shouted.

"Avast heaving, sir; there's no wind a-blowing here but what people can hear, if you don't hail quite so loud," said Tom, much to the amusement of the company. Acting the part of agent, he placed himself directly in the intruder's path.

"Out of the way, fellow!" he said, losing control of his temper, and attempting to push the seaman from before him.

"Weigh and cock-bill your anchor, sir, before starting, or you may veer round on your cable thus,"—and, seizing Tindale's outstretched arm, he swung him around face toward the open window; then, with a sudden effort, he sent the broker fairly over the shrubbery to the grass beyond. It was

so quickly done, so unexpected, that Wilder and Leneger had not time to interpose. In a moment Tom was gone, and he was soon seen piloting the unhappy man down to the road. It was the end of Tindale.

A decade of years are passed. We ask the reader to take a parting glance at Wilder and his wife. Years had brought their changes. The blustery winds, the howling tempests, the ice and snow of two winters, with the golden sun, the balmy breezes and gentle showers of the summers, had come and gone since Mr. Leneger had passed away to his last slumber. He died deeply regretted and dearly beloved by those whom he had rendered happy. Our little shipwrecked boy, Fernando Santos, had been adopted by Mr. Leneger; and his entire property left to Wilder's charge, until he should come of age. At the time we take this parting look at the characters of our story, he was far away upon the dark-blue waters of the ocean.

Mr. and Mrs. Wilder had been blessed with two children now—a boy of eight, and a girl of six years. They were having a romp with Tom—who had never left Wilder since the marriage on the green-sward—while their parents, together with Robert's mother and Captain Williams, who also resided with the family, sat watching their innocent amusement.

“Robert?”

“Well, Ella?”

“This is the anniversary of our escape from the sinking ship.”

“Is it, love?”

“And we are so blessed—children—home—friends!”

“God's hand is to be seen in all things, Ella,” he answered, gazing at her with a look that showed his love had grown with the years that had elapsed.

“True, Robert, he brings good out of seeming evil. He wrecked us to save us. Our united lives shall bless the  
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