No. 662 *W. Clark Russell* 50 Cents

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AN OCEAN TRAGEDY

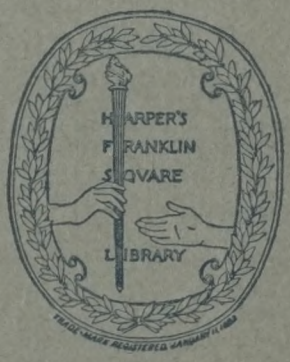
A Novel

By W. CLARK RUSSELL

AUTHOR OF

"A SAILOR'S SWEETHEART" "THE WRECK OF THE 'GROSVENOR'"

"THE FROZEN PIRATE" "MAROONED" ETC.



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December, 1889

Harper's Magazine for 1890.

WITH the December Number HARPER'S MAGAZINE enters upon its Eightieth Volume. Its record, from 1850 to 1890, is contemporaneous with the great Industrial Era of modern times, with the marvellous Western development of the United States, and with the most original and characteristic period of American literature. While promptly and faithfully reflecting the progress made in these fields, furnishing a cyclopædia of American development, it has been no less valuable for its thorough exposition of contemporary European life and institutions, for its graphic African and Oriental sketches, and for its large treatment of Historical, Scientific, Literary, and Artistic Subjects. During the last decade its progress in these directions has, through the co-operation of the best writers and artists in America and Europe, been such as to give it the largest importance as a great international magazine.

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AN OCEAN TRAGEDY.

CHAPTER I.

MY COUSIN.

"Sir Wilfrid Monson, sir," exclaimed my man.

It was half-past ten o'clock at night, and I was in my lodging in Bury Street, St. James's, slippers on feet, a pipe of tobacco in my hand, seltzer and brandy at my elbow, and on my knees the *Sun* newspaper, the chief evening sheet of the times.

"Sir Wilfrid Monson, sir."

My cousin! thought I, starting, and looking round at my man, with a fancy in me for a moment that he had got the wrong name. "Show him in."

Sir Wilfrid entered in a sort of swift, headlong way, full of nervousness and passion, as was to be seen easily enough; and then he came to a dead-stop, with a wild look round the room as if to make sure that I was alone, and a frowning stare at my servant, who was lingering a moment on the threshold, as though suddenly surprised out of his habits of prompt, sleek attendance by a fit of astonishment.

He stood about six feet high; he had a slight stoop, and was something awkward in arms and legs; yet you were sensible of the indefinable quality of breeding in him the moment your eye took in his form and face, uncommon as both were. He was forty-four years of age at this time, and looked fifty. His hair was long and plentiful, but of an iron-gray, streaked with soft white. He had a protruding underlip, and a nose which might have been broken for the irregularity of its outline, with unusually high-cut nostrils. His eyes were large, short-sighted, and gray, luminous and earnest, but with a tremulous lid that seemed to put a quivering into their expression that was a hint in its way of cunning and mental weakness. He had a broad, intellectual forehead, brilliantly white teeth, high cheek-bones, a large, heavy chin, rounding into a most delicately

moulded throat. He was a man, indeed, at whom, as a stranger, one might catch one's self staring as at something sufficiently puzzling to be well worth resolving. Ill-looking he was *not*, and yet one seemed to seek in vain for qualities of body or mind to neutralize to the sight what was assuredly a combination of much that was uncomely, and indeed, in one or two directions, absolutely grotesque. But then I had the secret.

The long and short of it was, my cousin, Sir Wilfrid Monson, was not entirely straight-headed. Everything was made clear to the mind, after a glance at his strange, weak, yet striking profile, with the hint that there had been madness in his mother's family. He was the eighth baronet, and on his father's side (and that was my side, I am thankful to say) all had been sound as a bell; but my uncle had fallen in love with the daughter of a Scotch peer, whose family were tainted with insanity; no matter her real name; the Lady Elizabeth will suffice. He was frankly warned by the old earl, who was not too mad to be candid, but the lovesick creature grinned in his lordship's face with a wild shake of the head at the disclosure, as though he saw no more in it than a disposition to end the engagement. Then the honest old madman carried him to a great window that overlooked a spacious sweep of lawn, and pointed with a bitter smile and a despairful heave of the shoulders to three women walking, two of whom were soberly clad in big bonnets and veils down their back, while the third, who was between them, and whose arms were locked in the others', glided forward as though her feet travelled on clock-work rollers, while she kept her head fixedly bent, her chin upon her breast, and her gaze rooted upon the ground; and as the amorous baronet watched—the earl meanwhile preserving his miserable smile as he held his gouty forefinger levelled—he saw the down-looking woman make an effort to break away from her companions, but without ever lifting her head.

"That's Lady Alice," said the earl—"speechless and brainless! Guid preserve us! And the Lady Elizabeth is her seester."

"Ay, that may be," answers the other; "but take two roses growing side by side; because some venomous worm is eating into the heart of one and withering up its beauty, is the other that is radiant and flawless to be left uncherished?"

"Guid forbid!" answered the earl, and then turned away with a weak *hech! hech!* that should have proved more terrifying to one's matrimonial yearnings than even the desolate picture of the three figures stalking the emerald-green sward.

These were dim memories, yet they flashed into my head with the swiftness of thought, along with the workings of the eager conjecture and lively wonder raised in me by Wilfrid's visit, and by his peculiar aspect, too, during the few moments' interval of pause that followed his entrance. My servant shut the door; Wilfrid looked to see that it was closed, then approached me with a sort of lifting of his face as of a man half choked with a hurry and passion of sentences which he wants to be quit of all at once in a breath, staggering as he moved, his right arm out-stretched with a rapid vibration of the hand at the wrist; and, without delivering himself of a syllable, he fell into a chair near the table, dashing his hat to the floor, buried his face in his arms, and so lay sobbing in respirations of hysteric fierceness.

This extraordinary behavior amazed and terrified me. I will not deny that I at first suspected the madness that lurked as a poison in his blood had suddenly obtained a strong hold, and that he had come to see me while seized with a heavy fit. I put down my pipe, and adopted a steadier posture, so to speak, in my chair, secretly hoping that the surprise his manner or appearance had excited in my valet would render the fellow curious enough to hang about outside to listen to what might pass at the start. I kept my eyes fixed upon my cousin, but without offering to speak, for whatever might be the cause of the agitation that was convulsing his powerful form with deep sobbing breathings, the emotion was too overwhelming to be broken in upon by speech. Presently he looked up, his eyes were tearless, but his face was both dusky and haggard with the anguish that worked in him.

"In the name of Heaven, Wilfrid!" I cried, witnessing intelligence enough in his gaze to instantly relieve me from the dread that had possessed me, "what is wrong with you? What has happened?"

He drew a long, tremulous breath, and essayed to speak, but it was unintelligible in the broken syllable or two he managed to utter. I poured what sailors term a "two-finger nip" of brandy into a tumbler, and added a little seltzer-water to the dram. He seized the glass with a hand that shook like a drunkard's and emptied it. But the draught steadied him, and a moment after he said, in a low voice, while he clasped his hands upon the table with such a grip of each other that the veins stood out like whip-cord, "My wife has left me!"

I stared at him stupidly. The disclosure was so unexpected, so

wildly remote from any conclusion my fears had arrived at, that I could only look at him like a fool.

"Left you!" I faltered; "what d'ye mean, Wilfrid? Refused to live with you?"

"No!" he exclaimed, with a face darkening yet to the effort it cost him to subdue his voice. "She has eloped—left me—left her baby for—for—" He stopped, bringing his fist to the table with a crash that was like to have demolished everything upon it.

"It is an abominable business," said I, soothingly; "but it is not to be bettered by letting feeling overmaster you. Come, take your time; give yourself a chance. You are here, of course, to tell me the story; let me have it quietly. It is but to let yourself be torn to pieces to suffer your passion to jockey your reason."

"She has left me!" he shrieked, rising bolt-upright from his chair, and lifting his arms, with his hands clinched, to the ceiling. "Devil and beast! faithless mother! faithless wife! May God—"

I raised my hand, looking him full in the face. "Pray, sit, Wilfrid. Lady Monson has left you, you say. With or for whom?"

"Hope-Kennedy," he answered, "Colonel Hope-Kennedy," bringing out the words as though they were rooted in his throat. "My good friend Hope-Kennedy, Charles; the man I have entertained, have hunted with, assisted at a time when help was precious to him. Ay, Colonel Hope-Kennedy. That is the man she has left me for—the fellow that she has abandoned her baby for. It is a dream—it is a dream! I loved her so! I could have kissed her breast, where her heart lay, as a Bible, for truth, sincerity, and all beautiful thought."

He passed his hand over his forehead and seated himself again, or rather dropped into his chair, resting his chin upon the palm of his hand, with the nails of his fingers at his teeth, while he watched me with a gaze that was rendered indescribably pathetic by the soft, near-sighted look of his gray eyes under the shadow of his forehead, that had a wrinkled, twisted, even distorted aspect with the pain his soul was in. There was but one way of giving him relief, and that was by plying him with questions to enable him to let loose his thoughts. He extended his hand for the brandy, and mixed himself a bumper. There was little in spirits to hurt him at such a time as this. Indeed, I believe he could have carried a whole bottle in his head without exhibiting himself as in the least degree oversparred. This second dose distinctly rallied him, and now he lay back in his chair, with his arms folded upon his breast.

"When did your wife leave you, Wilfrid?"

"A week to-day."

"You know, without doubt, that Hope-Kennedy is the man she has gone off with?"

He nodded savagely, with a smile like a scowl passing over his face.

"But how do you know for certain?" I cried, determined to make him talk.

He pulled a number of letters from his side-pocket, overhauled them, found one, glanced at it, and handed it to me with a posture of the arm that might have made one think it was some venomous snake he held.

"This was found in my wife's bedroom," said he; "read it to yourself. Every line of it seems to be written in fire here." He struck his breast with his fist.

What I am telling happened a long time ago, as you will notice presently. The letter my cousin handed to me I read once and never saw again, and so, as you may suppose, I am unable to give it as it was written; but the substance of it was this: it was addressed to Lady Monson. The writer called her, I recollect, my darling, my adorable Henrietta. It was all about the proposed elopement, a complete sketch of the plan of it, and the one document Sir Wilfrid could have prayed to get hold of, had he any desire to know what had become of his wife, and on what kind of rambles she and her paramour had started. The letter was signed, boldly enough, "Frank Hope-Kennedy," and was filled with careful instructions to her how and when to leave her house. Railroads were few and far between in those days. Sir Wilfrid Monson's estate was in Cumberland, and it was a long journey by coach and chaise to the town that was connected with the metropolis by steam. But the colonel had made every arrangement for her ladyship, and it was apparent from his instructions that she had managed her flight first by driving to an adjacent village, where she dismissed the carriage, with orders for it to return for her at such and such an hour; then, when her coachman was out of sight, she entered a post-chaise that was in readiness, and galloped along to a town through which the stage-coach passed. By this coach she would travel some twenty or thirty miles, then post it to the terminus of the line that conveyed her to London. But all this, though it ran into a tedious bit of description, was but a part of the gallant colonel's programme. Her ladyship would arrive in London at such and such an hour, and the colonel would be

waiting at the station to receive her. They would then drive to a hotel out of Bond Street, and next morning proceed to Southampton, where the *Shark* lay ready for them. It was manifest that Colonel Hope-Kennedy intended to sail away with Lady Monson in a vessel named the *Shark*. He devoted a page of small writing to a description of this craft, which, I might take it—though not much in that way was to be gathered from a landsman's statement—was a large schooner-yacht owned by Lord Winterton, from whom the colonel had apparently hired it for an indefinite period. He assured his adorable Henrietta that he had spared neither money nor pains to render the vessel as luxurious in *cuisine*, cabin fittings, and the like as was practicable in a sea-going fabric in those days. He added that what his darling required for the voyage must be hastily purchased at Southampton. She must be satisfied with a very slender wardrobe; time was pressing; the madman to whom the clergyman who married them had shackled her would be off in wild pursuit, helter-skelter, flying moonward, mayhap, in his delirium on the instant of discovering that she was gone. Time, therefore, pressed, and when once the anchor of the *Shark* was lifted off the ground, he had no intention of letting it fall again until they had measured six thousand miles of salt-water.

I delivered a prolonged whistle on reading this. Six thousand miles of ocean, methought, sounded intolerably real as a condition of an elopement. My cousin never removed his eyes from my face while I read. I gave him the letter, which he folded and returned to his pocket. He was now looking somewhat collected, though the surging of the passion and grief in him would show in a momentary sparkle of the eye, in a spasmodic grin and twist of the lips, in a quick clinching of his hands as though he would drive his finger-nails into his palms. I hardly knew what to say, for the letter was as full a revelation of the vile story as he could have given me in an hour's delivery, and the injury and misery of the thing were too recent to admit of soothing words; yet I guessed that it would do him good to talk.

"Have they sailed yet?" I inquired.

"Yes," he answered, letting out his breath in a sigh, as though some thought in him had arrested his respiration for a bit.

"How do you know?"

"I arrived an hour ago from Southampton," he replied, "and have got all the information I require."

"There cannot be much to add to what the letter contains," said

I; "it is the completest imaginable story of the devilish business."

He looked at me oddly, and then said, "Ay, it tells what has happened, but that did not satisfy me; I have gone beyond that, and know the place they are making for."

"It will be six thousand miles distant, anyhow," said I.

"Quite. The villain reasoned with a pair of compasses in his hand. It is Cape Town—the other side of the world. When 'tis ice and northern blasts with us, it is the fragrance of the moon-lily and a warm heaven of quiet stars with them."

He struck the table, smothering some wild curse or other behind his set teeth, next leaped from his chair, and fell to pacing the room, now and again muttering to himself, with an occasional flourish of his arm. I watched him in silence. Presently he returned to the table and mixed another glass of liquor. He sat lost in thought for a little; then, with a slow lifting of his eyes, till his gaze lay steadfast on me, he said, "Charley, I am going to follow them to Cape Town."

"In some South African trader?"

"In my yacht. You know her?"

"I have never seen her, but I have heard of her as a very fine vessel."

"She sails two feet to the *Shark's* one," he exclaimed, with a queer gleam of satisfaction glistening in the earnest stare he kept fastened on me. "I gave her square yards last year; you will know what a great hoist of top-sail, and a big square-sail under it, and a large top-gallant sail should do for such a model as the *Bride.* The *Shark* is fore and aft only." He fetched his leg a smack that sounded like the report of a pistol. "We'll have 'em!" he exclaimed, and his face turned pale as he spoke the words.

"Let me understand," said I; "you propose to sail in pursuit of the colonel and your wife?"

He nodded, while he clasped his hands upon the table and leaned forward.

"What proof have you that they have started for Cape Town?"

He instantly answered: "The captain of the *Shark* is a man named Fidler; my captain's name is Finn. His wife and Mrs. Fidler are neighbors at Southampton, and good friends. Mrs. Fidler told my captain's wife that her husband was superintending the equipment of Lord Winterton's yacht for a voyage round the world, and that the first port of call would be Table Bay. She knew that

the *Shark* had been let by Winterton to a gentleman, but at the time of her speaking to Mrs. Finn she did not know his name."

"You said just now," I exclaimed, "that you had assisted this fellow Hope-Kennedy when help was precious to him. I suppose you mean that you lent him money? How can he support the expense of a yacht, for, if I remember rightly, the *Shark's* burden is over two hundred tons?"

"I lent him money before I was married; within the last three years he has come into a fortune of between eighty and a hundred thousand pounds."

I paused a moment, and then said, "Have you thoroughly considered this project of chasing the fugitives?"

His eyes brightened to a sudden rage, but he checked the utterance of what rose to his lips, and said, with a violent effort to subdue himself, "I start the day after to-morrow."

"Alone?"

"No, my sister-in-law will accompany me;" then, after a breath or two, "*and you.*"

"I?"

"Oh," he cried, "it would be ridiculous in me to expect you to say at once that you will come, but before I leave this room I shall have your promise." And as he said this he stretched his arms across the table and took my hand in both his and fondled it, meanwhile eying me in the most passionate, wistful manner that can be imagined.

"Wilfrid," said I, softly, touched by his air and a sort of beauty, as I seemed to think, that came into his strange face with the pleading of it, "whatever I can do that may be serviceable to you in this time of bitter trial, I *will* do. But let me reason with you a little."

"Ay, reason," he responded, relinquishing my hand and folding his arms and leaning back in his chair.

"I have been a sailor in my time, as you know," said I, "and have some acquaintance with the sea, even though my experience goes no further than a brief spell of East African and West Indian stations, and therefore forgive me for inquiring your expectations. What do you suppose? The *Shark* will have had three days' start of you."

"Five days!" he interrupted.

"Five days, then. Do you expect to overhaul her at sea, or is it your intention to crowd on to the Cape, await her arrival there; or,

if you find she has already sailed, to follow her to the next port, providing you can learn it?"

"You have named the programme," he answered; "I shall chase her. If I miss her, I shall wait for her at Table Bay."

"She may get there before you," I said, "and be under way for another destination while you are still miles to the nor'ard."

"No," he cried, hotly; "we shall be there first. But we shall not need to go so far. Her course must be our course, and we shall overhaul her; don't doubt that."

"But put it," said I, "first of all, that you *don't* overhaul her. You may pass her close on a dark night with never a guess at her presence. She may be within twenty miles of you on a clear, bright day, and not a creature on board suspect that a shift of helm, by so much as half a point, would bring what all hands are dying to overhaul within eyeshot in half an hour."

He listened with a face clouded and frowning with impatience; but I was resolved to weaken, if I could, what seemed an insane resolution.

"Count upon missing her at sea, for I tell you the chances of your picking her up are all against you. Well, now, you arrive at Table Bay, and find that the *Shark* sailed a day or two before for some port of which nobody knows anything. What will you do then? How will you steer your *Bride?* For all you can tell, this man Hope-Kennedy may make for the Pacific Islands, by way of Cape Horn, or he may head north-east for the Mozambique and the Indian waters, or south-east for the Australias. It is but to let fly an arrow in the dark to embark on such a quest."

He lay back, looking at me a little without speaking, and then said, in a more collected manner than his face might promise: "I *may* miss this man upon the high-seas; I *may* find his yacht has arrived and gone again when I reach Table Bay; and I *may not* know, as you say, in what direction to seek her, if there be no one in Cape Town able to tell me what port she has started for; but"—he drew a deep breath—"the pursuit gives me a chance. You will admit that?"

"Yes, a chance, as you say."

"A chance," he continued, "that need not keep me waiting long for it to happen. D'ye think I could rest with the knowledge that that scoundrel and the woman he has rendered faithless to me are close yonder?" he exclaimed, pointing, as though there had come a vision of the Atlantic before his mind's eye and he saw the yacht

afloat upon it. "Who's to tell me that before the month is out our friend the colonel will not be drifting fathoms deep, with a shot through his heart?"

"If you catch him you will shoot him?"

"Oh yes."

"And Lady Monson?"

He looked down without answering.

"I am a single man," said I, "and am, therefore, no doubt disqualified from passing an opinion, but I vow to Heaven, Wilfrid, if my wife chose to leave me for another man, I would not lift a finger either to regain her or to avenge myself. A divorce would fully appease me. Who would not feel gay to be rid of a woman whose every heart-throb is a dishonor? What more unendurable than an association rendered an incomparable insult, and the basest lie under heaven, by one's wife's secret abhorrence, and her desire for another?"

On a sudden he sprang to his feet, as though stabbed. "Cease, for Christ's sake!" he shouted. "The more truthful your words are, the more they madden me. If I could tear her from me," clutching at his breast in a wild, tragical way; "if I could cleanse my heart of her, as you would purify a vessel of what has lain foul and poisonous in it; if disgust would but fall cool on my resentment and leave me loathing her merely; if—if—if! But it is *if* that makes the difference between hell and heaven in this bad world of unexpected things." He sat afresh, passing the back of his hand over his brow, and sighing heavily. "There is no *if* for me," said he. "I love her passionately yet, and so hate her besides that—" He checked himself with a shake of the head. "No, no; perhaps not when it *came* to it," he muttered, as though thinking aloud. "We are wasting time," he cried, pulling out his watch. "Charley, you will accompany me?"

"But you start the day after to-morrow?"

"Yes."

"From Southampton?"

"Yes."

"And should you find the *Shark* gone when you arrive at the Cape—"

"Well?"

"Ay," said I, "that's just it. We should be like Adam and Eve, with all the world before us where to choose."

"Charley, will you come? I counted upon you from the mo-

ment of forming my resolution. You have been a sailor. You are the one man of them all that I should turn to in such a time as this. Say you will come. Laura Jennings, my wife's—my—my sister-in-law, I mean — will accompany us. Did I tell you this? Yes; I recollect. She is a stout-hearted little woman, as brave as she is beautiful, and so shocked, so shocked!" He clasped his hands upon his brow, lifting his eyes. "She would pass through a furnace to rescue her sister from this infamy. Come!"

"You give me no time."

"Time! You have all to-morrow. You may easily be on board by four o'clock in the afternoon on the following day. Time! A sailor knows nothing of time. I must have you by my side, Charley. We shall meet them, and I shall need a friend. The support and help of your company, too—"

"Will your yacht be ready for sea by the day after to-morrow?"

"She is ready now."

"Your people have worked expeditiously," said I, fencing a little, for he was leaning towards me and devouring me with his eyes, and I found it impossible to say yes or no right off.

"Will you come?"

"How many form your party?"

"There is myself, there is Laura, then you, then a maid for my sister-in-law, and my man, and yours, if you choose to bring him."

"In short, there will be three of us," said I; "no doctor?"

"We cannot be too few. What would be the good of a doctor? Will you come?"

"Do you sleep in town to-night?"

"Yes," he replied, naming a hotel near Charing Cross.

"Well, then, Wilfrid," said I, "you must give me to-night to think the thing over. What are your plans for to-morrow?"

"I leave for Southampton at ten. Laura arrives there at six in the evening."

"Then," said I, "you shall have my answer by nine o'clock to-morrow. Will that do?"

"It must do, I suppose," said he, wearily, moving as if to rise, and casting a dull, absent sort of look at his watch.

A quarter of an hour later I was alone.

CHAPTER II.

THE "BRIDE."

TIME was when I had been much thrown with my cousin. I had served in the Royal Navy for a few years, as I have said, but abandoned it on my inheriting a very comfortable little fortune from my father, who survived my mother a few months only. I say I quitted the sea then, partly because I was now become an independent man, partly because I was comparatively without influence, and so found the vocation unpromising, and partly because my frizzling equatorial spells of service had fairly sickened me of the life.

It was then that Wilfrid, who was a bachelor, and my senior by some ten years or thereabouts, invited me down to Cumberland, where I hunted and shot with him and passed some merry weeks. He took a great liking to me, and I was often with him, and we were much together in London. There came a time, however, when he took it into his head to travel. He thought he would go abroad and see the world; not Paris, Brussels, and Rome, but America and the Indies and Australia—a considerable undertaking in those ambling days of the tea-wagon and the cotton kettle-bottom, when the passage from the Thames to Bombay occupied four months, and when a man who had made a voyage around the world believed he had a right to give himself airs.

Well, my cousin sailed; I went down to Gravesend with him and bade him good-bye there. His first start was for New York, and then he talked of proceeding to the West Indies and afterwards to the Cape, thence to India or Australia, and so on. He was away so long that the very memory of him grew dim in me, till one day I heard some men in a club that I belonged to speaking about the beautiful Lady Monson. I pricked up my ears at this, for Monson is my name, and the word caught me instantly, and, gathering that one of the group, a young baronet with whom I was well acquainted, could satisfy my curiosity about the lady, I waited till he was alone and then questioned him.

He said that Lady Monson was my cousin's wife; Sir Wilfrid had met her at Melbourne, and married her there. She was the

daughter of a squatter, a man of small beginnings, who had done amazingly well. She was exceedingly beautiful, my young friend assured me. He had met her twice at county balls, and had never seen her like for dignity, grace, and loveliness of form and face. He told me that she was very fond of the sea, so some friends or acquaintances of hers had informed him, and that to gratify her taste in this way Sir Wilfrid sold his cutter—a vessel of twenty tons, aboard which I had made one or two excursions with him—and replaced her by a handsome schooner which he had rechristened the *Bride*. I understood from the young baronet that my cousin and his wife were then away cruising in the Mediterranean.

I had not before heard of Wilfrid's marriage, and, though for the moment I was a little surprised and perhaps vexed that he had never communicated so interesting a piece of news as this to me, who, as a blood relation and an intimate friend, had a claim upon his candor and kindness, yet on reflection I judged that his memory had been weakened by separation as mine had; and then I considered that he was so much engrossed by his wife as to be able to think of little besides, while, though he had then been married many months, he had apparently spent with Lady Monson a good deal of his time out of England.

About six weeks before the opening of this story I met him in Bond Street. I was passing him, for time and travel had wonderfully changed him, and in his long hair and smooth face I must certainly have failed, in the hurry of the pavement, to have recognized the cropped and bewhiskered young fellow whom I had taken leave of at Gravesend, but for his starting, and his peculiar way of peering at me. My rooms were conveniently near. I carried him to them, and a couple of hours passed while he told me of his adventures. I noticed that he said much less about his wife than I should have expected to hear from him. He referred to her, indeed; praised her beauty, her accomplishments, with an almost passionate admiration in his way of speaking, yet I remarked a sort of uneasiness in his face, too, a kind of shadowing, as though the having to speak of his wife raised thoughts which eclipsed or dimmed the brightness of the holiday memories he was full of. Still I was so little sure that when I came to think it over I was convinced it was mere fancy on my part, or at the worst I took it that, though he was worth ten thousand a year, she might be making him uneasy by extravagance, or there might have been a tiff between them before leaving his home to come to London, the memory of which

would worry a man of his temperament—a creature of nerves, and tainted besides, as you know. He told me he was in London for a couple of days on a matter of business, and that he had asked Lady Monson to accompany him; but she had said it vexed her to leave her baby for even a day, and that it was out of the question to subject the bairn to the jolting, risks, and fatigue of a long journey. He looked curiously as he said this, but the expression fled too nimbly from his face to be determinable.

What was I doing? When would it suit me to visit him? If I had no better engagement, would I return with him? But, though I had missed nothing of the old cordiality in his greeting, and in his conversation, that had reference to our by-gone jinks and to his travels, his invitation—if invitation it could be called—was lifeless. So much so, indeed, that it was as good or bad as his telling me he did not want me *then*, however welcome I might be by-and-by. We parted, and I did not see or hear of him again until he came, as I have related, to tell me that his wife had eloped with Colonel Hope-Kennedy.

I had now to decide how to act, and I was never more puzzled or irresolute in the whole course of my life. Had he proposed an ocean cruise as a mere yachting trip, I should have accepted the offer right out of hand.

The sea, as a vocation, I did not love; but very different from the discipline of a man-of-war's quarter-deck, and the fever-breeding tedium of stagnant and broiling stations, was the business of navigating the blue brine in a large, richly equipped yacht, of chasing the sun as one chose, of storing one's mind with memories of the glittering pageantry of noble and shining rivers, and green and sparkling scenes of country radiant and aromatic with the vegetation of tropic heights, and distant seaboard cities passed, the gleam of the coral strand with a scent of sandal-wood in the off-shore breeze, and boats of strange form and rig, gay as aquatic parrots, sliding along the turquoise surface to the strains of a chant as Asiatic as the smell of the hubble-bubble. No man ever loved travel more than I; only, unfortunately, in my time, when I had the right sort of health and spirit for adventure, journeys by land and by sea were tedious and fatiguing. Very few steamers were afloat; one might have sought in vain for a propeller to thrash one to the world's end with the velocity of a gale of wind. I had often a mind, after Wilfrid had started on his voyage to various parts of the world, to follow his example; but I would shake my head when I came to think of the

passenger ship, the chance of being locked up for months with a score or two of people, half of whom might prove disagreeable, not to mention indifferent food and a vile ship's cook, with weeks of equatorial deadness, and everything to be gone through again as one went from place to place by sea, and myself companionless the while.

But a yachting cruise was another matter, and I say I should have accepted Wilfrid's proposal without an instant's reflection, even if I had had to be on board by noon next day, but for the extraordinary *motive* of the trip. It was very plain that he had no clear perception of his own programme. He talked as though everything that happened would correspond with his anticipations. He seemed cocksure, for instance, of overhauling the *Shark* in mid-ocean, when in reality the possibility of such an encounter was so infinitesimally small that no man in his senses would dream of seriously entering it as an item in his catalogue of chances. Then, supposing him to miss the *Shark*, he was equally cocksure of arriving at Table Bay before her. The *Bride* might be the swifter vessel, but the course was six thousand miles and more; the run might occupy two, and perhaps three, ay, and even four months; and, though I did not make much of the *Shark's* five days' start, yet, even if the *Bride* out-sailed her by four feet to one, so much of the unexpected must enter as conditions of so long a run and so great a period of time—calms, head-winds, disaster, strong, favorable breezes for the chased, sneaking and baffling draughts of air for the pursuer—that it was mere madness to reckon with confidence upon the *Bride's* arrival at Cape Town before the *Shark*. So that, as there was no certainty at all about it, what was to follow if my cousin found that the runaways had sailed from Cape Town without leaving the faintest hint behind them as to their destination?

Moreover, how could one be sure that the colonel and Lady Monson would not change their minds, and make for American or Mediterranean ports? Their determination to put the whole world between them and England was not very intelligible, seeing that our globe is a big one, and that scoundrels need not travel far to be lost to the eye. If Lady Monson discovered that she had left behind her the remarkable letter which Wilfrid had given to me to read, then it would be strange if she and the colonel did not change their programme, unless, indeed, they supposed that Wilfrid would never dream of following them upon the high-seas.

But these were idle speculations; they made no part of my busi-

ness. Should I accompany my cousin on as mad an undertaking as ever passion and distraction could hurry him into? I was heartily grieved for the poor fellow, and I sincerely desired to be of use to him. It might be that after we had been chasing for a few weeks his heart would sicken to the sight hour after hour of the bare sea-line, and then, perhaps, if I were with him, I might come to have influence enough over his moods to divert him from his resolution, and so steer us home again; for I would think to myself, grant that we fall in with the *Shark*, what can Wilfrid do? Would he arm his men and board her? Yachtsmen are a peaceful body of sea-farers, and before it could come to a boarding match and a hand-to-hand fight, he would have to satisfy his crew that they had signed articles to sell their lives as well as work his ship. To be sure, if the yachts fell within hail, and Sir Wilfrid challenged the colonel, the latter would not, it may be supposed, decline the duel.

But, view the proposal as I might, I could see nothing but a mad scheme in it; and I think it must have been two o'clock in the morning before I had made up my mind, so heartily did I bother myself with considerations; and then, after reflecting that there was nothing to keep me in England, that my cousin had come to me as a brother, and asked me in a sense to stand by him as a brother; that the state of his mind imposed it almost as a pious obligation upon me to be by his side in this time of extremity and bitter anguish; that the quest was practically so aimless — the excursion was almost certain to end on this side the Cape, or, to put it at the worst, to end at Table Bay, which, after all, would prove no formidable cruise, but, on the contrary, a trip that must do me good, and kill the autumn months very pleasantly—I say that, after lengthily reflecting on these and many other points and possibilities of the project, I made up my mind that I would sail with him.

Next morning I despatched my man with a note—a brief sentence: "*I will be on board to-morrow by four*," and received Wilfrid's reply, written in an agitated, sprawling hand: "*God bless you! Your decision makes a double-barrelled weapon of my purpose. I have not slept a wink all night—my fifth night of sleeplessness; but I shall feel easier when the clipper keel of the* Bride *is shearing through it in hot and sure pursuit. I start in a quarter of an hour for Southampton. Laura will be overjoyed to hear that you are to be one of us; from the moment of my determining to follow that hell-born rascal she has been exhorting me to choose a companion—of my own sex, I mean, but it would have to be you or* nix. *My good*

angel be praised, 'tis all right now! We'll have 'em, we'll have 'em! Mark me! Would to Heaven the pistol-ball had the power to cause in the heart of a seducer the intolerable mental torments he works for another ere it fulfilled its mission by killing him!" He signed himself, "*Yours ever affectionately.*"

Wild as the tone of this note was, it was less suggestive of excitement and passion and restlessness than the writing. I locked it away and possess it still, and no memorial that I can put my hand on has its power of lighting up the past. I never look at it without living again in the veritable atmosphere and color and emotions of the long-vanished days.

Being a bachelor, my few affairs which needed attention were speedily put in order. My requirements in regard to apparel for a voyage to the Cape I exactly knew, and supplied them in three or four hours. The railroad to Southampton had been opened some months, so I should be spared a long and tiresome journey by coach. By ten o'clock that night I was ready, bag and baggage—a creditable performance in a man who for some years had been used to a lounging, inactive life. I offered to take my servant, but he told me he was a bad sailor, and afraid of the water, and was without curiosity to view foreign parts; so I paid and discharged him, not doubting that I should be able to manage very well without a man; and leaving what property I could not carry with me in charge of my landlord, I next morning took my departure for Southampton.

I believe I did not in the least degree realize the nature of the queer adventure I had consented to embark on until I found myself in a wherry heading in the direction of a large schooner-yacht that lay a mile away out upon Southampton water. She was the *Bride*, the boatman told me, and the handsomest vessel of her kind that he knew.

"A finer craft than the *Shark?*" said I.

"Whoy, yes," he answered; "bigger by fourteen or fifteen ton, but Oi dunno about *foiner.* The *Shark* has the sweeter lines, Oi allow; but that there *Bride,*" said he, with a toss of his head in the direction of the yacht, sitting with his back upon her as he was, "has got the ocean-going qualities of a line-of-battle ship."

"Take a race between them," said I, "which would prove the better ship?"

"Whoy, in loight airs the *Shark*, Oi dare say, 'ud creep ahead. In ratching, too, in small winds she'd go to wind'ard of t'other as though she was warping that way. But in anything loike a stiff

breeze yonder *Bride* 'ud fore-reach upon and weather the *Shark* as easy as swallowing a pint o' yale, or my name's Noah, which it ain't."

"The *Shark* has sailed?"

"Oy, last week."

"Where bound to, d'ye know?"

"Can't say, Oi'm sure. Oi've heerd she was hired by an army gent, and that, wherever his cruise may carry him to, he ain't going to be in a hurry to finish it."

"Does he sail alone? Or perhaps he takes his wife or children with him?"

"Well," said the waterman, pausing on his oars a minute or so with a grin, while his damp, oyster-like eyes met in a kind of squint on my face, "the night afore the *Shark* sailed Oi fell in with one of her crew, a chap named Bobby Watt; and on my asking him if this here military gent was a-going to make the voyage alone, he shuts one eye, and says: 'Jim,' he says—Jim being one of my names, not Noah—'Jim,' says he, 'when soldiers go to sea,' says he, 'do they take pairosols with 'em? and are bonnet-boxes to be found 'mongst their luggage? Tell ye what it is, Jim,' he says, 'they may call yachting an innocent divarsion, but bet your life, Jim,' says he, 'tain't all as moral as it looks;' by which Oi understood," said the waterman, falling to his oars again, "that the military gent hain't sailed alone in the *Shark*, nor took his wife with him neither, if so be he's a wedded man."

We were now rapidly approaching the *Bride*, and as there was little to be learned from the waterman I ceased to question him, while I inspected the yacht as a fabric that was to make me a home for I knew not how long. Then it was, perhaps, that the full perception of my undertaking, and of my cousin's undertaking, too, for the matter of that, broke in upon me with the picture of the fine vessel straining lightly at her cable, while past her ran the liquid slope into airy distance, where, in the delicate blue blending of azure radiance floating down and mingling with the dim cerulean light lifting off the face of the quiet waters, you witnessed a faint vision of dashes of pale green and gleaming foreshore, with blobs and films of land beyond, swimming, as it seemed, in the autumn haze and distorted by refraction. It was the Isle of Wight, and the shore on either hand went yawning to it till it looked a day's sail away; and I suppose it was the sense of distance that came to me with the scene of the horizon past the yacht, touched with hues illusive

enough to look remote, that rendered realization of Wilfrid's wild programme sharp in me as I directed a critical gaze at the beautiful fabric we were nearing.

And beautiful she was—such a gallant toy as an impassioned sweetheart would love to present to the woman he adored. In those days the memory of the superb Baltimore clippers, and of the moulded perfections of the schooners which traded to the Western Islands and to the Mediterranean for the season's fruits, was still a vital inspiration among the shipwrights and yacht-builders of the country. I had never before seen the *Bride*, but I had no sooner obtained a fair view of her, first broadside on, then sternwise, as my boatman made for the starboard gangway, than I fell in love with her. She had the beam and scantling of a revenue-cutter, with high bulwarks and an elliptical stern, and a bow with the sheer of a smack, but elegant beyond expression with its dominating flare at the catheads, where it fell sharpening to a knife-like cut-water, thence rounding amidships with just enough swell of the sides to delight a sailor's eye.

The merest landsman must instantly have recognized in her the fabric and body of a sea-going craft of the true pattern. This was delightful to observe. The voyage might prove a long one, with many passages of storm in it, and the prospect of traversing the great oceans of the world; and one would naturally want to make sure in one's floating home of every quality of stanchness and stability. A vessel, however, of over two hundred tons burden in those times was no mean ship. Crafts of the *Bride's* dimensions were regularly trading as cargo and passenger boats to foreign parts, so that little in my day would have been made of any number of voyages round the world in such a structure as Sir Wilfrid's yacht. It is different now. Our ideas have enlarged with the growth of the huge mail-boat, and a voyage in a yacht driven by steam, and of a burden considerably in excess of many West Indiamen which half a century ago were regarded as fine large ships, is considered a performance remarkable enough to justify the publication of a book about it, no matter how destitute of interest and incident the trip may have proved. The fashion of the age favored gilt, and forward and about her quarters and stern the *Bride* floated upon the smooth waters all ablaze with the glory of the westering sun striking upon the embellishments of golden devices writhing to the shining form of the semi-nude beauty that, with arms clasped Madonna-wise, sought with an incomparable air of coyness to conceal the graces of

her form under the powerful projecting spar of the bowsprit; while aft, the gilt-work, in scrolls, flowers, and the like, with a central wreath as a frame for the virgin-white letters of the yacht's name, smote the satin surface under the counter with the sheen of a sunbeam. All this brightness and richness was increased by her sheathing of new copper, that rose high upon the glossy bends, and sank with ruddy clearness under the water, where it flickered like a light there, preserving yet, even in its tremulous waning, something of the fair proportions of the submerged parts.

The bulwarks were so tall that it was not until I was close aboard I could distinguish signs of life on the yacht. I then spied a head over the rail aft watching me, and on a sudden there sprang up alongside of it a white parasol edged with black, and the gleam, as it looked, of a fair girlish face in the pearly twilight of the white shelter. Then, as I drew close, the man's head uprose, and I distinguished the odd physiognomy of my cousin under a large straw hat. He saluted me with a gloomy gesture of the hand, with something, moreover, in his posture to suggest that he was apprehensive of being observed by people aboard adjacent vessels, though I would not swear at this distance of time that there was anything lying nearer to us than half a mile. You would have thought some one of consequence had died on board, all was so quiet. I lifted my hat solemnly in response to Wilfrid's melancholy flourish, as though I was visiting the craft to attend a funeral. The boat then sheered alongside, and paying the waterman his charges, I stepped up the short ladder and jumped on deck.

CHAPTER III.

LAURA JENNINGS.

Sir Wilfrid was coming to the gangway as I entered, leaving his companion, whom I at once understood to be Miss Laura Jennings, standing near the wheel. He grasped my hand, gazing at me earnestly a moment or two without speaking, and then exclaimed, in a low, faltering voice, "You are the dearest fellow to come! Indeed, it is good, true, and noble of you."

He then turned to a man dressed in a suit of pilot-cloth, with brass buttons on his waistcoat, and a round hat of old sailor fashion on his head, who stood at a respectful distance looking on, and motioned to him. He approached.

"Charles, this is Captain Finn, the master of the yacht. My cousin, Mr. Monson."

Finn lifted his hat, with a short scrape of his right leg abaft.

"Glad to see you aboard, sir; glad to see you aboard," said he, in a leather-lunged note that one felt he had difficulty in subduing. "A melancholy errand, Mr. Monson, sir; God deliver us! But we're jockeying a real sweetheart, your honor, and if we ain't soon sticking tight to Captain Fidler's skirts I don't think it'll be for not being able to guess his course."

He shook his head and sighed. But there lay a jolly expression in his large, protruding, lobster-like eye, that twinkled there like the flame of a taper—enough of it to make me suspect that his mute-like air and Ember-week tone of voice was a mere piece of sympathetic acting, and that he was a merry dog enough when Wilfrid was out of sight.

"See Mr. Monson's luggage aboard, captain," said my cousin, "and stowed in his cabin, and then get your anchor. There's nothing to keep us now."

"Ay, ay, sir!"

"Step this way, Charley, that I may introduce you to my sister-in-law."

He passed his arm through mine, and we walked aft, but I noticed

in him a certain manner of cowering, so to speak, as of one who fears that he is being watched and talked about; an involuntary illustration of profound sensitiveness, no doubt, for, as I have said, the yacht lay lonely, and he was hardly likely to dread the scrutiny of his own men.

The girl he introduced me to seemed about nineteen or twenty years old. Lady Monson had been described to me as tall, stately, slow in movement, and of a reposeful expression of face that would have been deemed spiritless in a person wanting the eloquence of her rich and tropic charms; so, at least, my club friend, the young baronet, had as good as told me, and it was natural, perhaps, that I should expect to find her sister something after her style in height and form, if not in color.

Instead, she was a woman rather under than above the average stature, fair in a sort of golden way, by which I wish to convey a complexion of exquisite softness and purity, very faintly freckled, as though a little gold-dust had been artfully shaken over it; a hue of countenance, so to speak, that blended most admirably with a great quantity of hair of a dark gold, whereof there lay upon her brow many little natural curls and short tresses, which her white forehead, shining through them, refined into a kind of amber color. Her eyes were of violet, with a merry spirit in them, which defied the neutralizing influence of the sorrowful expression of her mouth. By some she might have been held a thought too stout, but for my part I could see nothing that was not perfectly graceful in the curves and lines of her figure. I will not pretend to describe how she was dressed. In mourning I thought she was at first when she stood at a distance. She was sombrely clad, to keep Wilfrid's melancholy in countenance, perhaps, and I dare say she looked the sweeter and fairer for being thus apparelled, since there is no wear fitter than dark clothes for setting off such skin and hair as hers. Indeed, her style of dress and the fashion of her coiffure were the anticipation of a taste of a much later date. In those days women brushed their hair into a plaster-like smoothness down the cheeks, then coiled it behind the ear, and stowed what remained in an ungainly lump at the back of the head, into which was stuck a big comb. The dress, again, was loose about the body, as though the least revelation of the figure were an act of immodesty, and the sleeves were what they called *gigots;* all details, in short, combining to so ugly a result as to set me wondering *now* sometimes that love-making did not come to a dead-stand. Miss Laura Jennings's dress was cut to show her

figure. The sleeves were tight, and I recollect that she wore gauntlet-shaped gloves that clothed her arm midway to the elbow.

This which I am writing was my impression, at the instant, of the girl with whom I was to be associated for a long while upon the ocean, and with whom I was to share in one adventure at all events, which I do not doubt you will accept as among the most singular that ever befell a voyager. She courtesied with a pretty Old World grace to Wilfrid's introduction, sending at the same time a sparkling glance full of spirited criticism through the fringe of her lids, which drooped with a demureness that was almost coquettish, I thought. Then she brightened into a frank manner while she extended her hand.

"I am very pleased to meet you, Mr. Monson; glad indeed to feel sure now that you will be of our party. Sir Wilfrid has talked of you much of late. You have acted far more kindly than you can imagine in joining us."

"We have a fine vessel under us at all events, Miss Jennings," said I, with a look at the unsheltered decks, which stretched under the declining sun white as freshly peeled almonds. "She seems to have been born with the right kind of soul, Wilfrid; and I think that if your skipper will tell her quietly what is expected of her, she will fulfil your utmost expectations."

He forced a melancholy smile which swiftly faded, and then, with a start and a stare over the rail on either hand, he exclaimed: "It makes me uneasy to be on deck, d'ye know. I feel—though 'tis stupid enough—as if there were eyes *yonder* and *yonder* on the watch. This restlessness will pass when we get to sea. Let us go below; dinner will be ready by half-past five," pulling out his watch, "and it is now a little after four."

He took his sister-in-law's hand in a brotherly, boyish way, and the three of us descended.

The cabin was as shining and sumptuous an interior as ever I was in, or could imagine, indeed, of a yacht's internal accommodation. Mirrors, hand-painted bulkheads, combinations of gilt and cream, thick carpets, handsome lamps, silver swinging trays, and twenty more elegancies which I will not bore you with, made you feel, as you stood at the foot of the companion-steps, as though you had entered some delicious, sparkling, fragrant little drawing-room. The bedrooms were at each extremity. The berth allotted to me was a roomy, airy apartment forward, with a stout bulkhead at the end of the short passage that effectually closed this part of the craft from whatever might be amidships and beyond. There was a stand

of arms fixed here, and my thoughts instantly went to Colonel Hope-Kennedy and Lady Monson, and the crew of the *Shark*, as I counted twenty fowling-pieces, with long polished barrels and bright stocks, with hooks alongside from which hung a number of cutlasses and pistols of the sort you then found in the small-arms chests aboard men-of-war. The pattern of these weapons persuaded me that they had been collected in a hurry, purchased out of hand off some Southampton or Gosport dealer. They can signify but one sort of business, thought I; but bless my heart! does he *seriously* entertain notions of boarding if we fall in with the craft? And do his men suspect his intentions? And has he provided for all things by shipping a fighting crew?

I peered into my berth, saw that it would make me as comfortable a sea bedroom as it was possible to desire, and returned to the cabin, where Wilfrid and Miss Jennings were sitting, he at a small table right aft, sprawling upon it with his elbow, his chin in his hand, his face gloomy with melancholy and anger, and his eyes fixed upon a port-hole through which he might just get a glimpse of green shore, with a tremble of water, yellow under the western light, sweeping to it; she near him on a short sofa, with her back against the vessel's side, toying with her hat, which lay in her lap, so that I was now able to see that she was indeed a very sweet woman to the topmost curl of gold that gleamed upon her head. Indeed, you seemed to witness her charms as in a light of her own making. There was something positively phosphoric in the irradiation on her face and hair, as though in sober truth they were self-luminous. A couple of fellows were bringing my luggage down the hatch, but very quietly. I knew they were getting the anchor on deck by the dim *chink, chink* of the windlass pawls, but I could hear no other sounds, no singing out of orders, nothing save the pulsing of the windlass barrel to indicate that we were about to start. There was an element of solemnity in this our first step, at all events, along the prodigious liquid highway that we were about to enter, that was not a little irksome to me. After all, it was not *my* wife who had run away, and whom I was starting in pursuit of, and though I keenly sympathized with my cousin, it was impossible that I could feel or look as though I was broken down by grief.

"We are not a numerous party," said I, in a hearty way, seating myself; "one less, indeed, than we bargained for, Wilfrid, for I am without a servant. My fellow funked the very name of salt-water, and there was no time to replace him."

"There are two stewards to wait upon you, and my own valet besides," said Wilfrid, bringing his eyes with an effort from the porthole through which he was staring to my face. "Trust me to see that you are perfectly comfortable."

"My dear fellow—*comfortable!* Why, this is palatial!" I cried, with a comprehensive sweep of my hand round the cabin; "much too luxurious, in my humble opinion; don't you think so, Miss Jennings? Only figure all these fine things going down to swell the navies that lie green on the Atlantic ooze."

"The *Bride* is a lovely boat," she answered—"and very swift, Wilfrid says."

"Swift enough to serve my turn, I expect," said he, with what the Scotch call a *raised* look coming into his face.

"But why not come on deck?" said I; "no fear of being noticed, Wilfrid. Who is there to see us, and who is there to care if anybody *should* see us?"

He drew his tall, awkward figure together with a shake of the head.

"Get you on deck by all means, Charles, and take Laura with you if she will go. I have occupation until the dinner-bell in my cabin."

"Will you accompany me, Miss Jennings?" said I.

"Indeed I will," she exclaimed with an alacrity that exhibited her as little disposed as myself to rest passive in the shadow of my cousin's heavy, resentful melancholy.

He seized my hand in both his as I rose to escort the girl on deck. "God bless you once again, my dear boy, for joining us. Presently I shall feel the stronger and perhaps the brighter for having you by my side." He looked wistfully, still holding my hand, at Miss Jennings, as though he would address a word to her too, but on a sudden broke away with a sigh like a sob, and walked hastily to the after passage, where his cabin was.

In silence, and much affected, I handed the girl up the companion-steps. Gay and glittering as was the cabin, its inspiration was but as that of a charnel-house compared with the sense of life and the quickness of spirit you got by mounting on deck, entering the shining atmosphere of the autumn afternoon with the high blue sky filled with the soft and reddening light of the waning luminary, while already the land on either side was gathering to its green and gold and brown the tender dyes of the evening. The distance had been clarified by a small easterly air that had sprung up since I first stepped on board, and the Isle of Wight hung in a soft, pure mass of

many dyes upon the white gleam of the water that brimmed to it. There was a large frigate, as I imagined her, drawing slowly up past Gosport way, heading westward, and the eye fastened upon her with a sort of wonder; for, though she looked to be hull down, and the merest toy, and indistinguishable by the careless glance as a sail, yet she was too defined to pass for a cloud either, while the silver brightness seemed impossible in canvas, and you watched her with a fancy in you of a large bland star that would be presently afloat in the blue, and sparkling there on the brow of the rising night. There were a few vessels of different kinds anchored off Southampton, and the scene in that direction looked wonderfully fair and peaceful, with the spars of the craft gilt with sunshine, and a flash in their hulls where paint or glass caught the declining beam, and past them the higher reaches of the light-blue water, with the twinkling of little sails, that carried the gaze shoreward to the town.

All this my sight took in quickly. The men had quitted the windlass, and were making sail upon the yacht nimbly and so quietly, even with a quality of stealth in their manner of pulling and hauling, that we could not have been a stiller ship had we been a privateersman getting under way on a dark night with a design of surprising a rich fabric, or of escaping a heavily armed enemy. They looked a stout crew of men, attired without the uniformity that is usual in yachting companies in these days, though the diversity of dress was not sufficiently marked to offend. I gathered that the vessel carried a mate as well as a captain, and detected him in the figure of a sturdy little fellow, with a cast in his eye and a mat of red hair under his chin, who stood between the knight-heads forward, staring aloft at a hand on the top-sail yard. Captain Finn saluted the girl and me with a flourish of a hairy paw to his hat, but was too full of business to give us further heed.

"We shall be under way very soon now, Miss Jennings," said I. "It is a strange voyage that we are undertaking."

"A sad one, too," she answered.

"You show a deal of courage in accompanying Wilfrid," I exclaimed.

"I hesitated at first," said she, "but he seemed so sure of overtaking the *Shark*, and pressed me so earnestly to join him, believing that the sight of me, or that by my pleading to—to—" She faltered, flushing to the eyes, and half turned from me with such a tremulous parting of her lips to the gush of the mild breeze, which set a hundred golden fibres of her hair dancing about her ears, that

I expected to see a tear upon her cheek when she looked at me afresh. I pretended to be interested in nothing but the movements of the men who were hoisting the main-sail.

"What do you think of the voyage, Mr. Monson?" she exclaimed, after a little pause, though she held her face averted as if waiting for the flush to fade out of her cheeks.

"It bothers me considerably," I answered. "There is nothing to make heads or tails of in it that I can see."

"But why?" and now she stole a sidelong look at me.

"Well, first of all," I exclaimed, "I cannot imagine that there is the faintest probability of our picking up the *Shark*. She may be below the horizon, and we may be sailing three or four leagues apart for days at a stretch, and neither ship with the faintest suspicion of the other being close. The ocean is too big for a hunt of this sort."

"But suppose we *should* pick her up, to use your term, Mr. Monson?"

"Suppose it, Miss Jennings, and add this supposition: that the gallant colonel"—she frowned at his name, with a sweet curl of horror on her lip as she looked down—"who will long before have twigged us, declines to heave to or have anything whatever to do with us; what then?"

"I suggested this to your cousin," she answered, quickly; "it is a most natural objection to make. He answered that if the *Shark* refused to stop when he *hailed her*—that's the proper term, I know—he would compel her to come to a stand by continuing to fire, even if it came to sinking her, though his object would be to knock her mast down to prevent her from sailing."

I checked a smile at the expression "knock her mast down," and then caught myself running my glance round in search of any hint of ordnance of a persuasive kind; and now it was that I noticed for the first time, secured amidships of the forecastle, and comfortably housed and tarpaulined, something that my naval instincts were bound to promptly interpret into a *long-tom*, and of formidable calibre, too, if the right sort of hint of it was to be obtained out of its swathing. I also observed another feature that had escaped me; I mean a bow-port on either side the bowsprit—a detail of equipment so uncommon in a pleasure craft as to force me to the conclusion that the apertures had been quite newly cut and fitted.

I uttered a low whistle, while I found my companion's gaze rooted upon me with the same critical attention in the spirited blue gleam of it I had before noticed.

"Well," said I, taking breath, "upon my word, though, I should not have thought he had it in him. Yes; yonder's a remedy," I continued, nodding in the direction of the forecastle, "to correspond with Wilfrid's intentions if he's fortunate enough to fall in with the *Shark*. Will *she* be armed, I wonder? It would then make the oddest of all peppering matches."

"If the yacht escapes, we are certain to meet her at the Cape," said Miss Jennings.

It was idle to argue on matters of seamanship with the pretty creature.

"Wilfrid has said little on the subject to me," I remarked. "He was dreadfully overcome when he called to ask me to accompany him. But it is good and brave of you to enter upon this wild experiment with a womanly and a sisterly hope of courting the fugitive back to her right and only resting-place. My cousin will receive her then."

"He means to come between her and the consequences of her—of her folly," said she, coloring again, with a flash in her eye and a steady confrontment of me, "let the course he may afterwards make up his mind to be what it will."

I saw both distress and a little hint of temper in her face, and changed the subject.

"Have you been long in England?"

"I arrived three months ago at Sherburne Abbey (my cousin's seat in the North). You know I am an Australian?"

"Yes, but not through Wilfrid, of whose marriage I should have learned nothing but for hearing it talked about one day in a club. A young baronet who had met Lady Monson was loud in her praises. He described her as a wonderfully beautiful woman, but dark, with fiery Spanish eyes and raven tresses;" and here I peeped at her own soft violet stars and sunny hair.

"Yes, she is beautiful, Mr. Monson," she answered, sadly—"too beautiful, indeed. Her face has proved a fatal gift to her. What madness!" she exclaimed, whispering her words almost. "And there never was a more devoted husband than Wilfrid. And her baby, the little lamb! Oh, how could she do it—how could she do it!"

"With whom has the child been placed?" said I.

"With a cousin, Mrs. Trevor."

"Oh, I know—a dear, good creature; the bairn will be in excellent hands."

"Sir Wilfrid was too affectionate, Mr. Monson. You know," she continued, looking at me sidewise, her face very grave, "if you have ceased to love or to like a person your aversion will grow in proportion as he grows fond of you. It is *not* true, Mr. Monson, that love begets love. No; if it were true my sister would be the happiest of women."

"Have you met Colonel Hope-Kennedy?"

"Oh yes, often and often. He was a very constant visitor at Sherburne Abbey."

"Pretty good-looking?"

"Tall, very gentlemanly, not by any means handsome, to my taste, but I have no doubt many women would think him so."

"The name is familiar to me, but I never met the man. Did he live in the North?"

"No; whenever he came to Sherburne Abbey he was your cousin's guest."

Phew! thought I. "And of course," I said, willing to pursue the subject afresh, since it did not seem now to embarrass her to refer to it, while I was curious to learn as much of the story as could be got, "my cousin had no suspicion of the scoundrelism of the man he was entertaining."

"No, nor is he to be blamed. He is a gentleman, Mr. Monson, and like all fine, generous, amiable natures, very, very slow to distrust persons whom he has honored with his friendship. When he came to me with the news that Henrietta had left him, I believe he had gone *utterly* mad, knowing him to be just a *little*—" She hesitated, and ran her eyes over my face as though positively she halted merely to the notion that perhaps *I* was a trifle gone, too; and then, clasping her hands before her, and hanging her head so as to look as if she was speaking with her eyes closed, she went on: "I was much with Henrietta, and often when Colonel Hope-Kennedy was present. I had ridden with them, had watched them while they played billiards—a game my sister was very fond of—observed them at the piano when she was singing and he turning the music, or when she accompanied him in a song. He sang well. But—it might be, it is true, because I was as unsuspicious as Wilfrid—yet I declare, Mr. Monson, that I never witnessed so much as a look exchanged between them of a kind to excite a moment's uneasiness. No! Wilfrid cannot be charged with blindness; the acting was as exquisite as the object was detestable." And she flushed up again, half turning from me, with a stride towards the rail and a wander-

ing look at the green country, which I accepted as a hint that she wished the subject to drop.

The yacht was now under way. They had catted, and were fishing the anchor forward. I noticed that the man I had taken to be the mate had arrived aft and was at the wheel. The vessel's head was pointing fair for the Solent, and already you heard a faint crackling sound like a delicate rending of satin rising from under the bows, though there was so little weight in the draught of air that the *Bride* floated without the least perceptible list or inclination, spite of all plain sail being upon her, with the exception of the top-gallant sail.

"Fairly started at last, Miss Jennings," said I.

She glanced round as though disturbed in an absorbing reverie, smiled, and then looked sad enough to weep, all in a breath.

Well, it was a solemn moment for her, I must say. She had her maid with her, it is true; but she was the only lady on board. There was none of her own quality with whom she could talk apart—no other woman to keep her in countenance, so to speak, with the sympathy of presence and sex; she was bound on a trip of which no mortal man could have dated the termination—an adventure that might carry her all about the world for aught she knew; for, since she was fully conscious of the very variable weather of my cousin's mind, she would needs be too shrewd not to conjecture that many wild and surprising things were quite likely to happen while the power of directing the movements of the yacht remained his.

And then, again, she was in quest of her sister without a higher hope to support her than a fancy—that was the merest dream to my mind when I thought of the little baby the woman had left behind her, to say nothing of her husband—that her passionate entreaties backing Wilfrid's might coax her ladyship to quit the side of the gallant figure she had run away with.

Just then the merry silver tinkling of a bell smartly rung sounded through the open skylight, and at the same moment the form of a neat and comely young woman arose in the companion-hatch.

"What is it, Graham?" inquired Miss Jennings.

"The first dinner-bell, miss. The second will ring at the half-hour."

The girl pulled out a watch of the size of a thumb-nail, and exclaimed: "It is already five o'clock, Mr. Monson. It cannot be a whole hour since you arrived! I hope the time will pass as quickly when we are at sea."

She lingered a moment gazing shoreward, sheltering her eyes sailor fashion with an ungloved hand of milk-white softness, on which sparkled a gem or two; then, giving me a slight bow, she went to the companion and stepped down the ladder with the grace and ease of a creature floating on wings. Ho, ho! thought I, she will have her sea legs, anyhow; no need, therefore, Master Charles, to be *too* officious with your hand and arm when the hour of tumblefication comes. But that she was likely to prove a good sailor was reasonable, seeing that she was comparatively fresh from probably a four months' passage from Melbourne.

I followed her after a short interval, and then to the summons of the second dinner-bell entered the cabin. The equipment of the table rendered festal the sumptuous furniture of this interior with the sparkle of silver and crystal, and the dyes of wines blending with the central show of rich flowers. The western sunshine lay upon the skylight, and the atmosphere was ruddy with it. One is apt to be curious when in novel situations, and I must confess that yachting in such a craft as this was something very new to me, not to speak of the uncommon character one's experiences at the outset would take from the motive and conditions of the voyage; and this will prove my apology for saying that while I stood waiting for Wilfrid and his sister-in-law to arrive, I bestowed more attention, furtive as it might be, upon the two stewards and my cousin's man than I should have thought of obliging them with ashore. The stewards were commonplace enough—a pair of trim-built fellows, the head one's face hard with that habitual air of solicitude which comes at sea to a man whose duties lie among crockery and bills of fare, and whose leisure is often devoted to dark and mysterious altercations with the cook; the second steward was noticeable for nothing but a large strawberry mark on his left cheek; but Wilfrid's man was worth a stare. I had no recollection of him, and consequently he must have been taken into my cousin's service since I was last at the Abbey, as we used to call it. He had the appearance of a man who had been bred to the business of a mute—a lantern-jawed, yellow, hollow-eyed person, whose age might have been five-and-twenty or five-and-forty; hair as black as coal, glossy as grease, brushed flat to the tenacity of sticking-plaster, and fitting his egg-shaped skull like a wig. He was dressed in black, his trousers a little short and somewhat tight at the ankles, where they revealed a pair of white socks bulging with a hint of gout over the sides of a pair of pumps. He stood behind the chair that Wilfrid would

take with his hands reverentially clasped upon his waistcoat, his whole posture indicative of humility and resignation. Nothing could be more in harmony with the melancholy nature of our expedition than this fellow's countenance.

Miss Jennings arrived and took her place; she was followed by my cousin, who walked to the table with the gait of a person following a coffin. This sort of thing, thought I, must be suffered for a day or two, but afterwards, if the air is not to be cleared by a rousing laugh, it won't be for lack of any effort on my part to tune up my pipes.

CHAPTER IV.

IN THE SOLENT.

THE dinner was exquisitely cooked, and as perfectly ordered a repast as the most fastidious could devise or desire; but very little was said—mainly, I suspect, because our thoughts were filled with the one subject we could not refer to while the attendants hung about us. What fell was the merest commonplace, but I noticed that while Wilfrid ate little he offered no objection to the frequent replenishing of his glass with champagne by the melancholy chap who stood behind him.

By-and-by we found ourselves alone.

"That is very honest port; you need not be afraid of it, Charles," said my cousin. "Do you understand gunnery?"

"I believe I could load a piece and point it," said I, smiling, "but beyond *that*—"

"Have you seen the gun on the forecastle?"

"Just the outline of a cannon," I answered, "under a smother of tarpaulin. What is called a long-tom, I think."

"You will have guessed the object of my mounting it?" said he, with a frown darkening his face to one of those angry moods which would sweep athwart his mind like the deep but flitting shadows of squall clouds over a gloomy sky, sullen with the complexion of storm.

"Yes; Miss Jennings explained," I answered, glancing at her and meeting her eye, in which I seemed to find the faintest hint of rebuke, as though she feared I might be laughing in my sleeve. "What's the calibre, Wilfrid?"

"Eighteen pounds," he answered.

"An eighteen-pounder, eh? That should bring the *Shark's* spars about their ears, though. Let me think. The range of an eighteen-pounder will be, at an elevation of five degrees, a little over a mile."

"If," cried my cousin—lifting his hand as though to smite the table, then bringing his clinched fist softly down, manifestly checked in some hot impetuous impulse by the sense of the presence of the girl, who regarded him with a face as serious as though she were

listening to a favorite preacher — "if," he repeated, sobering his voice with the drooping of his arm, "we succeed in overhauling the *Shark*, and they refuse to heave her to, my purpose is to wreck her aloft, and *then*, should they show fight, to continue firing at her until I sink her."

There was a vicious expression in his eyes as he said this, to which the peculiar indescribable trembling or quivering of the lids imparted a singular air of cunning.

"Is the *Shark* armed, do you know?" said I.

"She carries a couple of small brass pieces, I believe, for purposes of signalling. Pop-guns," said he, contemptuously. "But I fancy she has an armory of her own. Lord Winterton was constantly cruising north on shooting excursions, and it is quite likely that he let the weapons which belong to him with the yacht."

"If Colonel Hope-Kennedy's programme," said I, "includes a ramble among the South Sea Islands, you may reckon upon his having equipped himself with small-arms and powder enough, if only with an eye to man-eating rogues. But to revert to your long-tom, Wilfrid. It should not be hard to sink a yacht with such a piece; but you are not for *murdering* your wife, my dear fellow?"

"No, no," said he, slowly, and speaking to me, though he kept his eyes fixed upon his sister-in-law, "have no fear of that. It is I that am the murdered man." He pressed his hand to his heart. "Rather put it thus: that when they find their vessel hulled and sinking they will get their boats over and be very willing to be picked up by us."

"But your round-shot may knock their boats into staves," said I, "and what then?"

"Our own boats will be at hand to rescue them," said he, now looking at me full with an expression of relish of the argument.

"But, my dear Wilfrid," said I, "don't you know that when a craft founders she has a trick of drowning most of the people aboard her, and among the few survivors, d'ye see, who contrived to support themselves by whatever lay floating might *not be* Lady Monson!"

He took a deep breath, and said, so slowly that he seemed to articulate with difficulty: "Be it so. I have made up my mind. If we overhaul the *Shark*, and she declines to heave to, I shall fire into her. The blood of whatever follows will be upon *their* heads. This has been forced upon me; it is none of my seeking. I do not mean that Colonel Hope-Kennedy shall possess my wife, and I will take her from him alive if possible; but rest assured I am not to be hindered from separating them, though her death should be the consequence."

Miss Jennings clasped her fingers upon her forehead and sat motionless, looking down. For a little I was both startled and bewildered; one moment he talked as though his wish was that his wife should not be harmed, and the next, in some concealed convulsion of wrath, he betrayed a far blacker resolution than ever I could have imagined him capable of. Yet in the brief silence that followed I had time to rid myself of my little fit of consternation by considering, first of all, that he was now talking just as, according to my notion, he was acting—insanely; next, that it was a thousand to one against our falling in with the yacht; and again, supposing we came up with her, it was not very probable that the crew of the *Bride* could be tempted, even by heavy bribes, into a measure that might put them in jeopardy of their necks or their liberty.

It was now dark, and the cabin lamps had been for some time lighted. The evening looked black against the port-holes and the skylight, but the cheerfulness and beauty of the cabin were greatly heightened by the sparkling of the oil-flames in the mirrors, the swing trays, the glass-like surface of the bulkheads, and so on. Miss Laura's golden loveliness—do not laugh at my poor nautical attempts to put this amber-colored, violet-eyed woman before you—showed, as one may well suppose of such a complexion and tints, incomparably perfect, I thought, in the soft though rich radiance diffused by the burning sperm. I wondered that she should listen so passively to Wilfrid's confession of his intentions should we overhaul the *Shark*. My gaze went to her as he concluded that little speech I have just set down; but I witnessed no alteration in as much of her face as was visible, nor any stir, as of one startled or shocked, in her posture. Possibly she did not master all the significance of his words; for how should a girl realize the full meaning of plumping round-shot out of an eighteen-pounder into a vessel till she was made a sieve of? Or it might be that she was of my mind in regarding the expedition as a lunatic undertaking, and in suspecting that a few weeks of this ocean hunt would sicken Wilfrid of his determination to chase the *Shark* round the world. Or mingled with these fancies, besides, there might be enough of violent resentment against her sister, of grief, pain, shame, to enable her to listen with an unmoved countenance to fiercer and wilder menaces than Wilfrid had as yet delivered himself of.

These thoughts occupied my mind during the short spell of silence that followed my cousin's speech. He suddenly rang a little hand-bell, and his melancholy servant came sliding up to him out of the little cabin.

"Tell Captain Finn I wish to see him—that is, if he can leave the deck."

The fellow mounted the steps.

"What is the name of that gloomy-looking man of yours, Wilfrid?"

"Muffin," he answered.

"Have I not seen somebody wonderfully like him," said I, "holding on with drunken gravity to the top of a hearse trotting home from the last public-house along the road from the graveyard?"

Miss Laura laughed; and there was a girlish freshness and arch cordiality in her laughter that must have put me into a good humor, I think, had it been *my* wife, instead of Wilfrid's, that Colonel Hope-Kennedy was sailing away with.

"Maybe, Charles, maybe," he answered, with a dull smile; "he *may* have been an undertaker's man for all I know, though I doubt it, because I had him from Lord ——, with a five years' character, every word of which has proved true. But I knew you would have your joke. The fellow fits my temper to a hair; he has a hearse-like face, I admit; but then he is the quietest man in the world—a very ghost. Summon him, and if he shaped himself out of thin air he couldn't appear at your elbow more noiselessly. That's his main recommendation to me. Any kind of noise now I find distracting, even music; Laura will tell you that I'll run a mile to escape the sound of a piano."

At this moment a pair of pilot breeches showed themselves in the companion-way, and down came Captain Finn. As he stood, hat in hand, soberly clothed with nothing more gimcrack in the way of finery upon him than a row of brass waistcoat-buttons, I thought he looked a very proper, sailorly sort of man. There was no lack of intelligence in his eyes, which protruded, as from a long habit of staring too eagerly to windward, and trying to see into the inside of gales of wind. He was remarkable, however, for a face that was out of all proportion too long, not for the width of his head only, but for his body; while his legs, on the other hand, were as much too short, so that he submitted himself as a person whose capacity of growth had been experimentally distributed, in so much that his legs appeared to have come to a full stop when he was still a youth, while in his face the active principle of elongation had continued laborious until long after the term when nature should have made an end.

"A glass of wine, captain?" said Sir Wilfrid.

"Thank your honor. Need makes the old wife trot, they say, and I feel a-dry—I feel a-dry."

"Put your hat down and sit, Finn. I want you to give my cousin, Mr. Monson, your views respecting this—this voyage. But first, where are we?"

"Why," answered the captain, balancing the wineglass awkwardly between a thumb and a forefinger that resembled nothing so much as a brace of stumpy carrots, while he directed a nervous look from Wilfrid to me, and on to Miss Laura, as though he would have us observe that he addressed us generally, "there's Yarmouth lights opening down over the port bow, and I reckon to be clear of the Solent by about three bells—half-past nine o'clock."

"The navigation hereabouts," said I, "needs a bright lookout. The captain may not thank us for calling him below."

"Lord love 'ee, Mr. Monson, sir," he answered, "the mate, Jacob Crimp, him with the one eye slewed—if so be as you've noticed the man, sir—he's at the helm, and I'd trust him for any inshore navigation, from the Good'ens to the Start, blindfolded. Why, he knows his soundings by the smell of the mud."

"How is the weather?" inquired my cousin.

"Fine, clear night, sir; the stars plentiful and the moon a-rising. The wind's drawed a bit norradly, and 's briskening at that; yet it keeps a draught, with nothing noticeable in the shape of weight in it. Well, your honor, and you, Mr. Monson, sir, and you, my lady, all I'm sure I can say is, here's luck!" and down went the wine.

"Captain," said Sir Wilfrid, "oblige me by giving Mr. Monson your views of the chase we have started upon."

Finn put down the wineglass, and dried his lips on a pocket-handkerchief of the size of a small ensign.

"Well," he began, with a nervous, uneasy twisting about of his legs and feet, "my view's this: Fidler isn't likely to take any other road to the Cape than the one that's followed by the Indiemen. Now," said he, laying a forefinger in the palm of his big hand, yellow still with ancient stains of tar, while Wilfrid watched him in his near-sighted way, leaning forward in the posture of one absorbed by what is said, "you may take that there road as skirting the Bay o' Biscay, and striking the latitude of forty at about fifteen degrees east; then a south by west-half-west course for the Canaries, the equator to be cut at twenty-five degrees west, and a straight course for Trinidad to follow, with a clean brace up to the south-east trades. What d'ye think, sir?"

"Oh, 'tis about the road, no doubt," said I; for whatever might have been my thoughts, I had no intention to drop a discouraging syllable then before Finn in my cousin's hearing.

"But," said the captain, eying me nervously and anxiously, "if so be as we should have the luck to fall into that there *Shark's* wake, you know, we sha'n't need to trouble ourselves with the course to the Cape south of the equator."

"Of course not!" exclaimed Sir Wilfrid.

"By which I mean to say," continued the captain, giving his back hair a pull, as though it were some bell-rope with which he desired to ring up the invention or imagination that lay drowsy in his brain, "that if we aren't on to the *Shark* this side the Line, it'll be better for us to tarn to and make up our mind to crack on all for Table Bay, to be there afore her, without further troubling ourselves about her heaving in sight, though of course the same bright lookout 'll be kept."

"Good!" said Wilfrid, with a heavy nod; "that's not to be bettered, I think, Charles."

"I suppose," said I, addressing Finn, "that though your hope will be to pick up the *Shark* any day after a given period, and though you'll follow the scent of her as closely as your conjecture of Fidler's navigation will admit, you will still go on sweating—pray pardon this word in its sea sense, Miss Jennings—your craft as though the one business of the expedition was to make the swiftest possible passage to the Cape of Good Hope?"

"Ay, never sparing a cloth, sir; and she's something to jockey, Mr. Monson. You don't know her yet, sir."

"The *Shark's* a fore-and-aft schooner?"

"Yes," he answered.

"She carries a square-sail, no doubt?"

"Ay, a big un, but good only for running; and we ain't without that canvas, too, you must know," he added, with the twinkle of humor in his gaze that I had observed in him when Wilfrid had first made him known to me. "Enough of it, Mr. Monson, to hold wind to serve a Dutchman for a week, not to mention a torp-s'l and a t'gallant-s'l fit for a line-o'-battle ship to ratch under."

This was vague talk, but it pleased Wilfrid.

"Square yards are very well," said I, "but surely they don't allow a vessel to look up to it as though her canvas was fore and aft only? I merely ask for information. My marine experiences were limited to square rigs."

"There's nothin' to prevent the *Bride* from looking up to it as close as the *Shark*," answered Finn. "The yards 'll lie fore and aft; what's to hinder them? There ain't no spread, sir, like what you get in ships with your futtock-rigging and backstays and shrouds in the road of the slings, elbowing their ways to channels big enough for a ball-room. Besides," he added, "suppose it *should* be a matter of a quarter of a p'int's difference, we need but stow the square cloths, and then we ain't no worse off than the *Shark*."

"True," said I, thinking more of Miss Jennings than of what Finn was saying, so perfect a picture of girlish beauty did she happen to be at that instant, as she leaned on her elbow, supporting her chin with a small white hand, her form in a posture that left one side of her face in shadow, while the other side lay bright, golden, and soft in the lamplight over the table. She was listening with charming gravity, and a countenance of sympathy whose tenderness was unimpaired by an appearance of attention that I could not doubt was just a little forced, since our sailor talk could not but be Greek to her. Besides, at intervals, there was a lift of the white lid, a gleam of the violet eye, which was like assuring one that thought was kept in the direction of our conversation only by constraint.

I was beginning to feel the want of a cigar, and I had been sitting long enough now to make me pine for a few turns on deck, but I durst not be abrupt in the face of my cousin's devouring stare at his skipper, and the pathetic spectacle of the contending passions in him as he hearkened, now nodding, now gloomily smiling, now lying back on a sudden with a frown which he made as if to smooth out by pressing his hand to his brow.

"The *Shark*," said I, "has five days' start of us. Give her a hundred miles a day for the mere sake of argument; she should be, at that, well in the heart of the bay."

"By Heaven! within arm's-length of us, when you put it so!" cried Wilfrid, extending his hand in a wild, darting, irrelevant gesture, and closing his fingers with a snap, as though upon some phantom throat he had seen and thought to clutch.

"Five hundred miles," exclaimed Finn, apparently giving no heed to the baronet's action. "Well, sir, as a bit of supposing, there's no harm in it. It might be more. *I* should allow less. There's been no weight of wind down Channel. What's happened, then, to blow her along? But there's no telling. Anyhow," said he, picking up his cap and rising, "there's nothing in five hundred miles, no, nor in a thousand, to make us anxious with such a race-course

as lies afore us. 'Tain't as if we'd got to catch the craft before she'd made Madeira." He paused, looking a little irresolute, and then said, addressing Wilfrid, "I don't know if there's anything more your honor would like to ask of me?"

"No, not for the moment," answered my cousin, dully, with the air of a man languid with a sudden sense of weariness or exhaustion following some internal fiery perturbation. "It is just this, Finn: Mr. Monson served in the Royal Navy for a few years, and I was anxious that he should be at once made acquainted with your views, so that he and you could combine your experiences. You have chased in your time, Charles, no doubt?"

"Not very often, and then always something that was in sight," I answered, with a slight glance at Finn, whose gaze instantly fell while he exclaimed:

"Well, sir, any suggestion you can make I'll be mighty thankful to receive. But it'll be all plain sailing, I don't doubt; it'll be all plain sailing," he repeated, rumbling out the words in a stifled hurricane note, and giving us a bow, he went up the steps.

Wilfrid gazed at me vacantly when I proposed a cigar on deck.

"What do you think of Finn?" he asked.

"He seems as honest a man and as practical a seaman as needs be. But he has had command of this yacht since you bought her?"

He nodded. "Well, then, of course you know all about him. He has clearly been a merchant Jack in his day, and has all necessary experience, I dare say, to qualify him for this charge. But I say, Wilfrid, let us go on deck, my dear fellow. Miss Jennings, I am sure, will not object to the scent of a cigar in the open air."

"Nor down here, either," she exclaimed.

"I shall remember that," said I, gratefully. "Now, Wilfrid, won't you—"

"No," he interrupted; "I am drowsy, and thank Heaven for a sensation that threatens to become a novelty. If I get no rest to-night it will be my eighth of sleeplessness, and I must humor myself; yes, I must humor myself," he repeated, talking in a sort of muttering way, and rising.

I advised him by all means to withdraw if he really felt tired, and further recommended a boatswain's calker of whiskey to top off the champagne and port he had been swallowing.

"How will you amuse yourself, Laura?" he exclaimed, turning to her. "It will be dull work for you, I fear."

"No, no," cried I, blithely, "why need Miss Jennings be dull? It must be our business to keep her lively."

"I can sit and read here," said she, "till it is time to go to bed. What is the hour, Mr. Monson?"

"Just on the stroke of eight," said I.

She made a pretty little grimace, and then burst into one of her refreshing cordial laughs.

"A little early for bed, Wilfrid," she exclaimed.

He smothered a yawn and responded: "I will leave you to Charles. Would to Heaven I had his spirits. God bless you both! —good-night."

He rang for his valet, and stalked with hanging arms and drooping head, in the most melancholic manner picturable, to his cabin. I asked Miss Jennings to accompany me on deck.

"There is a moon in the air," said I, "you may see the haze of it through this port-hole; but I must not forget that it is an autumn night, so let me beg you to wrap yourself warmly while I slip on a pea-coat."

I fancied she hung in the wind an instant, as a girl might who could not promptly see her way to walking the deck of a yacht alone with a young man on a moonlight or any other night, but she assented so quickly in reality that I dare say my suspicion was an idle and groundless bit of sensitiveness. Five minutes later we were on deck together.

The yacht was floating through the dusk, that was tinctured into glimmering pearl by the broad face of the silver moon which had already climbed several degrees above the black sky-line of the Isle of Wight, without the least perceptible stir or tremor in her frame. The wind was well abaft the starboard beam; the great main-boom overhung the port quarter; the white sail rose wan to the moonshine, with a large gaff-topsail above it—for those were the days of gaffs—dimming into a space of airy faintness to the mast-head, above the white button of whose truck you caught the icy gleam of a metal vane, as though it was a piece of meteoric scoring under the dust of the stars that hovered in the velvet gloom like a sheet of undulating silver glooming out into hollows in places. Light as the breeze was, and following us, besides, it held the canvas asleep; but that every cloud-like cloth was doing its work, too, the ear quickly noted in the pleasant fountain-like sounds of running waters over the side, with a cool, seething noise in the wake, and a fairy tinkling of exploding foam-bells. The land to port loomed black against

the moonshine, save where some slope or other, catching the slanting beam, showed the faint green of its herbage or wooded growths in a very phantasm of hue, like some verdant stretch of land dyeing an attenuated veil of vapor witnessed afar upon the ocean. Over the port bow I caught sight of a light or two a long way down the dusky reach, as it seemed, with a brighter gleam to starboard where the land, catching the moonlight, came in visionary streaks and breaks to abeam and on past the quarter, where it seemed to melt out into some twinkling beacon—off Calshot Castle, may be, so far astern it looked.

I spied the sturdy figure of the mate standing beside the wheel, no longer steering, but manifestly conning the yacht. The skipper was abreast of the skylight, leaning over the rail, with his arm round a backstay. There were figures moving forward, tipping the gloom there with the scarlet points of glowing bowls of tobacco, but if they conversed it was in whispers. The stillness was scarce imaginable. It was heightened yet even to my fancy presently when, growing used to the light, I spied the phantom figure of what was apparently a large brig, clouded to her royals with pale canvas, stemming the Solent, outward bound, some half a mile distant.

"There is no dew," said I; "the moon shines purely, and is full of promise so far as fine weather goes. Well, here we are fairly started, indeed. It is almost a dream to me, Miss Jennings, d'ye know?" I continued, staring about me. "Three days ago I had no notice of anything having gone wrong with my cousin, and therefore little dreamed, as you will suppose, of what I was to enter upon this blessed afternoon. Three days ago! And now here I am heading into God knows what part of this mighty ocean, as empty of all theory of destination as though I were bound in a balloon to the part the poets call interstellar space. How is it all to end, I wonder?"

She was pacing quietly by my side.

"You think the pursuit a silly one, Mr. Monson?"

"Yes, I do, and Wilfrid *knows* that I do. If he were not—he is my cousin, Miss Jennings, and a dear friend, and you are his sister-in-law, and dear to him, too, I am sure, and so I dare be candid with you—if it were not that he—" I touched my forehead; "would he embark on such a quest as this?"

"Yes," she replied, with just enough of heat or temper, or whatever you like to call it, in her voice to render her utterance distinct with unconscious emphasis. "He adored his wife. Can a man

tear his love into pieces in a day, as though it were no more than a tedious old letter? He thinks he hates her; he does so in a sense, no doubt, but in a sense, too, he still worships her. Mad! that is what you mean."

I was beginning to protest.

"Yes, it *is* what you mean, and you are right and wrong. If he does not pursue her, if he does not recover her, she is lost forever! She is lost now, you will tell me. Ay," she cried, with a little stamp, "lost so far as her husband's heart goes, so far as her honor is concerned; but not so utterly lost as she will later be if she is not rescued from that—that man, who must be so served, Mr. Monson, as to render it impossible for him ever again to trouble the peace of another home, to break the heart of a noble-minded creature, and rob a little infant of its mother. Hate him! Oh, girl as I am, I declare before my Maker I would shoot him with my own hand!"

There was nothing in the least degree theatrical in her way of speaking. The words came in a hurry to her lips from her indignant heart, and I heard the sincerity of them so clearly in the mere utterance, I did not doubt for an instant that, put a pistol in her hand, and set up the figure of the colonel in front of her, she would have sought for his heart, if he had one, with the barrel of the weapon, without so much as a sigh at having to kill him. I felt abashed; her sincerity and resentment were overwhelming; her strength of feeling, too, won a peculiar accentuation from the character of airy delicacy, of tender fragility, the moonlight gave to her golden beauty. It was like listening to a volume of sounds poured forth by a singing-bird, and wondering that such far-reaching melody should be produced by so small a creature.

"I fear," said I, "you don't think me very sincere in my sympathy with Wilfrid—"

"Oh yes, Mr. Monson," she interrupted; "do not suppose such a thing. It is not to be imagined that you should take this cruel and miserable affair to heart as he does, or feel as I do, who am her sister."

"The truth is," said I, "it is impossible for a bachelor not to take a cynical view of troubles of this sort. A man was charged with the murder of his sweetheart. The judge said to him, 'Had the woman been your wife, your guilt would not have been so great, because you would have no other means of getting rid of her save by killing her; but the unhappy creature whose throat you cut you could have sent adrift without trouble.' What I mean to say is,

Miss Jennings, that a husband does not merit half the pity that is felt for him if his wife elopes. He is easily quit of a woman who is his wife only by name. I am for pitying her. The inevitable sequel, the disgrace, desertion, and the rest of it, is as punctual as the indications of the hand of a clock. But see how nimbly the *Bride* floats through all this darkness and quietude. We shall be passing that vessel shortly, and yet for canvas she might really be one of the pyramids of Egypt towing down Channel."

We went to the rail to look; I, for one, glad enough to change the subject, for it was nothing less than profanity to be arguing with so sweet a little woman as this — in the pure white shining of the moon, too, and with something of an ocean freshness of atmosphere all about us—on such a gangrenous subject as the elopement of Lady Monson with Colonel Hope-Kennedy. Out of all my sea-going experiences I could not pick a fairer picture than was made by the brig we were passing, clad as she was in moonlight, and rising in steam-colored spaces to mere films of royals, motionless under the stars. She was a man-of-war; the white of her broad band, that was broken by black ports, gleamed like the ivory of piano-forte keys; her canvas was exquisitely cut and set, and trimmed as naval men know how, one yard-arm looking backward a little over another, the rounded silent cloths, faint in the radiance with a gleam as of alabaster showing through a delicate haze, and high aloft the tremor of a pennant, like the expiring trail of a shooting-star. All was as hushed as death upon her; her high bulwarks concealed her decks; nothing was to be seen stirring along the whole length of the shapely, beautiful, visionary fabric that, as we left her slowly veering away upon our quarter, looked to lose the substance of her form, as though through the gradual absorption of the light her own white canvas made by the clearer and icy radiance of the soaring moon.

"To think, now," said I, "of the thunder of adamantine lips concealed within the silence of that heap of swimming faintness! How amazing the change from the exquisite repose she suggests to the fierce crimson blaze, and headlong detonations of a broadside flashing up the dark land, and dying out miles away in a sullen roar. But, d'ye know, Miss Jennings, I shall grow poetical if I do not light another cigar? Women should encourage men to smoke. Nothing keeps them quieter."

We exchanged a few words with Captain Finn, who, together with the mate, was keeping a bright lookout, and then resumed our walk; and, in a quiet chat that was ended only by a small bell on the fore-

castle announcing the hour of ten by four chimes, Miss Laura gave me the story of my cousin's introduction to her family, described the marriage, talked to me about Melbourne and her home there, with more to the same purpose, all very interesting to me, though it would make the merest parish gossip in print. Her mother was dead; her father was a hearty man of sixty, who had emigrated years before in dire poverty, "as you will suppose," said she, "when I tell you that he was the son of a dissenting minister, who had a family of twelve children, and who died without leaving money enough to pay for his funeral." Mr. Jennings had made a fortune by squatting, but he had lost a considerable sum within the past few years by stupid speculation; and as Miss Laura said this, I could see—by hearing her (to use a Paddyism)—the pout of her lip; for, bright as the moonlight was, the silver of it blended with the golden tint of her hair without defining any feature of her clearly, saving her eyes, in which the beam of the planet would sparkle like a diamond whenever she raised them to my face. She told me that her father was very proud that his daughter should become a lady of title, and yet he opposed the marriage, too. In short, he saw that Wilfrid's mind was not as sound as it should be, though he never could point to any act or speech to justify his misgivings. But this was intelligible; for, to speak of my cousin as I remembered him in earlier times, the notion you got that he was not straight-headed, as I have before said, was from his face, and the suspicion lay but dully in one, so rational was his behavior, so polished, and often intellectual his talk, till on a sudden it was sharpened into conviction on your hearing there was insanity in his mother's family.

"What had Lady Monson to say to your father's misgivings?" I inquired.

"She insisted upon marrying him. He was wonderfully fond of her, Mr. Monson."

"And she?"

I saw her give her head a little shake, but she made no reply. Perhaps she considered that this trip we had started on sufficiently answered the question. She said, after a brief pause: "I myself thought my father a great deal too critical in his estimate of Sir Wilfrid. No one talked more delightfully than your cousin. He was a favorite with everybody whom he met at Melbourne. He was fresh from his travels, and was full of entertaining stories and shrewd observations; and then, again, he had much to say about European capitals, of English university life, of English society. You will not

need me to tell you that we Colonials have little weaknesses in regard to lords and ladies, and to the doings of high life, from which people in England are quite exempt, and for the having which I fear we are slightly sneered at and a good deal wondered at."

I caught the sparkle of her lifted eye.

"And pray, Miss Jennings," said I, "what would your papa think if he were to know that you had embarked on what I must still take the liberty of calling a very queer voyage?"

"Oh," she cried, almost hysterically, "don't ask me what he would think of what I am doing! What will be his thoughts when he gets the news of what Henrietta has done?"

She turned her head away from me, and kept it averted long enough to make me suspect that there was a tear in her eye. It was then that a sailor forward struck the forecastle bell four times.

"Ten o'clock," she exclaimed, knowing as an ocean traveller how to interpret sea time. "Good-night, Mr. Monson."

I handed her down the companion-steps, and went to my own cabin, and was presently in my bunk; but it was after seven bells (half-past eleven) before I fell asleep.

The breeze had freshened, had drawn apparently more yet to the northward, and the yacht, having hauled it a bit now that we were out of the Solent, was leaning over a trifle, with a sputtering and frisky snapping of froth along her bends, and a quiet moaning sounding down into her heart out of the hollows of her canvas, while an occasional creak breaking from one knew not what part of the structure hinted at a taut drag of tacks and sheets, though there was no motion in the water, over whose surface our keel slided as steadily as a sleigh over a snow-covered plain.

It was one thing on top of another, I suppose; the fancies put into me by the oddness of this adventure; the memory of the long gun forward; Wilfrid's tragic intentions, the darker to my mind because it was so easy for me to see how grief, wrath, a sense of dishonor, bitter injury, with impulses not imaginable by me which every recurrence to the motherless little baby at home would visit him with, had quickened in him of late the deadly seminal principle that circulated in his blood. Then, again, there was Miss Laura's beauty, if beauty be the proper term to express a combination of physical charms which a brief felicitous sentence, like a single line from some old poet, would better convey than fifty pages of description; her conversation; her sympathy with the motive of this trip; her apparent heedlessness as to the time to be occupied by it; her

indifference as to the magnitude of the programme that Wilfrid's resolution to recover his wife might end in framing if Table Bay should prove but a starting point—I say it was one thing on top of another; and all reflections and considerations being rendered acute by the spirit of life one now felt in the yacht, and that awakened the most dormant or puzzled faculty to the perception that it was all grim, downright earnest, small wonder that I should have lain awake until half-past eleven. Indeed, that I should have snatched a wink of sleep that first blessed night is a mystery only to be partially resolved by reflecting that I was young, heedless, "unencumbered," as they say, a lover of adventure, and in no sense dissatisfied by the company I found myself among.

CHAPTER V.

LONG-TOM.

When I awoke the morning was streaming a windy light through the port-hole over my bunk. I lay a few minutes watching my coat and other suspended garments swinging against the bulkhead, and listening to the creaking and groaning of partitions and strong fastenings, and to a muffled humming sound like the distant continuous roll of a drum mixed with a faint seething that sent one's fancy to the shingle of the English shore, and to the panting respiration of the recoiling breaker upon it, and then I guessed that there was a fresh breeze blowing.

I tumbled out of bed, and stood a while, partly with a notion of making sure of my legs and partly to discover if I was likely to be sea-sick. Finding myself happily sound in all ways, I drew on some clothing and looked out. Wilfrid's melancholy man sat at the cabin table, leaning his head upon his elbow, with his fingers penetrating the black plaster of hair over his brow, so that he presented a very dejected and disordered appearance. I called to him; he looked in my direction with a wandering eye, struggled to get up, put his hand upon his stomach with an odd smile, and sat again. I entered the cabin to see what ailed the fellow.

"What's the matter?" said I: "Sick?"

He turned his hollow, yellow face upon me, and I saw that he was in liquor.

"It's here, sir," he exclaimed, pointing with an inebriated forefinger to the lower button of his waistcoat. "It's a feelin', sir, as if I was a globe, sir, with gold and silver fishes a-swimming round and round, and poking of their noses against me to get out."

He spoke respectfully, but thickly, with sundry little feints at rising, as though very sensible that he should not be sitting while I stood.

"Try a dose of brandy," said I, satirically.

"Do you think it will help me, sir?" he inquired, pulling his fingers out of his hair and clasping his hands upon his waistcoat, while his lips went twisting into an intoxicated grin on one side of his

nose, as it looked. "I will try it, Mr. Monson, sir. There's a something here as wants settling, sir. I never was partial to the hocean, sir."

He was proceeding, but just then the second steward came below, on which I quitted the melancholy man, ordered a cold salt-water bath and a hot cup of coffee, and was presently on deck. It was a windy-looking morning, the sky high, gray, compacted, with here and there a dark curl of scud in chase of some bald lump of sulphur-colored cloud blowing away to leeward like the first ball of powder-smoke from a cannon's mouth ere the wind has had time to shred it. The water was green, a true Channel sea with the foam of the curled ridges dazzling out in times to the touch of a wet, pale beam of sunshine dropping in a lance of light in some breathless moment through one of the dim blue lines that here and there veined the dulness aloft. There was no land to be seen; the haze of the sea-line ran the water into the sky, and the green of the horizon went blending into the soft grayness of the heavens till it looked all one with a difference of color only.

The yacht was bowling through it at a noble pace; the wind sat as it should for such a craft as the *Bride;* the sea had quartered her and swept in hillocks of foam along her lustrous bends, sending an impulse to her floating rushes with every pale boiling of it to her frame, and the sputter and creaming all about her bows, and the swirl of the snow over the lee-rail, and the milk-white race of wake rising and falling, fan-shaped astern, prismatic with the glint of chips and bubbles and feathers of spume swept out of the giddiness by the rush of the wind, might have made you think yourself aboard a ship of a thousand tons. Upon my word, it was as though the *Bride* had got the scent and knew that the *Shark* was not far distant. Finn was not sparing her. He was to windward, close beside the wheel as I emerged, and I knew he watched me while I stood a moment in the hatch looking from the huge thunderous hollow of the main-sail to the yawn of the big square-sail they had clapped upon her with the whole square top-sail atop of *it*, top-gallant sail stowed, but the jibs yearning from their sheets taut as fiddle-strings, as though they would bodily uproot the timber and iron to which they were belayed.

Something of the exhilaration of a real chase came into one with the glad roaring aloft and the saw-like spitting at the cut-water, and the sullen crash of the arching billow repulsed by the cleaving bow; and it was the instinct in me, I suppose, due to my early training

and recollection of the long pursuit of more than one polacre and nimble-heeled schooner flush to the hatches with a living ebony cargo that made me send a look sheer over the bows in search of some shining quarry there.

There were three or four coasters in a huddle on the weather-beam, their outlines sharp, but their substance of a dingy black against the yellowish glare of light over the water that way, as though the east were finding reflection in it; and to leeward, a mile off, a full-rigged sailing ship on a bowline bound up Channel, and plunging her round bows with clumsy viciousness into the green hollows with a frequent lift of white water to above the cathead, where it blew in a storm of crystals into the head-canvas.

"Good-morning, captain."

"Good-morning, sir," answered Finn, knuckling his forehead in the old-fashioned style. "Nice little breeze of wind, sir."

"Ay; one could pray for nothing better," said I, crossing over to him. "You've got a fine craft here, certainly, captain; no stint of beam, and bulwarks stout and tall enough to serve the purpose of a pirate. And how finely she rounds forward to the eyes! Holloa! getting ready with your gun so soon?"

"No, sir, only a-cleaning of him," he answered, with a grin.

They had removed the tarpaulin, and there stood the long piece, with a couple of seamen hard at work furbishing it up.

"D'ye think," said I, making a step or two towards the rail to bring us out of ear-shot of the fellow who was standing at the wheel, "that Sir Wilfrid really means to let fly at the *Shark*, should we overhaul her, if she refuses to heave to?"

"I don't doubt it, sir."

"But how about your crew? Will they be willing, think you, to fire into a vessel that's a yacht like their own ship, that hails from the same port, and whose people may number among them acquaintances—old shipmates of your own men?"

"They'll obey orders, sir," said he, quietly, with an air of caution in his long face.

"Suppose it should come to our having to board the *Shark*, captain, and she shows fight—are you going to get your men to hazard their lives in the face of the pacific articles they, I presume, have signed?"

"It'll never come to a fight, Mr. Monson," he responded, "though I don't say it may not come to our having to fire at the vessel to stop her; for, you see, if the colonel commands Fidler to keep all fast and

take no notice of us, there'll be nothin' for him but to obey; while stop her *we* must, do ye see, sir? But as to fighting—" he shook his head. "No, sir; when the time's come for boarding they'll be willing to let us walk quietly over the side, no matter how much they may consider their feelings injured by our shooting at 'em. In short, it's like this: ne'er a man aboard the *Shark* but knows what the colonel and her ladyship's gone and done. A good many, I dessay, are husbands themselves, not to speak of their being Englishmen, and ye may take ne'er a hand of 'em, from Fidler down, is going to resist Sir Wilfrid's stepping on board to demand his own."

"You may be right," said I; "'tis hard to say, though. Do our crew know the errand we are on?"

"Bound to it, sir. In fact, the shipping of that there gun wouldn't allow the job to remain a secret. But the *Shark* was away first; and if all Southampton had got talking of our intention, it couldn't have signified—so far as consarns, I mean, their guessing at it aboard the *Shark*."

"You must have pushed your equipment forward with wonderful expedition."

"Yes, sir; we worked day and night. Of course, we was all ready for sea; but there would be many things a-wanting for what might turn out a six or seven thousand mile run, with ne'er a stoppage along the whole road of it."

My eye was just then taken by something that glittered upon the main-mast, within reach of a man's uplifted arm. I peered, imagining it to be a little plate with an inscription upon it commemorating something that Wilfrid might have deemed worthy of a memorial. I caught Finn grinning.

"D'ye see what it is, sir?" said he.

I looked again and shook my head. He walked to the mast and I followed him, and now I saw that it was a handsome five-guinea piece, obviously of an old date—but it was too high to distinguish the impress clearly—secured by a couple of little staples, which gripped without piercing or wounding it.

"That piece of money," said Finn, "is for the first man that sights the *Shark*."

"Ha!" I exclaimed, "an old whaling practice. My cousin has not viewed the world for nothing."

It was but a trifling thing, yet in its way it was almost as hard a bit of underscoring of my cousin's resolution as the long, grinning

piece they were cleaning forward, or the stand of arms against the bulkhead below.

"What's the pace, captain?"

"A full ten, sir, by the last heave of the log."

I fell a whistling—for it was grand sailing, surely—with a lift of my eye to the top-gallant sail, that lay stowed in a snow-white streak, with a proper man-of-war's bunt amidships on the slender black yard.

"Well, sir," said Finn, taking it upon himself to interpret my glance, "I know the *Bride*, and I'm acquainted with a good many vessels which ain't the least bit in the world like her, and my notion's this, that a craft'll do no more than she *can* do. I've hove the log to reefed canvas, and I've hove it in the same wind to whole sails and found a loss. No use of burying what you want to keep afloat. I might set that there little top-gallant sail, without enjoying a hinch of way more out of it. Then what ud be the good of straining the spars?"

"But you'll be setting stun-sails, I suppose, when a right chance for running them aloft occurs?"

"Ay, sir. There's the boom irons all ready; but my notion is, in a vessel of this sort, that it's best to keep your stun-sail booms out of sight till your anchors are stowed. Once out of soundings, and then let a man cut what capers he likes."

As he said this, up rose my cousin's long body through the companion-hatch. He stood a little, looking about him in his short-sighted way, but with an expression of satisfaction upon his face that gave a new character to it. I saw him rub his hands while he grinned to the swift, salt rush of the wind. He caught sight of me and instantly approached.

"This will do! this will do, Charles!" he cried, grasping my hand. "Don't spare her, captain. These are slants to be made the most of. By Heaven, but it makes a new man of me to see such a sight as *that!*" pointing to the torrent that was roaring past to leeward.

He stared with a sort of pathetic eagerness at the vessels which we were passing as though they had their anchors down, afterwards shading his eyes for another long yearning look over either bow.

"It is fine, though! it is fine, though!" he muttered, with the spirit of an unreasonable exhilaration working strong in every feature. "What is it, captain—twelve?" Finn gave him the figure. "And what would be the *Shark's* pace, supposing her yonder?"

"Not all ours, Sir Wilfrid, not all ours," responded Finn, "though

it is a fine sailing breeze, your honor. A craft would have to be a sawed-off-square consarn not to wash handsomely along this morning, sir."

"How have you slept, Wilfrid?" said I.

"Well," he answered. "But I say, Charles, what do you think?" said he, with a sudden, boyish air, that startled me with its suggestion of stupidity in him. "Muffin is drunk."

"Drunk!" cried I; "but who the deuce is Muffin?" forgetting the name.

"Why, my man," he answered; "my valet. It's very odd. I thought at first it was sea-sickness. He's been crying; the tears streamed down his cheeks. He begs to be set ashore, and swears that if he should choke with one of the fishes that are swimming about in him, his mother and two sisters would have to go to the Union. Do you think he's mad?"

"Drunk and sea-sick, too," said I. "Has he not been away with you on a yachting trip before?"

"No. This is a handsome vessel, don't you think, Charles?" he exclaimed, breaking from the subject as though it had never been in his mind, and following on his question with a curious fluttering smile and that trembling of the lids I have before described; though his gaze steadied miraculously as they rested upon the gun the fellows were at work upon, and a shadow came into his face which was good as telling me that I need not respond to his inquiry, as his thoughts were already elsewhere.

"Let's go and have a look at my cannon," said he, with the same old boyish manner he had discovered a minute or two earlier.

We walked forward; the decks had been some time before washed down and were sand dry, white as a tree newly stripped of its bark, with a glitter all about them of the crystals of salt. The rigging was everywhere neatly coiled down; whatever was of brass shone as though it reflected a sunbeam; no detail but must have satisfied the most exacting nautical eye with an indication of frigate-like neatness, cleanliness, finish, and fore-and-aft discipline. The *Bride*, after the manner of many yachts of those days, carried a galley on deck abaft her foremast. I peeped in as I passed, and took notice of a snug little interior, brilliant with polished cooking vessels, and as clean and sweet as a dairy. A few of the sailors were standing about it waiting (as I took it) for the cook to furnish the messes with their breakfast. They had the air of a rough, resolute set of men, with something of the inspiration of the yacht-

ing business, perhaps, in their manner of saluting Sir Wilfrid and myself, but with little of the aspect of the seafarer of the pleasure vessel of *these* times. They were bushy-whiskered, hard-a-weather fellows for the most part, with one odd face among them as yellow and wrinkled as the skin of a decayed lemon.

I asked Wilfrid carelessly if any of his crew had sailed with him before. He answered that a few of them had; but that the others had declined to start on a voyage to the end of which Finn was unable to furnish a date, so that the captain had made up the complement in a hurry out of the best hands he could find cruising about ashore. So this, thought I, accounts for the absence of that uniformity of apparel one looks for among the crews of yachts; yet all the sailors I had taken notice of were dressed warmly in very good clean nautical clothes, though I protest it made one think of the old picaroon and yarns of the Spanish Main to glance at one or two of the dry, tough, burnt seawardly chaps, who concealed their pipes and dragged a curl upon their foreheads to us as we passed them.

Wilfrid stared at his eighteen-pounder as though he were some lad viewing a toy cannon he had just purchased. He bent close to it in his near-sighted way, and looked it all over while he asked me what I thought of it. I saw the two fellows who were still at work upon it chew hard on the junks in their cheek-bones in their struggle to keep their faces.

"Why," said I, "it seems to me a very good sort of gun, Wilfrid, and a thing, when fired, I'd rather stand behind than in front of."

"I should have had two of them," said he, with a momentary darkening of his looks to the rising in him of some vexing memory, pointing as he spoke to the bow ports, "but Finn thought one piece of such a calibre enough at this end of the vessel, and it would have been idle to mount a stern-chaser; for what we want to fire at—should it come to it—we can always manage to keep yonder," nodding in the direction of the jib-boom.

I had no mind to talk to him in the presence of the two fellows, one of whom I would see screw up his eye like the twist of a gimlet at us while he went on polishing; so I stepped into the head to take a view of the shear of the cut-water as it drove knife-like into each green freckled and glass-smooth side of surge rolling transversely from us ere shattering it into a snow-storm; but the bulwarks being too tall to enable me to see all that I looked for, I sprang on to the bowsprit and laid out to the jib-boom end, which I jock-

eyed, holding on to a stay and beckoning to Wilfrid to follow; but he shook his head with a loud call to me to mind what I was about.

One may talk of the joy of a swift gallop on horseback when the man and the animal fit like hand and glove, when all is smooth running with a gallant leap now and again; but what is a flight of that sort compared with the sensations you get by striding the jib-boom of such a schooner as the *Bride* and feeling her airily leap with you over the liquid hollows which yawn right under you, green as the summer leaf or purple as the violet for a moment or two, before the smiting stem fills the thunderous chasm with the splendor of a cloud of boiling froth! It was a picture to have detained me an hour, so noble was the spectacle of the leaning yacht forever coming right at me as it seemed, the rounds of her canvas whitened into marble hardness with the yearn and lean of the distended cloths to a quarter of the sea where hung a brighter tincture of sky through some tenuity of the eastern grayness behind which the sun was soaring. One felt a life and soul in the little ship, in every floating bound she made, in every sliding blow of the bow that sent a vast, smooth curl of billow to windward for the shrill-edged blast to transform into a very cataract of stars and diamonds and prisms! Lovely beyond description was the courtesying of her gilt figure-head and the refulgence of the gold lines all about it to the milk-white softness that seethed to the hawse-pipes.

I made my way inboard and said to Wilfrid, who stood waiting for me, "She's a beauty. She should achieve your end for you if it is Table Bay only you are thinking of. But yonder great horizon!" I exclaimed, motioning with my hand. "We are still in the narrow sea—yet look how far it stretches! Think then of the Atlantic circle."

"We shall overhaul her!" he exclaimed, quickly, with a gesture that made an instant's passion of his way of speaking. "Come along aft, Charles, and stump it a bit for an appetite. Breakfast can't be far off now."

Miss Laura did not make her appearance until we were at table. I feared that the *Bride's* lively dance had proved too much for her, and glanced aft for the maid that I might ask how her mistress did. Indeed, though on deck one gave no heed to the rolling and plunging of the yacht, the movements were rendered mighty sensible in the cabin by the swift, often convulsive oscillations of lamps and swing trays, by the sliding of articles of the breakfast equipment in the fiddles, by the monotonous ticking-like noise of doors upon

their hooks, the slope of the cabin floor, sounds like the groanings of strong men in pain breaking in upon the ear from all parts, and, above all, by sudden lee lurches which veiled the port-holes in green water, that sobbed madly till it flashed, with a shriek and a long, dim roar, off the weeping glass lifted by the weather-roll to the dull, gray glare of the day.

But we had scarcely taken our seats when the girl arrived, and she brought such life and light and fragrance in her mere aspect to the table that it was as though some rich and beautiful flower of a perfume sweetened yet by the coolness of dew had been placed among us. She had slept well, she said, but her maid was ill and helpless. "And where is Muffin?" she demanded.

"He's lying down, miss," said the head steward. "He says his blood-wessels is that delicate he's got to be werry careful indeed."

Wilfrid leaned across to her and said, in a low voice that the steward might not hear him, but with a boyish air that I had found odd and even absurd strong in him again, "Laura, my dear, imagine! Muffin is *drunk*," he broke into a strong, noisy laugh. "Weepingly drunk, Laura; talks of himself as a globe of fish, and, indeed," he added, with a sudden recovery of his gravity, "so queer outside all inspirations of the bottle that I'm disposed to think him mad." Again he uttered a loud ha! ha! peering at me with his short sight to see if I was amused.

A look of concern entered Miss Jennings's face, but quickly left it, subdued, as I noticed, by an effort of will.

"I was afraid that Muffin would not suit you," she exclaimed, quietly. "I told you so, I remember. Those yellow, hollow men are miserable sailors. He has all good qualities as a valet on shore, but—" she was proceeding when he interrupted her.

"I say, Laura, isn't this breeze magnificent, eh? Think, my dear —ten knots an hour! We are sweeping through it as though we were in tow of a comet. Why, if the devil himself were ahead, we should overhaul him at this pace."

He dropped his knife and fork as though to rub his hands—an action common to him when gratified — but his face darkened, a wild expression came into it with a sudden savage protrusion of his projecting under lip to the bitter sneer of the upper one; he fell again to eating in a hurry, breathing short, and masticating viciously with now and again a shake of the head, until all at once, ere he had half made an end of what was before him, he pushed his plate violently away and lay back in his chair, with his arms tightly folded

upon his breast and his gaze intently fixed downward, in a way to make me think of that aunt of his whom the old earl had pointed out to his father as she paced the greensward between two keepers.

With the easiest air imaginable, though it was impossible that she could effectually blind to my sight the mingled expression of worry and dismay in her eyes as she directed them at me, Miss Jennings, making the breakfast upon the table her text, prattled about the food one gets on board ship, seizing, as it seemed to me, the first commonplace topic she could think of.

I took an askant view of the stewards to see if they noticed Sir Wilfrid, but could find nothing to interpret in their wooden, waiting faces. After a little he seemed to wake up, coming back to his mind, as it were, with a long, tremulous sigh, and a puzzled look round at the table as though wondering whether he had breakfasted or not. Miss Jennings and I chatted commonplaces. He called for a cup of tea, and then, after listening with plenty of intelligence in his manner to a little experience I was relating to Miss Laura concerning the recovery of a captain's pig that had been washed overboard in a sudden squall, he described a gale of wind he had encountered off Agulhas while on a voyage to India, during which the cuddy front was stove in, and an immense sow and her young, along with a fine specimen of an English cart-horse and a cow, washed bodily aft and swept in thunder down the broad staircase in the saloon that conducted to the berths and living room for what were then termed the steerage passengers. No story was ever more graphically related. He described the panic among the passengers, the horrible concert produced by the screams of the pigs, and the terrified moaning and bellowing of the cow, the uproar of the cart-horse's plunging hoofs against the resonant bulkheads, mingled with the shrieks of the people who were in bed and imagined the ship to be already under water; I say he described all this so well, with so keen an appreciation of the humor, as well as of the horror of the scene, with a delivery so free from all excitement, that it seemed almost incredible he should be the same man that just now sat fixed in the posture of a melancholy madman with a face, as I might have thought, dark with the shadow of eclipsed reason.

Breakfast ended, he quitted the table to fetch his pipe.

"I had better have come without a man, after all," said he, laughing; "one condition of sea-going should be that a fellow must help himself; and upon my word, it comes to it, no matter how many servants he brings with him. 'Tis the same ashore, too, after all.

It is the mistress who does most of the waiting;" and thus pleasantly speaking, he went to his cabin.

Miss Laura made as if to rise.

"An instant, Miss Jennings," said I. "I have seen nothing of Wilfrid of late years. You, on the other hand, have been a good deal thrown with him during the last three months. Tell me, then, what you think of his manner and language just now—that behavior, I mean, from which he started, so to speak, into perfect rationality."

"It was a sort of mood," she answered, speaking low, "that I have noticed in him, but never before saw so defined."

"Madness," said I, with a shake of the head.

"The shadow of a passing mood of madness," said she. "Was he on deck with you before breakfast?"

I answered, "Yes."

"Were his spirits good?"

"Irrationally good, I thought. It was the sight of the flying schooner, no doubt, the picture of the running seas, the sense of headlong speed, with the black grin of the forecastle gun to quicken his wild craving into a very delirium of expectation and hope. But that kind of glee is quite as alarming as his melancholy."

"Yes, but you will find his melancholy strong as his spirits seem high. Do I make myself understood, Mr. Monson?"

"Quite. One moment, you mean, he is looking down upon this extraordinary plan of his—this goose-chase, I must call it, with a bounding heart from the edge of a chasm; the next he is at the very bottom of the pit, gazing upward in an anguish of dejection. The deeper the precipice, the gloomier the depth where he brings up. Certainly I understand you, Miss Jennings. But here is now a consideration that is bothering me," I continued, sending a look aft, and up at the open skylight and around to make sure that we were unheard. "I am his cousin. As his associate in this voyage I have a right to regard myself as his best friend, for the time being, anyway. Now, what is my duty in the face of a condition of mind whose capriciousness fills it with menace? He brings me here as his right-hand man to help him, but to help him in or to what? I seem to understand his programme, yet I cannot render it intelligible to my own common-sense. Many might think me 'wanting' myself to be here at all; but I will not go into that; what I mean is, is it not my duty to hinder him if possible from prosecuting a chase which, in my humble judgment, by continuing to irritate him

with the disappointment of hope, may end in rendering organic what is now, let us pray, merely functional and fugitive?"

"You may try, but I do not think you will succeed," she exclaimed. "Indeed," she cried, raising her voice, but immediately and nervously subduing it, "I hope you will *not* try, for it is not hard to foresee what must follow. You will merely make his resolution more stubborn by rendering it angrier than it is, and then there might come a coolness between you—indeed, something worse than coolness on his side; for in such minds as your cousin's it is impossible to imagine what dangerous ideas opposition may provoke."

I bowed in recognition of the truth of this, admiring in her a quality of sagacity that, to the fancy, at all events, of a young man, as I then was, would gather a new excellence from her graces. She looked at me with a tremble of light in her gaze that vexed its serenity.

"Besides, Mr. Monson, we must consider Henrietta."

"It is natural you should think wholly of her," said I.

"Not wholly. But this pursuit *may* end in rescuing her from Colonel Hope-Kennedy. It gives her a future chance. But you would have her husband sit quietly at home."

"Well, not exactly," I interrupted.

"What would you have him do?"

"Get a divorce," said I.

"He won't do that," she exclaimed. "Marriage in his sight is a sacrament. Do not you know his views, Mr. Monson?"

"You see, I have long lost sight of him."

"Well, I *know* he would not seek a divorce. He would be mad indeed," she cried, flushing to her brow, "to give my sister the liberty she wants, and Colonel Hope-Kennedy—" She faltered and stopped, biting her underlip, with the hot emotion which mounted to her face imparting a sudden air of womanly maturity to her girlish beauty, while her breast rose and fell to her ireful breathing. "This is no mad pursuit," she continued, after a brief pause, speaking softly. "What is there unreasonable in a man's determination to follow his wife that he may come as swiftly as the ship, the coach, the railway will permit him between her and a life of shame and remorse and misery?"

As she spoke my cousin arrived, holding a great meerschaum pipe in his hand. She at once rose and left the table, with a faint smile at me, and a glance on top of it that was as eloquent as a whisper

of regret at having been betrayed into warmth. Well, thought I, you are a sweet little woman, and it is highly probable that before I have been a week in your company I shall be head over ears in love with you. But for all that, you fair and artless creature, I don't agree with you in your views of this chase. Suppose Wilfrid recaptures his wife, what is he going to do with her? She is not a lunatic; he cannot lock her up—but I broke off to the approach of my cousin, fetched my pipe, and went on deck with him.

After all, it was about time I should now see that though we might shape a course for the yacht, and give the wind the name of the compass points whence it blew, Chance was our skipper and helmsman, and the regions into which he was leading us as blind and thick as smoke. Throughout life and in all things it is the same, of course; we sail with a fog that stands wall-like at the bows of our intentions, receding inch by inch with our advance, and leaving the water clear on either hand and astern, but ahead it remains forever as thick as mud in a wineglass. Anyhow, the chase was a sort of consolation to Wilfrid; it had Miss Laura's approval, and there was hope enough to be got out of it, according to her, to render her trustful. But for my part I could view it only as a yachting excursion, and I particularly felt this when I stepped on deck with my cousin, spite of my quite recent talk with his sweet sister-in-law, and felt the sweep of the strong wind, and caught the roar of the divided waters sounding a small thunder upon the ears after the comparative calm of the breakfast-table below.

CHAPTER VI.

FINN TESTS THE CREW'S SIGHT.

LITTLE of interest happened at the outset. There were but three of us for company; our ship was a small one, and the inner life of it a monotonous round of eating, drinking, smoking, of taking the wheel, of stumping the quarter-deck, of keeping a lookout, of scrubbing and polishing, and making and shortening sail; while outside there was nothing but weather and sea; so that in a very short time I had lapsed into the old ocean trick of timing the passage of the hours by meals.

But that I may not approach in a staggering or disjointed way the huddle of astonishments which *then* lay many leagues' distance past the gleam of the sea-line towards which our bowsprit was pointing, I will enter here in a sort of log-book fashion a few of the interests, features, and spectacles of this early passage of our singular excursion.

The fresh wind ran us well down Channel. Hour after hour the *Bride* was driving the green seas into foam before her, and there was a continuous, fretful heaving of the log to Wilfrid's feverish demands, until, I think, before we were two days out, the very souls of the crew had grown to loathe the cry of "Turn!" and the rattle of the reel.

That same morning—the morning, I mean, that I have dealt with in the last chapter—after Wilfrid and I had been smoking a little while under the lee of the tall bulwark, which the wind struck and recoiled from, leaving a space of calm in the clear above it to the height of a man's head, my cousin, who had been chatting with the utmost intelligence on a matter so remote from the object of this chase as a sale of yearlings which he had attended a few weeks before, sprang to his feet with the most abrupt breaking away imaginable from what he was talking about, and called to Captain Finn, who was coming leisurely aft from the neighborhood of the galley, with a sailorly eye upturned at the canvas, and a roll of his short legs that made you think he would feel more at home on all fours.

"Finn," cried Wilfrid, "there is no one on the lookout!" and he pointed with his long, awkward arm at the top-gallant yard.

"Why, hardly yet, sir," began Finn.

"Hardly *yet*," interrupted Wilfrid; "my orders were, day and night from the hour of our departure."

"Beg your honor's pardon, I'm sure, sir," said Finn. "I didn't quite take ye as meaning to be literal. Five days' start, you know, Sir Wilfrid—"

"What is that to *me?*" cried my cousin, impetuously; "it's the unexpected you've got to make ready for at sea, man. Figure something having gone wrong with the *Shark*—her masts overboard—a leak—fire; anyway," he cried, with the heat of a man who means to have his will, but who grows suddenly sensible of the weakness of his arguments, "have a fellow stationed aloft day and night. D'ye hear me, Finn?"

"Certainly I hear you, Sir Wilfrid."

He knuckled his forehead, and was in the act of moving away to give directions, when my cousin stopped him.

"No use sending *blind* men aloft, Finn—mere gogglers like myself, worse luck! You must find out the men with eyes in their heads in this ship."

Finn hung in the wind, sending a dull rolling glance at the five-guinea piece nailed to the main-mast. "If it worn't for that," he exclaimed, pointing to it, "it wouldn't matter; but if I pick and choose, 'twill be like stirring up the inside of a sty. The men'll argue that the piece of money is for the first man that sights the *Shark*, and they'll think it hard that a few of them only should be selected to stand a lookout aloft; for it will be but one of 'em that's chosen as can airn the money."

"Very true," said I.

"Confound it, Charles," cried my cousin, angrily, "what'll be the good of posting a short-sighted man up there?"

"All hands, Captain Finn, have got two eyes apiece in their heads," said I.

"All, sir," he answered, after a little reflection, "saving the mate, and he's got two eyes, too; only one makes a foul hawse of t'other."

"You may take it, Wilfrid," said I, "that your men are able to see pretty much alike."

"Is there no way of testing the fellows' sight?" cried Wilfrid, excitedly, with an unnecessary headlong manner about him as though he would heave his body along with every question he put or ex-

clamation he uttered; "then we could uproot the moles among them. Dash me, Finn, if I'm going to let the *Shark* slip astern of us for want of eyesight."

The skipper sent a slow, uncertain look around the horizon, evidently puzzled; then his face cleared a bit. He went to the weather-rail and stared ahead, crossed to leeward, and fastened his eyes on the sea on the lee bow. Then coming up to windward again he hailed a man who was at work upon the top-sail yard doing something to one of the stirrups of the foot-rope.

"Aloft there!"

"Holloa!"

"Jump on to the top-gallant yard, and let me know if there's anything in sight ahead or on either bow."

"Ay, ay, sir!"

The fellow got upon the yard, and leaned from it, with one hand grasping the tie, while with the other he shaded his eyes, and took a long whaling look. His figure was soft and firm as a pencil drawing against the hard and windy grayness of the heavens, and the rippling of his trousers to the wind, the yellow streak of his lifted arm, naked to the elbow, the inimitable, easy, careless pose of him as he swayed to the swift vibrations of the spar on which he stood, with the ivory-white curves of the jib and stay-foresail going down past him till they were lost forward of the top-sail, that yawned in a shadowed hollow which looked the duskier for the gleam of the pinion of staysail this side of it, made a little sea picture of quiet but singular beauty.

"Nothing in sight, sir," he bawled down. Finn raised his hand in token that he heard him, and turned to Wilfrid.

"Now, sir," said he, "something's bound to be heaving into view shortly ahead of us. We might test the men thus: one watch at a time; two men on the top-gallant yard, which can be hoisted without setting the sail; four men on the top-sail yard, and two men on the foreyard. I'll send Crimp on to the forecastle to see all's fair. There's to be no singing out; the man that sees the sail first is to hold up his arm. That'll test the chaps on the top-gallant yard, who, from the height they're posted at, are bound to see the hobject first; then it'll come to the top-s'l yard, and then to the foreyard. What d'ye say, sir? It'll take the men off their work, but for not long, I reckon, for something's bound to show soon hereabouts."

"An excellent notion," shouted Wilfrid, gleefully, all temper in him gone. "Quick about it, Finn; and, see here, there'll be a crown

piece for the man on each yard who's the first to hold up his arm."

"That'll skin their eyes for 'em," rumbled Finn, in a half-suppressed hurricane note, and he went forward, grinning broadly.

The port watch were mustered; I heard him explaining; the cock-eyed mate walked sulkily to the forecastle, and took up his place between the knight-heads in a sullen posture, his arms folded and his eyes turned up. "Away aloft!" There was a headlong rush of men, the rigging danced to their springs, and in a few moments every yard had its allotted number of lookouts.

It was not a test to believe in, for the instant an arm on the top-gallant yard was brandished the fellows below would know that something had hove into view, and the dishonest among them, calculating upon its appearance in due course, might flourish their fists before their eyes gave them the right to do so. However, Wilfrid looked hugely pleased, and you witnessed the one virtue of the test in *that*. He bet me a sovereign to ten shillings that the man on the port top-gallant yard-arm would be the first to lift his hand. I took him, and then naturally found the affair interesting.

In the midst of this business Miss Jennings arrived, cosily dressed in a jacket that fitted her shape, and a little hat that looked to be made of beaver curled on one side to a sort of cockade, where a small black plume rattled to the wind as I caught her hand and conducted her to my chair under the bulwarks. She started when she saw those sailors all staring in one direction with the intentness which the inspiration of five shillings would put into the nautical eye.

"What is in sight?" she exclaimed, looking round at Wilfrid with a pale face. "Surely—surely—"

I explained, while my cousin, rubbing his hands together and breaking into a loud but scarcely mirthful laugh, asked if she did not think it was a magnificent idea.

"Positively," she cried, with alarm still bright in her eyes, "I believed at first that the *Shark* or some vessel like her was in sight. But, Wilfrid, when a man climbs up there to look out, will not he have a telescope?"

"Yes, by day," he answered, "and a night-glass when the dark comes."

"Then, what good is there in that sort of test?" she inquired. "The shortest-sighted man with a telescope at his eye would be able to see miles farther than the longest-sighted."

"Ay," cried my cousin, "but a good sight 'll see farther through

a glass than a feeble one, and I want to find out who have got the good sight among those fellows."

I saw her peep askant at me, to gather what I thought of this business. Very clearly, she found nothing but childishness in it. Meanwhile, Wilfrid kept his large weak eyes fixed upon the two fellows on the top-gallant yard. They might have been a couple of birds perched on a bough, and he a hungry tomcat watching them. Finn was at the wheel, having sent the man who had been steering to join the others aloft. The mate, on the forecastle, looked sulkily up; the growling that was going on within him, and his astonishment and scorn of the whole proceeding, were inimitably expressed in his posture. Twenty minutes passed. I was sick of staring, and filled another pipe, though without venturing to speak, for the breathless intensity of expectation in Wilfrid's manner, along with the eager, aching, straining expression of his face upturned to where the men were, was a sort of spell in its way upon one, and I positively felt afraid to break the silence. On a sudden the man on the port side of the top-gallant yard raised his hand, and in the space of a breath afterwards up went the other fellow's arm. But my cousin had won his bet; he hit his leg a blow, with boyish delight strong in his face.

"A magnificent test, isn't it?" he whispered, as though he feared his voice would travel aloft; "now watch the top-sail yard. The fellows there haven't seen the gestures of the chaps above them. Another sovereign to ten shillings, Charles, that the outermost man to windward will hold up his hand first."

I took the bet, and as luck would have it, he won again, for a very few minutes after the sail had been descried from the loftiest yard the man whom Wilfrid had backed signalled, and then up went the arms of the other three, along with the arms of the two fellows who were stationed on the foreyard, as though they were being drilled, while a rumble of laughter sounded from among a group of the starboard watch, who were standing near the galley awaiting the issue of the test.

The hands came down; the mate set the crew to work; the fellow whose trick it was at the wheel relieved the captain, who walked up to us.

"That's what they sighted, sir," he exclaimed, pointing ahead where we could just catch a glimpse of an airy streak of a marble hue, which showed only whenever our speeding schooner lifted upon some seething brow that washed in thunder slantwise to leeward, but which pres-

ently enlarged to the proportions of a powerful cutter, apparently a revenue-boat, staggering under a press as though in a hurry, steering north for an English port.

Wilfrid's satisfaction was unbounded; his exuberance of delight was something to startle one, seeing that there was nothing whatever to justify it. As I looked at him I recalled Miss Laura's remark as to fits of excessive gloom following these irrational soarings of spirits, and expected shortly to find him plunged in a mood of fixed black melancholy. He told Captain Finn to have the other watch tested in the same way before the day was out, and produced fifteen shillings, ten of which were to go to the two men whom he had backed, and half a crown apiece to the fellows on the foreyard. Finn took the money with an eye that seemed actually to languish under its load of expostulation, but he made no remark. He anticipated, as I might, indeed, that fathom after fathom of hoarse forecastle arguments would attend this distribution, for assuredly the men on the foreyard were no more entitled to the money than the others who received none.

"Now, captain," cried Wilfrid, "send the man who first sighted that sail yonder aloft at once. Let the foretop-gallant yard be the lookout station; d'ye understand?"

"Yes, sir."

"Call Muffin."

But Muffin was too ill, or drunk, or both, to appear, so one of the stewards was summoned and ordered to bring from Sir Wilfrid's cabin a telescope that he would find in such and such a place. The man returned with the glass, a lovely Dollond, silver mounted.

"Try it, Charles," my cousin said to me.

I pointed it at the cutter, and found the lenses amazingly powerful and brilliant. "A superb glass, indeed," said I, returning it to him.

"Now, captain," said Wilfrid, with that *raised* look I have before referred to, "I dedicate this glass to the discovery of the *Shark*." His teeth met in a snap as he spoke the word, and his breathing grew labored. "Let this telescope be carried aloft by that top-gallant yard man who was the first to lift his hand, and there let it remain, passing from sunrise to sunset from hand to hand as the lookouts are relieved. Never on any account whatever is it to be brought down from that mast-head until the image of the craft we want is reflected fair in it. See to this, Finn."

"Ay, ay, sir!" responded the captain, with his long face still

charged with expostulation, though you saw he would not have disputed for the value of his wages.

"By-and-by," continued my cousin, "I'll give you a night-glass of equal power, to be dedicated to the same purpose."

"Thank 'ee, Sir Wilfrid; but, your honor"—and here the worthy fellow looked nervously from Sir Wilfrid to me—"am I to understand, sir, that this here beautiful instrument," handling it as if it were a baby, "along with t'other which you're to give me, is to be kept aloft day and night, no matter the weather?"

"Day and night, no matter the weather," said Wilfrid, in a sepulchral voice.

"Very good, sir; but I should like to say—"

"Now, pray, don't say anything at all," interrupted my cousin, peevishly; "you're losing time, Finn. Send that fellow aloft, will you? Gracious Heaven! Can't you see it makes one feel *desperate* to understand that there's nobody on the lookout?"

He jumped up and fell to pacing the deck with long, irritable strides. Finn, without another word, hurried forward. Presently the fellow who had first signalled sprang into the rigging, with the glass slung over his shoulder. He ran nimbly aloft, and was speedily on the top-gallant yard; and there he sat, with an arm embracing the mast, from time to time levelling the polished tube, that glanced like a ray of light in his hand, and slowly sweeping the sea from one beam to another. Wilfrid came to a stand at sight of him; he clasped his arms on his breast, his gaze directed aloft, while he swayed on one leg, with the other bent before him to the heave of the deck; his melodramatic posture made one think of a Manfred in the act of assailing some celestial body with injurious language. It pained me to look at him. He was pale and haggard, but there was the spirit of high breeding in every lineament to give the grace of distinction and a quality of spiritual tenderness to his odd, irregular, uncomely face. He stared so long and so fixedly at the man that I saw the fellows forward looking up too, as though there must be something uncommon there to detain the baronet's gaze. After a while he let his arms drop with an awakening manner, and slowly sent his eyes around the sea in the most absent way that could be till, his gaze meeting mine, he gave a start, and cried, with a flourish of one hand, while he pointed to the top-gallant yard with the other: "Day and night, Charles; day and night! And keep *you* on the lookout, too, will you, old friend? You carry a sailor's eye in your head, and have hunted under canvas before. We mustn't miss her;

we mustn't miss her!" And with a shake of his head he abruptly strode to the companion and went below.

I sat with Miss Jennings under the shelter of the bulwarks until hard upon luncheon-time. Wilfrid did not again make his appearance on deck that morning. The girl asked me if the test the men's eyesight had been put to was my cousin's notion. I answered that it was the captain's.

"Then, how stupid of him, Mr. Monson!"

"Well, perhaps so," said I; "but I'm rather sorry for Finn, do you know. It is not only that he has to execute orders which he may consider ridiculous; he has to plot so as to harmonize the plain routine of shipboard life with Wilfrid's irrational or extravagant expectations. But there is the mate; I have not spoken to him yet. Let's hear what *he* thinks of the skipper's testing job."

He was pacing the lee quarter-deck, being in charge of the yacht, though Finn had been up and down throughout the morning sniffing about uneasily, as though he could not bear to have the picture of the little ship out of his sight too long. I called to him, and he crossed over to us slowly, as though astonished that I should want him. His face had something of a Cape-Horn look, with its slewed eye and a number of warts riding the wrinkles of his weather-seasoned skin, and a mat of hair upon his throat as coarse as rope-yarns. He was no beauty, certainly, yet I fancied him somehow as a good seaman—maybe for the forecastle sourness of his face and a general sulkiness of demeanor, which I have commonly found as expressing excellent sea-going principles.

"You're the mate, I think, Mr. Crimp," said I, blandly.

"Yes, I'm the mate," he answered, staring from me to Miss Jennings, and speaking in a voice broken by years of bawling in heavy weather, and possibly, too, by hard drinking.

"We're blowing along very prettily, Mr. Crimp. If this breeze holds it cannot be long before we are out of soundings."

"No, I don't suppose it will be long," said he.

"Do you know the *Shark?*"

"Why, yes."

"Are we going to pick her up, think you?"

"Well, if we gets into her wake and shoves along faster nor she, there'll be nothin' to stop us picking her up," he answered, steadily viewing Miss Jennings and myself alternately, to satisfy his mind, as I took it, that we were not quizzing him.

"I suppose," said I, "that the captain will be testing the eyesight of the other watch presently?"

"Ay," said he, with a sort of sneer, "they'll go aloft after dinner."

"Isn't it a good test?"

"Don't see no use in it at all," he answered, gruffly, sending a look aloft, and following it on with an admonitory stare at the fellow at the wheel. "Suppose nothin' had hove into view; the men ud be still a-watching. 'Sides, observing an object at sea depends upon where your eyes is. One chap may be looking in another direction when his mate sings out. Is that going to stand for a sign that his sight's poor?"

"What do the men think?" said I, anxious to get behind the forecastle, so to speak, for I was never to know how far knowledge of this kind might be serviceable to us later on.

"Why, the watch has been a-grumbling and a-quarrelling over the rewards. They say 'tain't fair. If t'other watch is to be tested on the same terms, stand by for something like a melhee, says I."

"Oh, but that must be stopped," I exclaimed; "we want no 'melhees,' Mr. Crimp."

Just then I caught sight of Captain Finn. I beckoned to him, and the mate passed over to leeward, where he fell to pacing the deck as before. I told the skipper what Crimp had said, and he burst into a laugh.

"Melhees!" he exclaimed; "that's just what old Jacob ud like. He's a regular lime-juicer, sir, and distils hacid at every pore; but he's a first-class seaman. I'd rather have that man by my side at a time of danger than the choicest of all the sailors as I can call to mind that I've met in my day. But there'll be no melhee, sir; there'll be no melhee, lady. The men are grumbling a bit; and why? 'Cause they're sailors; but it'll be all right, sir. That there notion of testing—I don't mind owning of it to you—was merely to pacify Sir Wilfrid, sir. I'll carry out his orders, of course, and send the other watch aloft arter dinner. It'll have to cost another fifteen shillin', otherwise I don't mean to say there mightn't come a feeling of onpleasantness among the sailors; but Sir Wilfrid 'll not mind that, sir."

I drew the money from my pocket and gave it him. "Here," said I, "you needn't trouble Sir Wilfrid; I'll make it right with him. Only," I exclaimed, "keep the crew in a good temper; we do not want any disaffection. Heaven knows there's trouble enough aboard as it is!"

He knuckled his forehead, and the luncheon-bell now sounding, I handed Miss Jennings below; but I could not help saying to her, as we stood a moment together in the cabin, that I saw one part of my duty would lie in advising Wilfrid to have as little as possible to do with his crew and the working of the yacht; for grief and heart-bitterness had so sharpened his eccentricities that one never could tell what orders he might give of a nature to lead to difficulty and trouble with the men. "Perhaps," I added, "it might be thought that a sincere friendship would suffer him to have his way, in the hope that some measure of his would bring this goose-chase to an abrupt end, and force him home. But, then, *you* are interested in the pursuit, Miss Jennings, and Heaven forbid that effort, or influence, or agency of mine, should hinder you from realizing the hope with which you have embarked on this strange adventure!"

CHAPTER VII.

SAIL, HO!

A CHARACTERISTIC of Wilfrid's mental feebleness was his inability to keep his attention long fixed. This symptom would be more or less acute according to the hold his trouble had of him. He arrived at the luncheon-table to the second summons, and I was really startled, after conversing with him a little, to gather from what he said that the whole incident of the testing of the men's eyesight had gone sheer out of his memory. This being so, no purpose could have been served by recurring to it, though, had he mentioned the subject, I had made up my mind to use it as a text that I might exhort him not to meddle with his crew, nor in any way step between Captain Finn and the navigation of the *Bride*.

However, I found something to raise a hope in me, too, in his odd, variable, imperfect intellect—namely, that he might come presently to, but dimly, comprehend the purport of this voyage, and then I did not doubt of being able to influence him and carry him back home, in short; for the wild uncertainty of the adventure was made to my mind more extravagant still by the inspiration of it being due to my poor cousin's weak brains; in fact, not to mince my meaning, it would have been a mad undertaking in the sanest man's hands; to my fancy, then, it became the completest expression of madness possible, when I thought of a madman as conceiving and governing it.

Finn, as I afterwards learned, sent the other watch aloft while we were at lunch, and there they hung, staring away for an hour, when, just as the captain was about to sing out to them to come down, a fellow on the foreyard (the lowest of the three yards) signalled a sail, and then all hands saw it together! So, to arrest any further grumbling, Finn gave five shillings to the foreyard man, and made the watch draw lots for the other two five-shilling prizes. This arrangement satisfied them, and it seemed to soothe the fellows in the other watch as well, who perhaps now perceived that there was little but inanity in the test, and that the only sensible way to treat the whole affair was to look upon it as a joke.

This I learned afterwards from Finn, who did not show himself much surprised to hear that Sir Wilfrid had apparently forgotten the incident of the morning.

"You'll forgive me saying of it, Mr. Monson," he exclaimed, "seeing it is your own cousin I'm speaking about, sir; but I've been master of this yacht now since he bought her for her ladyship, and I know this much of Sir Wilfrid, that his mind ain't as if it were half the time with the orders he gives. He'll say a thing without the eyes of his intellects being upon it. The result is that soon after the word is off his lips the sentiment of 'em is gone from his recollection. It is like breathing on a looking-glass; there's the mark, but it don't last long."

It came on a bit thick that afternoon, with now and again a haze of rain in the gust of a squall, sweeping like the explosion of a gun into the straining canvas out of the heart of the hard but steady breeze; and this weather, together with some strange edge of cold that had entered it since luncheon-time, kept us below, though I was on deck for a little while when I had that chat with the skipper which I have just repeated. Wilfrid lighted his big pipe in the cabin, telling Miss Laura that she had given us leave to smoke there on the preceding night—an odd proof of his power to remember little things. The interior was a bit gloomy with the ashen atmosphere of the gray day sifting through the skylight and down the companion-hatch, and with a green dimness coming yet into it from time to time to the burying of the glass of the ports in the pale emerald of the clear brine under the froth that was roaring away past on the surface. But there was nothing much to incommode one in the movements of the vessel; wind and sea, as I have said, were on the quarter, and the lift of the tall Channel surge came soft as its own melting head to the weather-counter, running the shapely fabric into a long, arrowy floating launch ahead, with a lean down that was wrought by rhythmic action into a mere bit of cradle-play.

Snugged in the cushions of a most luxurious arm-chair, with the consoling scent of a fine cigar under my nose, and a noble claret within arm's-reach chilled to the temperature of snow by the richly chased silver jug which contained it, I felt that there must be greater hardships in life than yachting, even when the sailing cruise came to a hunt for a runaway wife. Miss Jennings sat near me with a novel in her lap, on whose open page her violet eyes would sometimes rest when the conversation languished. There was a mirror in the bulkhead just behind me, and her hair shone in it as though a sunbeam

rested on her tresses. Wilfrid lay at full length upon a couch, blowing clouds from his pipe, with his large, strange, weak eyes fixed upon the upper-deck. He talked a good deal of his travels, always rationally and often with evidences of a shrewd perception, but again and again he would withdraw his pipe from his mouth and seem to forget that he held it, sigh deeply, a long tremulous inspiration that was full of the tears of a heart which sobbed continuously, then start on a sudden, sit upright, and send a crazy wandering look at the port-hole near him; after which he would stretch his form again and resume his pipe, and fall to talking afresh, but never picking up the thread he had let drop, or speaking with the least reference to the anecdote, experience, incident, or what not, from whose relation he had just broken.

Once he jumped up, after lying silent for five or ten minutes, during which Miss Jennings seemed to read, while I, thinking of nothing in particular, lazily watched the rings of cigar-smoke I expelled float to the wreathing of flowers and foliage painted with delightful taste upon the cabin ceiling. His movement was extraordinarily abrupt; he put his pipe down and stalked to his cabin—*stalk* is the one word that expresses my cousin's peculiar walk when any dark or strange mood was upon him—and I presumed that he had gone into hiding for a while; but he quickly reappeared. There was a light in his eye and a spot of red on each high cheek-bone as he put a case in my hand, saying, "Will these do, d'ye think, Charles?"

It contained a handsome pair of duelling pistols.

"Upon my word, Wilfrid," said I, in an off-hand way, while I toyed with one of the weapons as if admiring it, "our little ship is not without teeth, eh? What with your gun forward and the small-arms near my cabin, and now *these*—you'll be having a powder-magazine on board, I suppose?"

"There'll be as much powder as we need, I dare say. What think you of those weapons?"

"They are quite killing. For what purpose are pills like these gilded so sumptuously? Is all this garnishing supposed to make death more palatable?"

Miss Laura extended her hand and I gave her the weapon I was examining. A look came into her face that made me feel glad I wasn't Colonel Hope-Kennedy just then. She flushed to some thought with a sudden sweep of her gaze to the port-hole, then looked again at the pistol while she bit her lip. I found something fascinating in this brief passage of spirit in her. Wilfrid, holding the other pistol, drew

himself erect before a length of looking-glass against the starboard bulkhead, and levelled the weapon at his own reflection. He stood motionless, save for the swaying of his figure upon the rolling deck, his head thrown back, his nostrils large, his countenance a sallow white; it was absolutely as though he believed in the reality of his own impersonation, and waited for the signal to fire.

"Bless me, Wilfrid!" cried I, "I hope these affairs of yours aren't loaded! Hair-triggers, by jingo! Mind—if they are—you'll destroy that fine piece of plate-glass."

Of course I knew better; but his rapt posture was a little alarming, and I said the first thing that came into my head, to break the spell. His arm sank to his side, and he turned to me with a grin that was bewildering with its conflicting emotions of anger, misery, and triumph.

"Let that man give me a chance!" said he, in a low but deep voice.

"Ay, but my dear boy," said I, relieved by his slowly returning the pistols to the case, "figure the boot on the other leg; supposing he kills *you?*"

"Good God!" cried he, "d'ye think *that* consideration would hinder me from attempting the life of the ruffian who has brought shame and dishonor upon me and my child?"

"No," said I, with a glance at Miss Laura, whom I found eying me with a look of surprise that sparkled with something more than a hint of temper; "but if we should meet this fellow on the open sea, and you challenge him, and he should kill you, what will you have done for yourself? Suffered him to put you quietly out of the road and achieve the double triumph of first taking your wife from you, and then making a widow of her!—which, of course, would answer his purpose very well, whether he designed matrimony or not, seeing that there could not be much peace of mind for him with the knowledge either that you were on his track, or waiting with spider-like patience in England for his return."

"By Heaven, Charles!" he roared out, "no man but you would dare talk to me like this—"

I raised my hand. "Wilfrid, nothing that you can say, no temper that you can exhibit, no menaces that you may utter, will prevent me from remembering that I am here at your earnest request as the one male friend you wished at your side in such a time, and from speaking to you as freely as I should think within myself. This, to be sure, is ridiculously premature. We have yet to fall in with

the *Shark*. Supposing *that* happens, and that Colonel Hope-Kennedy consents to fight you, and you insist, then it will not be for me to say you nay. But, believe me, nothing shall intimidate me from trying to make you understand that, honor or no honor, to give that rascal an opportunity of assassinating you would be the very maddest act your most righteous wrath could hurry you into."

He looked at me a little while in silence, was about to speak, checked himself, or maybe it was his voice that failed; a dampness came into his eyes, he compressed his lips till they were bloodless in the effort to suppress his tears; then, flourishing his arm with a gesture grievously expressive of the anguish he was feeling at that moment, he went to his cabin, and we saw no more of him till dinner-time.

I thought Miss Jennings would rebuke me for what I had said, and I gathered myself together, in an intellectual sense, for a little gentle fencing with her for a bit; for, let her hate the colonel as she might, and let her be as eager as she would that her sister should be speedily rescued from the villain she had sacrificed her honor for, I had made up my mind not to suffer her to imagine that I regarded a meeting between the two men as a necessary effect of the colonel's action; but that, on the contrary, I should consider it my duty to vehemently discountenance a duel, until I found that there was nothing in argument to dissuade my cousin; when, of course, I would render him such services as he might expect from me.

In short, as you will see, I took a cold-blooded view of the whole business. The prosaic arbitrament of the law! *that* was my notion. The shears of a dispassionate judge; no pistols and coffee for two, thank'ee! Methinks when it comes to one's wife preferring Jones or Tomkins to one's own lovely self, her new emotions should be helped, not by giving the latest darling of her heart the chance to kill one, but by starting one's attorney to play upon the blissful couple with the cold, black venom of his inkhorn!

Miss Jennings, however, made no reference to my speech, nor to the manner of Wilfrid's going. She remained quiet, and showed herself subdued and grieved for some time, and then we talked about the testing of the men's sight, and I repeated what Captain Finn had said to me on that subject. On a sudden she exclaimed:

"You told me, Mr. Monson, that you have never seen my sister."

"No; only heard of her, and then quite indirectly."

She went to her cabin, moving in a very inimitable, floating, graceful, yielding way, to the heave of the deck, never offering to grasp

anything for support, though the lee lurches were at times somewhat staggering, and I thought I never saw a more perfect little figure as she withdrew, her hair glowing, when her form was already vague, as she flitted into the shadow astern of the companion-steps, towards the dark corridor, or passage, which conducted to her cabin. She returned after a short absence with a miniature painting, set in a very handsome case, on which was my cousin's crest, with initials beneath, signifying that it was a gift from him to Laura Jennings. I carried it under the skylight to see it clearly.

"When was this done?" I asked.

"About a year ago," she answered; "Wilfrid sent it to Melbourne as a gift to me."

Now, it might be that I was *then*—taste, of course, changes—no very passionate admirer of dark women—brunettes, I mean, of a South European sort, which the face in the miniature was after the pattern of—and that is why, no doubt, the expectation in me of the ripe and tropic graces I was to behold was not a little disappointed. Any one could see by the likeness that Lady Monson was a fine woman; her hair was raven black, but there was a want of taste in the fashion in which it was dressed; her eyes were bright, imperious, rather too staring, with something of haughty astonishment in their expression; but this might have been the artist's misinterpretation of their character. She was as like her sister Laura as I was like *her*. Her mouth was somewhat large, rich, voluptuous; the throat very beautiful, with something about the line or curve of the jaw which would have made you suspect, without knowing the original, that the character of this part of the face was exquisitely reproduced. It was a heaviness to communicate a slightly masculine air to the whole countenance. I turned to Miss Jennings, and found her eyes intent on my face.

"She is a handsome lady," said I, "handsomer, I should think, than she is here represented, quite apart, I mean, from the glow of countenance, the animation of look, and all the rest of the things which go to make up two-thirds at least of human beauty."

She took the miniature in silence.

"She is not like you," said I.

"Not in the least," she exclaimed. "I am little, she is very tall. She has a commanding manner, a rich voice, and, indeed," she added, with a smile, and then looking down, "any one might suppose her of noble blood."

I should have liked to tell her how very much sweeter and pret-

tier she was than her sister; what a very different sort of heart, as it seemed to me, from her ladyship's, looked out at you from her violet eyes; how very much more good, pure, gentle, sympathetic, womanly was the expression of her mouth compared with what I had found in the portrait's. But our friendship was rather too new just then for such candor as this; yet I would not swear that some faint suspicion did not cross her of what was in my mind, though so subtle are women's ways, so indeterminable by words the meaning that may be perfectly emphatic to every instinct in one in the turn of the head, a droop of the lid, a sudden, soft tincturing of the cheek, that I have no reason to offer for supposing this.

She took the miniature to her cabin, and I waited a while, thinking she would return. I then lighted a cigar, but as I stepped towards the companion, with the design of killing the rest of the afternoon till the dinner-hour on deck, Muffin came down the steps. He looked hideously sallow, and carried a horribly dismal expression of countenance, but he appeared to be no longer in liquor.

"Well," said I, shortly, "how are you now, Muffin?"

"Uncommonly queer, I am sorrowful to say, sir," he answered, patting his stomach and falling away on his left leg with a humbly respectful downcast look, and a writhe of the lips into a smile that would have been expressionless if it was not that it increased his ugliness by the exhibition of a row of fangs of the color of the keys of an ancient harpsichord. "The sea is not a congenial *spear*, sir."

"Sphere, I suppose you mean," said I; "but give yourself a day or two, man; the sickness will wear off."

"I *beg* your pardon, sir—" he paused, still keeping his eyes downward, while he bowed meekly and respectfully, but with an air of profound dejection.

"Well?" I exclaimed, running my gaze over the fellow's odd figure, with a yearning to laugh in me at the sight of the gouty bulgings of his feet over his pumps.

"*May* I take it, sir," said he, clasping his hands humbly upon his waistcoat, "that there is no disposition on the Bayronet's part to give up chasing of her ladyship by water?"

"You *may*," said I, bluntly. "Why, confound it, Muffin, we've only just entered on the run!"

He turned up his eyes to heaven till nothing showed but the bloodshot whites. "Sir, I humbly beg your pardon. It seems an ordacious liberty for the likes of me to be questioning the likes of you; but *may* I ask, sir, *is* the voyage likely to carry us fur?"

"Well, it is about six thousand miles to the Cape, to begin with," said I.

"Good God!" he cried, startled out of all respectfulness. "Why, there'll be years of sailing in that distance, sir, begging your pardon for the hexclamation my agitation caused me to make, sir."

"If you want to return," said I, feeling a sort of pity for the poor devil, for the consternation that worked in him lay very strong upon his yellow face, "your plan must be to obtain Sir Wilfrid's permission to transship yourself into the first vessel we speak that will be willing to receive you and carry you to England. It is the only remedy I can suggest."

He bowed very meekly and with a manner of respectful gratitude; nevertheless, something in him seemed to tell me that he was not very much obliged by my suggestion, and that if he quitted Wilfrid's service it would not be in the manner I recommended.

Nothing worth noting happened till next day. It was in the afternoon. The Scillies were astern, and the broad Atlantic was now stretching fair under our bows. A strong fine wind had bowled us steadily down Channel, and the utmost had been made of it by Captain Finn, who, despite his talk of studding-sails and stowed anchors, had sent his booms aloft ere we had brought Prawle Point abeam, and the *Bride* had swept along before the strong wind, that would come in slaps at times, with almost the spite of a bit of a hurricane in them, under a foretop-mast studding-sail; whence you will gather that the yacht was prodigiously crowded; but then Finn was always under the influence of the fear of Wilfrid's head in the companion-hatch; for I learned that several times in the night my cousin unexpectedly made his appearance on deck, and his hot, incessant command to both Finn and old Jacob Crimp, according as he found one or the other in charge, was that they were to sail the yacht at all hazards short of springing her lower masts, for in the matter of spare booms and suits of canvas she could not have been more liberally equipped had her errand signified a three years' fighting voyage.

Well, as I have said, it was the afternoon of the third day of our leaving Southampton. The breeze had slackened much about the time that Finn stood ogling the sun through his sextant, and then it veered in a small puff and came on to blow a gentle, steady wind from south-south-east, which tautened our sheets for us and brought the square yards fore and aft. There was a long broad-browed swell from the southward that flashed under the hazy sun-

light like splintered glass with the wrinkling of it, over which the yacht went rolling and bowing in a rhythm as stately and regular as the swing of a thousand-ton Indiaman, with a sulky lift of foam to her cut-water at every plunge and a yeasty seething spreading on either quarter, the recoiling wash of it from the counter as snappish as surf. Suddenly from high above, cleaving the vaporous yellow of the atmosphere in a dead sort of way, came a cry from the lookout man on the top-gallant yard, "Sail, ho!" and the sparkle of the telescope in his hands as he levelled the glittering tube at the sea, over the starboard bow, rendered the customary echo of "Where away?" unnecessary.

There was nothing, however, to take notice of in this; the cry of "Sail, ho!" had been sounding pretty regularly on and off since the lookout aloft had been established, as you will suppose when you think of the crowded waters we were then navigating; though everything thus signalled so far had hove into view broad on either bow or on either beam. We were all on deck; that is to say, Miss Jennings, snug in a fur cloak—for the shift of wind had not softened the temperature of the atmosphere—in a chair near the skylight; Wilfrid near her, lying upon the ivory-white plank smoking a cigar, with his head supported on his elbow, and I stumping the deck close to them, with Finn abreast of the wheel to windward. We were in the midst of some commonplace chatter when that voice from aloft smote our ears, and when we saw the direction in which the fellow was holding his glass levelled we all looked that way, scarce thinking for the moment that if the stranger were heading for us she would not be in sight from the deck for a spell yet, and as long again if she were travelling our course.

Miss Jennings resumed her seat; Wilfrid stretched his length along the deck as before; and I went on pacing to and fro close beside them.

"It will be a Monday on which we sight the *Shark*," said Wilfrid.

"How do you know?" said I.

"I dreamed it," he answered.

Miss Jennings looked at him wistfully, as if she believed in dreams.

"It was an odd vision," he continued, with a soft, far-away expression in his eyes, very unlike the usual trouble in them. "I dreamed that on hearing of the—of the"—he pushed his hair from his forehead, and spoke with his hand to his brow—"I say that I dreamed I flung myself on horseback—it was a favorite mare—Lady Henrietta, Laura"—she bowed her head—"and gave chase. I did

not know which way to go, so I let fall the reins on the animal's neck, and left the scent to the detection of her instincts. She carried me to the sea-coast, a desolate bit of a bay, I remember, with the air full of the moaning of vexed waters and a melancholy crying of wind in the crevices and chasms of the cliff, and the whole scene made gaunter than it needed to have been, as I fancied, by a skeleton that was one moment that of a big fish and the next of a man, fluctuating upon the sight like an image seen three fathoms deep floating in such glass-clear water as you get in the West Indian latitudes." He paused. "Where was I?" he inquired, with an air of bewilderment.

"Your horse had carried you to the sea-shore," said Miss Laura, with her face full of credulity. I love a superstitious girl, and who is the woman that does not believe in dreams?

"Ha!" he cried, after a brief effort of memory; "yes, the mare came to a stand on the margin of the beach, and Heaven knows whence the apparition rose; but there was an empty boat tossing before me, with a sort of sign-post erected in her, a pole with a blackboard upon it on which was written, in letters that glowed as though wrought by a brush dipped in a sunbeam, the single word 'Monday!'"

"Pooh!" said I, scornfully, and fancying at the moment that something stirred in the companion-way. I moved a step or two in that direction, and saw Muffin, with his head a trifle above the level of the top step, apparently taking the air, though no doubt he was diverting himself too by listening to our talk. On seeing me he descended, stepping backward with a sickly respectful smile of apology.

"Why do you say pooh, Mr. Monson?" asked Miss Jennings. "Wise people never ridicule dreams until they have been disproved."

I admired her arch air, that floated like a veil of gauze over her sympathy with Wilfrid.

"I don't want to believe in dreams," said I; "my own dreams are much too uncomfortable to make me desire faith in that direction."

I glanced at Wilfrid; his eyes were staring right up at the vane at the maintop-mast head, and it was easily seen that he was no longer thinking of what we had been talking about. Miss Jennings opened the novel that lay in her lap, and seemed to read; there was a store of this sort of literature in the yacht, laid in, I dare say, by Sir Wilfrid for Lady Monson, who, I don't doubt, was a great devourer of novels; the trash in one, two, and three volumes of an age

of trashy fiction, of a romantic literature of gorgeous waistcoats, nankeen breeches, and Pelham cravats. I don't think Miss Jennings had read much of the book she held. It was called "The Peeress," and I believe it had taken her two days to arrive at the end of the first chapter. But then, who can read at sea? For my part, I can never fix my attention. In a dead calm I am prone to snooze; in a brisk breeze every swoop of surge, every leap of frothing head, every glance of sunshine, every solemn soaring of white cloud up the slope of the liquid girdle is an irresistible appeal to quit my author for teachers full of hints worth remembering; and then, indeed, I yield myself to that luxury of passivity Wordsworth rhymes about—that disposition to keep quiet until I am visited with impulses—the happiest apology ever attempted by a home-keeping poet for an unwillingness to be at the trouble to seek beyond his hill-side for ideas.

"Here is a flowery fancy!" exclaimed Miss Jennings, and she began to read. It was something—I forget what—in the primitive Bulwerian vein; plenty of capitals, I dare say, and without much sense that I could make out to linger upon the ear; but one sentence I remember: "He had that inexpressible air of distinction which comes as a royal gift from Heaven to members of old families, and only to them."

"Stupid ass!" exclaimed Wilfrid, whom I had imagined to be wool-gathering.

"But there is truth in it, though," said Miss Jennings.

"What is an old family?" I exclaimed.

"Why, a good family, surely, Mr. Monson," she answered.

"No, no, Laura," grumbled Wilfrid. "I could introduce you to a 'longshore sailor who can't sign his name, and whose sole theory of principle lies in successfully hoodwinking the revenue people, who will tell you that his forefathers have been boatmen and smugglers for over three hundred years, and who could feel his way back along a chain of Jims, Dicks, and Joes, without a link missing down, maybe, to a time when the progenitors of scores of our dukes, earls, and the rest of them were—tush! That boatman belongs to an old family."

"Then, pray, what is a good family?" inquired Miss Jennings.

"Yonder's the sail that was sighted a while agone, Sir Wilfrid," sung out Captain Finn, in his leather-lunged voice.

My cousin sprang to his feet, and the three of us went to the rail to look.

CHAPTER VIII.

WE SPEAK THE "WANDERER."

On the lee bow was a dash of orange light, much less like the sails of a ship than a feather vapor bronzed by a sunset and vanishing in the tail of a cloud.

"How does she head, Finn?" cried Wilfrid to the skipper, who was viewing her through a long, heavy, powerful glass of his own.

"Coming dead on end for us, sir."

"What'll she be, captain?" said I.

He eyed her a bit and answered, "A square rig, sir; a bit of a bark, I dare say."

My cousin suddenly slapped his leg—one of his favorite gestures when a fit of excitement seized him. "Charles," he bawled, "we'll speak her. D'ye hear me, Finn? We'll speak her, I say!"

"Ay, ay, sir!" cried the captain.

"She may have news for us," Wilfrid proceeded; "it is about time we fell in with something that has sighted the *Shark*."

"A bit betimes, sir," said Finn, touching his cap and approaching to give me his telescope, which I had extended my hand for.

"Confound it, man!" cried Wilfrid, in a passion, "everything's always too soon with you. Suppose by this time to-morrow we should have the schooner in sight—what then, hey? What would be your arguments? That she had no business to heave in sight *yet?*"

Finn made no answer, but pulled his cap off to scratch his head, with his lips muttering unconsciously to himself to the energy of his secret thoughts, and his long face, which his mouth seemed to sit exactly in the middle of, working in every muscle with protest.

The distant vessel was showing in the glass as high as the curve of her fore-course, with now and again a dim sort of refractive glimmer of wet black hull rising off a head of sea into an airy, pale length of light that hung in a low gleam between the junction of sea and sky. The sun was westering though still high, but his orb was rayless, and the body of him looked no more than an oozing of shapeless yellow flame into the odd sky, that seemed a misty blue in places, though where it appeared so you would notice a faint outline

of cloud, and as he waned his reflection in the wind-wrinkled heave of the long head-swells seemed as if each broad, soft brow was alive with runnings of flaming oil.

There was to be no more argument about good and bad families. Wilfrid now could think of nothing but the approaching vessel, and the child-like qualities which went to the creation of his baffling, unfixable nature showed in an eager impatience, in which you seemed to witness as much of boyish desire for something fresh and new to happen as of anything else. For my part, I detest arguments. They force you to give reasons and to enter upon definitions. I fancied, however, I was beginning to detect Miss Laura's little weakness. There was a feminine hankering in her after ancient blood, sounding titles, high and mighty things. As I glanced at her sweet face I felt in the humor to lecture her. What but this weakness had led to her sister's undoing? Wilfrid was a worthy, honest, good-hearted, generous-souled creature, spite of his being a bit mad; but I could not imagine he was a man to fall in love with, and in this queer chase we had entered upon there was justification enough of *that* notion. His wife had married him, I suppose, for position, which she had allowed the first good-looking rogue she met to persuade her was as worthless as dust and ashes unless a human heart beat inside it. And the scoundrel was right, though he deserved the halter for his practical illustration of his meaning. I met Miss Jennings's eye, and she smiled. She called softly to me:

"You are puzzling over the difference between a good and an old family!"

"I wish my countenance were less ingenuous," said I.

"Hadn't you better run up some signal," exclaimed Wilfrid, turning upon Finn, "to make yonder craft know that we want her to stop?"

"Lay aft here, a couple of hands," shouted Finn, in a sulky note.

Two seamen instantly came along. The flag-locker was dragged from its cleats, or chocks, under the small, milk-white grating abaft the wheel; Finn, with a square, carrot-colored thumb, ploughed into the book of directions; then, after a little, a string of butterfly bunting soared gracefully to the top-mast head, where the flags were to be best seen, a long pennant topping the gay colors like a tongue of flame against the rusty yellow of the atmosphere; the dip of the yacht to the swell became a holiday courtesy, and you thought of her as putting on a simper like some pretty country wench newly pranked out by her sweetheart with a knot of ribbons.

"Aft and haul up the main-tack; round in on the weather fore-braces, and lay the top-sail to the mast; down hellum! so—leave her at that!" and the *Bride*, with the wide ocean heave lifting to the bow, came to a stand, her way arrested, the wind combing her fore and aft canvas like the countless invisible fingers of giant spirits, and a dull plash and sulky wash of water alongside, and a frequent sharp clatter of wheel-chains to the jar of the churning rudder. There was the true spirit of the deep in this picture then, for the seamen had dropped the various jobs they were upon and stood awaiting orders about the decks, every man's shadow swaying upon the salt sparkling of the spotless planks, and all eyes directed at the approaching craft, that had now risen to her wash-streak and was coming along in a slow, stately roll, with her canvas yearning from flying-jib to fore-royal, every cloth yellow as satin, and flashes of light like the explosion of ordnance breaking in soft sulphur-colored flames from her wet side as she lifted it sunward from the pale blue brine, that melted yeastily from her metalled fore-foot into two salival lines which united abaft and went astern in a wake that looked as if she were towing some half-mile length of amber-tinctured satin. Yet there was no beauty in her as in *us;* it was the sweetness and grace of airy distance working in her, and the mild and misty gushing of the afternoon radiance, and the wild infolding arms of the horizon sweeping, as it were, the very soul of the mighty ocean loneliness into her solitary shape and into her bland and starlike canvas, until you found her veritably spiritualized out of her commonplace meaning into a mere fairy fancy, some toylike imagination of the deep; but she hardened rapidly into the familiar prosaics of timber, sail-cloth, and tackling as she came floating down upon us, sinking to her narrow white band, then poised till a broad width of her green sheathing was exposed, with a figure in a tall chimney-pot hat standing on the rail, holding on by a backstay.

She was a slow old wagon, and one saw the reason of it as she came sliding along, rolling like an anchored galliot in a sea-way, in her bows as round as an apple and her kettle-bottom run; and Wilfrid's impatience grew into torture to us to see almost as much as to him to feel as he'd pace the deck for a minute or two tumultuously, then fling against the rail with a wild stare at the approaching craft, as if indeed he was cocksure she was full of news for him, though for my part it seemed mere trifling with the yacht's routine to back her yard that we might ask questions at that early time of day. She steered so as to come within easy hail, and then, boom-

ending her foretop-mast studding-sail, she backed her maintop-sail and floated the full length of her out abreast of us within pistol-shot, pitching clumsily and bringing her bows out of it with the white brine frothing like lace-work all about her there, her line of bulwarks dotted with heads watching us, the sounds of the creaking of her aloft very clear, along with a farm-yard noise of several cocks crowing one after the other lustily, and the lowing of bulls or cows.

"Bark ahoy!" sung out Captain Finn, funnelling his hands as a vehicle for his voice.

"Holloa!" cried the figure that stood upon the rail, in the most cheery, laughing voice that can be conceived.

"What ship is that?"

"The *Wanderer*."

"Where are you from, and where are you bound to?"

"From Valparaiso to Sunderland," answered the other, in a way that made one think he spoke with difficulty through suppressed mirth.

"Will you tell us," bawled Finn, "if you've sighted an outward-bound fore-and-aft schooner-yacht within the past week?"

"Sighted a fore-and-aft schooner-yacht? Ay, that I have, master; fine a vessel as yourn, pretty nigh," shouted the other as though he must burst in a moment into a roar of laughter.

"Ask him aboard! ask him aboard!" cried Wilfrid, wild with excitement, slapping his knee till it was like a discharge of pistols. "Beg him to do me the favor of drinking a bottle of champagne with me; ask him—ask him—but first ascertain if he has made an entry of the meeting in his log-book."

"Ay, ay, sir! Ho, the bark ahoy!"

"Holloa!"

"Can you tell us when and whereabouts ye fell in with that there schooner?"

"Tell ye? To be sure I can; got it in black and white, master. Ha, ha, ha!" and here the old figure in the tall hat clapped his hand to his side and laughed outright, toppling and reeling about on the rail in such a manner that I took it for granted he was drunk, and expected every moment to see him plunge overboard.

"Ask him aboard! ask him aboard!" shrieked Wilfrid. "Request him to bring his log-book with him. We will send a boat."

Finn hailed the bark again. "Sir Wilfrid Monson's compliments to you, sir, and will be pleased to see you aboard to drink a bottle

of champagne with him. Will you kindly bring your log-book with you? We will send a boat."

"Right y'are," shouted the old chap, with a humorous flourish of his hand; and so speaking, he sprang inboard, laughing heartily, and disappeared down his little companion-hatch.

A boat was lowered, with four men, in charge of surly old Crimp. My cousin's excitement was a real torment to witness. He smote his hands violently together while he urged the men at the top of his voice to bear a hand and be off or the bark would be swinging her top-sail and sailing away from us. He twitched from head to foot as though he must fall into convulsions; he bawled to the sailors not to wait to cast anything adrift, but to put their knives through it as though somebody were drowning astern and the delay of a single moment might make all the difference between life or death. "By Heaven!" he cried, halting in front of me and Miss Jennings, with a fierceness of manner that was rendered almost delirious by the quality of savage exultation in it, "I knew it would fall out thus! They cannot escape me. Of course it is the *Shark* that that fellow has sighted." He broke from us and ran to the rail and overhung it, gnawing his nails while he watched the receding boat, with his eyelids quivering and his face working like that of a man in acute pain.

"I fear," said I, in a low voice to Miss Jennings, "that it would not require more than two or three incidents of this sort to utterly dement him. His resolution is strong enough. Why in the name of pity will not he secure his mind to it? It's bound to go adrift else, I fear."

"But realize what he has suffered, Mr. Monson," she answered, gently. "Such a blow might unseat a stronger reason than his. I cannot wonder at his excitement. Look how I am trembling!" She lifted her little hand, which shook as though she had been seized with a chill, but there was tremor enough in her voice to indicate her agitation. "The mere idea that the *Shark* may be much nearer to us than we imagine—that this chase may very shortly bring her within sight of us—" a strong shiver ran through her. "Do you believe it is the *Shark* that that old man saw?"

"I shall be better able to judge when he comes aboard," said I. "See, our boat is alongside. They must fend her off handsomely, by George, if she is not to be swamped! Heavens, how that old cask wallows!"

In a few moments the old man in the tall hat came to the gang-

way and looked over; there was apparently some discussion; I imagined the elderly humorist was going to funk it, for I fancied I saw him wag his head; but, on a sudden, all very nimbly, he dropped into the wide main-chains, whence, watching his opportunity, he toppled into the boat, which immediately shoved off. Wilfrid went to the gangway to receive him. I was a little apprehensive of the effect of my cousin's behavior—which had something of the contortions and motions of a galvanized body—upon the old sea-dog that was coming, and I say I rather hoped that this captain might be a bit too tipsy to prove a nice observer. I took a view of him as he sat in the stern-sheets, the boat sinking and rising from peak to hollow as she burst through the water to the gilded, sparkling sweep of the admirably handled oars, and could have laughed out of mere sympathy with the broad grin that lay upon his jolly, mottled countenance. His face was as round as the full moon, and of the appearance of brawn; his nose was a little fiery pimple; small white whiskers went in a slant in the direction of his nostrils, coming to an end under either eye. His hat was too big for him, and pressed down the top of his ears into the likeness of overhanging flaps under the Quaker-like breadth of brim; his mouth was stretched in a smile all the time he was approaching the yacht, and he burst into a loud laugh as he grasped the man-ropes and bundled agilely up the side of the *Bride*.

"You are very good to come on board, sir," cried Wilfrid, bowing with agitation, and speaking as though suffering from a swollen throat, with the hurry, anxiety, impatience which mastered him. "I thank you for this visit. I see you have your log-book with you. Let me inquire your name?"

"Puncheon, sir. Ha, ha, ha! Toby Puncheon, sir; a rascally queer name, ho, ho! And your honor's a lord, ain't ye? I didn't quite catch the words. He, he, he!" rattled out the old fellow, laughing after almost every other word, and staring at us one after another as he spoke, without the least diminution of his prodigious grin.

"No, no; not a lord," exclaimed Wilfrid, "but pray step this way, Captain Puncheon. Charles, please accompany us. Captain Finn, I shall want you below."

He led the road to the companion, calling to the steward, while he was yet midway down the steps, to put champagne and glasses upon the table.

Captain Puncheon's grin grew alarmingly wide as he surveyed

the glittering cabin. "My eye!" he cried, after a rumbling laugh full of astonishment, "them's looking-glasses and *no* mistake! And pickle me blue if ever I see the likes of such lamps afore on board ship!" growing grave an instant to utter a low whistle. "Why, it's finer than a theaytre, ain't it?" he exclaimed, turning to me, once more grinning from ear to ear, and addressing me as if I was his mate that had come off with him. His glass was filled; he drank to us, and pulled his log-book out of the piece of newspaper in which he had brought it wrapped up.

"Will you kindly give us," said Wilfrid, "the date on which you passed the schooner-yacht?"

"Ay, that I will," cried Puncheon, turning back the pages of his log, and then pouncing upon an entry with a forefinger curled by rheumatism into the aspect of a fish-hook, as though the piece of writing would run away if he did not keep it squeezed down upon the page. He felt about his coat with his other hand, and then bursting into a laugh, exclaimed: "Gents, you must read for yourselves. Blow'd if I ain't gone and forgot my glasses."

The entry was perfectly ship-shape, and written in a round, somewhat trembling old hand. There were the usual records of weather, courses steered, and the like, and under the heading of observations was: "Passed large schooner-yacht, steering west-south-west. Hoisted our ensign, but she showed no colors." The log gave the latitude and longitude of this encounter as 16° west longitude, 41° 30′ north latitude.

I hurriedly made certain calculations after reading aloud this entry, and, addressing Finn, said, "If that vessel be the *Shark*, she has managed to hold her own so far."

"Ay, sir," answered Finn, peering at my figures, "but what's been her weather?"

"Are you chasing of her, gents?" whipped out Puncheon, smiling, as though he only waited for us to answer to break into a roar of laughter.

"Yes," cried Wilfrid, fiercely, "and we mean to catch her;" then, controlling himself, "Captain, will you be so good as to describe the vessel you met?"

"Describe her? 'Course I will," answered the old chap, and forthwith he gave us a sailorly picture of a yacht apparently of the burden of the *Shark*, a fore-and-aft schooner, a long, low, black, handsome vessel, loftily rigged even for a craft of her kind. She passed within a mile and a half of the *Wanderer;* it was about

eight o'clock in the morning, the sunshine bright, the wind north-east, a pleasant air. I asked Puncheon if he examined her with his glass. "Examine her through my glass? Ay, that I did," he answered, in his hilarious way. "I see some figures aboard aft. No lady. No, ne'er a hint of a female garment. Happen if there was women they was still abed, seeing how young the morn was for females as goes to sea for pleasure. I took notice of a tall gent in a white cap with a naval peak and a white jacket." That was about as much as he could tell us, and so saying, he regaled himself with a hearty laugh. Finn questioned him as one sailor would another on points of the yacht's furniture aloft, but the old fellow could only speak generally of the impression left upon him. Wilfrid's face was flushed with excitement.

"Finn," he exclaimed, "what do you think?"

"Why, your honor," said the man, deliberately, "putting two and two together, and totalling up all sarcumstances of rig, haspect, time, and place, I don't doubt that the schooner-yacht Captain Puncheon here fell in with was the *Shark*."

Puncheon rose.

"Empty this bottle," cried Wilfrid to him. "By Heaven, man, the news you give me does me good, though!"

The old chap filled up, grinning merrily.

"Gents," he cried, holding the foaming glass aloft and looking at it with one eye closed, "your errand's an honest one, I'm sure, and so here's success to it. The craft I fell in with has got legs, mind ye. Yes, by thunder!—ha, ha, ha!—she's got legs, gents, and'll require all the catching I expects your honors have stomachs for. 'Tain't to be done in the inside of a month—he, he, he!—and so I tells ye. See her slipping through it under her square-sail! God bless my body and soul, 'twas like the shadow of a cloud running ower the waters. But give yourselves a long course, gents all, and you've got a beauty here as must lay her aboard—in time. Ha, ha, ha! Your honors, my respects to you."

Down went the wine, and up he got, pulling his hat to his ears, and stepping with a deep-sea roll up the companion-ladder. We followed him to the gangway.

"Is there nothing more to ask, Charles?" cried Wilfrid.

But Puncheon had given us all that he had to tell, and though I could have wished him to hint at something distinctive in the vessel's hull, such as her figure-head or any other point of the like kind in which the *Shark* might differ from vessels of her build and ap-

pearance, yet there was the strongest possible reason to suppose that the craft he reported was Lord Winterton's schooner, with Lady Monson and Colonel Hope-Kennedy on board.

While Captain Puncheon waited for the yacht's boat to haul alongside, Sir Wilfrid sent for a box of cigars, which he presented to the old chap. The gift produced such a grin that I saw some of the hands forward turn their backs upon us to conceal their mirth.

"Do you think, captain," exclaimed Wilfrid, once more rendered almost alarmingly convulsive in his movements by the excitement that filled him, "that there are men aboard your vessel who took note of more than you did in the yacht's appearance? If so—"

But Puncheon interrupted him by saying that he was the only man who examined the schooner through a glass, and therefore neither his mate nor any of the seamen who were on deck at the time could possibly have observed her so fully as he.

"Make haste and return," bawled my cousin to the fellows in the boat as they shoved off with the grinning old skipper in the stern-sheets. "Every moment is precious," he muttered, walking briskly in short turns opposite Miss Jennings and me. "To think of them sneaking along like the shadow of a cloud, hey!" he sent a wildly impatient look aloft, and brought his foot with a heavy stamp to the deck.

"It *is* the *Shark*, then?" whispered Miss Jennings.

"No doubt of it," I answered.

She glanced at me as if she had been wounded, and her lips turned pale. Well, thought I, anticipation, to be sure, is often the worst part of an affair of this sort, but if the mere hearing of the *Shark* affects this little sweetheart so violently, how will the sighting of the craft serve her, and the boarding of her, if ever it comes to it? In a few minutes the yacht's boat was returning, while you saw the figure of old Puncheon clambering out of his main-chains over the bulwarks of the *Wanderer*. A little later and there were hands tailing onto the falls, the boat rising, dripping, to the davits, and the foretop-sail yard slowly pointing its arm to the wind; then, to the full weight of the breeze sweeping, red with the sunset, into her hollowed canvas, the *Bride* leaned down, sullenly shouldering the swell into foam with the first stubborn push of her bows, till, gathering way, she was once more swinging into the west and south, with the gloom of the evening growing into a windy vagueness on her lee beam; while on the weather-quarter, black as indigo against

the dull western redness, was the figure of the bark rolling with filled maintop-sail over the long Atlantic heavings, and rapidly diminishing into the fragile beauty of some exquisitely carved toy of ebony-wood on the skirts of the rising and falling fan-shaped stretch of seething paleness that marked the limits of the *Bride's* wake.

Wilfrid, who had been standing at the compass staring with a frown at the card, with his arms folded, while the men trimmed sail and started the yacht afresh, marched up to me when that business was over, and exclaimed, "What did you make the average of the *Shark's* daily runs, according to Puncheon's reckonings of the place of his meeting her?"

"About one hundred and eighty miles a day," I answered.

"*We* haven't been doing that, though!"

"No; but wait a little," said I; "let your *Bride* feel the trade-wind humming aloft."

"Finn!" he bawled. The captain came running to us. "Fetch the track chart, Finn. There's light enough yet to see by."

The man disappeared, and very quickly returned with a handy chart of the world, which he unrolled and laid on top of the sky-light. We all overhung it, Miss Jennings among us. The men forward watched us curiously. Something in the manner of them suggested to the swift glance I sent their way that the perception our voyage was more serious, with a wilder, sterner purpose in it than they had imagined, was beginning to dawn upon them since Puncheon's visit.

"Mark the spot, Finn," exclaimed Wilfrid, in the dogged voice of a man sullenly and obstinately struggling to master a feeling of exhaustion—"the exact spot where the bark fell in with the *Shark*."

Finn produced a parallel ruler, a pair of compasses, a pencil, and the like, calculated, and indicated the spot by a little cross.

"How short the distance she has sailed seems!" exclaimed Miss Jennings.

"Fifteen degrees of latitude, though," said I; "these charts are mighty deceptive. A very small pencil-mark will cover a tremendously long course."

Wilfrid stood motionless, with his eyes fixed upon the mark Finn had made. He talked a little to himself, but voicelessly. The captain watched him nervously. My cousin came to himself with a start. "What will have been the *Shark's* course by magnetic compass, Finn, say from the latitude of the Scillies to the spot where the *Wanderer* met her?"

The captain put his parallel rules on the chart and named the course; what it was, I forget—south-west by south, I believe, or something near it.

"Supposing the wind not to head her, Finn," continued my cousin, "would she steer the same course down to the time when the *Wanderer* met her?"

"No, your honor. There's no call for Fidler any more than there is for me to go to the westward of Madeira."

"Now, Finn, show me on this chart where, steering the course you are now heading, you will have arrived when you have run nine hundred miles."

"How's her head?" sung out Finn to the fellow at the wheel. The man answered. "You hear it, Sir Wilfrid?" said Finn. My cousin nodded. The captain put his rules on the chart, adjusting them to the course the *Bride* was then sailing, and the measure of nine hundred miles brought the mark he made to touch the cross that represented the *Shark's* place. "That's right, I think, Mr. Monson," said he, turning a sober face of triumph on me.

"Quite right," I answered; and I spoke no more than the truth, for the poor fellow had made his calculations with laborious anxiety.

Wilfrid clapped his hands together with a shout of laughter that carried his voice to a shriek almost, and without speaking a word he strode to the hatch and went below.

CHAPTER IX.

A SQUALL.

ALTHOUGH Finn's calculations showed very well upon the chart, it will not be supposed I could find anything in them upon which to ground that hope of falling in with the *Shark* which had become a conviction with Wilfrid. The lookout man at our mast-head might, perhaps, on a clear day compass a range of some twenty miles, even thirty, if it came to a gleam of lofty canvas hovering over a hull a league or two past the slope of waters; but what was a view of this kind to signify in so vast an ocean as we had entered? As I have elsewhere said, the difference of a quarter of a point would in a few hours, supposing a good breeze of wind to be blowing, carry the *Bride* wide of the wake of the *Shark*, and put the two yachts out of sight fair abreast of one another.

Finn understood this as well as I; but when I fell into a talk with him on the subject that evening—I mean the evening of the day on which we had spoken the *Wanderer*—he told me very honestly that the odds indeed were heavy against our heaving the *Shark* into view, though he was quite sure of out-sailing her if the course was to extend to the Cape of Good Hope; but that as there *was* a chance of our picking her up—whether by luck, if I chose to think it so, or by his hitting with accuracy upon the line of direction that Fidler would take—he had made up his mind to regard the thing as going to happen, for his own ease of mind as well as to keep my cousin's expectations lively and trusting.

"A man can but do his best, sir," he said to me. "Sir Wilfrid needs a deal of humoring; you can see that, sir. I knew all along, when he first came and told me what had happened, and gave me my orders, that the job of keeping him pacified would have to go hand in hand with the business of sailing the *Bride* and lighting upon the *Shark*, if so be she's discoverable. My notion is that if you're called upon so to act as to fit an employer's taste, and keep his views and wishes gratified, though by no more than maintaining expectation in him, the best thing is to tarn to and try to think as fur as you can the same way as he do. I don't mind saying, Mr.

Monson, that I allow the whole of this here woyage to be as wague as wagueness can well be; therefore why worrit over parts of it? Suppose we overhaul the *Shark*, then it'll be all right; suppose we *don't*, then it won't be for the want of trying."

This was the substance of Finn's opinion as he imparted it to me that night. His sincerity touched me; besides, I saw worry enough in the poor fellow to make me sorry for him. Indeed, I resolved from that hour to back him up, heartily agreeing with him that the adventure was quite too vague to justify anxiety in respect of any one detail of the programme.

The weather was quiet when I went to bed that night. I came below from my long yarn with Finn, leaving a windy smear of moon over our mast-heads, and a dark sky going down from it to the obscured sea-line, with here and there a pale and vapory point of star hovering sparely over a wing of cloud that lay still in the dusk, as though what wind there was blew low upon the waters. The wide sea came to the yacht in a dusky throbbing, like folds of gloom rolling with a sort of palpitation in them to the eye; the foam glanced in places, but there was little weight in the wind, and the pallid spires of the yacht's canvas floated nearly upright through the dark atmosphere, with a sound of the sob of water coming off her weather-bow, and the dead plash of the hidden billow falling without life from her quarter in a way that made one think there were fellows emptying buckets over the side abreast of the wheel.

Wilfrid had been moody and reserved throughout the dinner, and retired early to bed. I sat an hour with Miss Laura, with the mild diversion of a draught-board between us; but we soon forgot to play in talking. We had been but a few days together, yet I had already made the discovery that I wonderfully enjoyed her company, and that I immensely relished a quality of arch naivete in her conversation, which owed something of its effect to the contrast between a sort of coquettish sagacity in many things she said and the nun-like artlessness and virginal sweetness I seemed to find in the gentle, girlish regard of her charming eyes. I also observed in myself that the more I saw of her the more her beauty gained upon me. I never remember meeting a woman's face that I would sooner have taken as a frank expression of mind; there was a softness and delicacy of feature that one instinctively accepted as an illustration of habitual refinement and purity of thought. Her manner, save when aroused, was of engaging gentleness and tenderness, and her smile the most amiable of any I remember. Her position was of great delicacy, and

could not have failed to painfully distress one of your self-conscious women. Our adventure, every reference to it, every mention of the *Shark*, every expression in Wilfrid of grief, shame, temper, was, as it were, a rude withdrawal of the veil from before her sister's frailty. There was no other lady on board to help her to bear, so to speak, the burden of the inevitable topic, and yet she never made it appear as though there were pain and shame to her in the subject outside her grief for Wilfrid, her eagerness that her sister should be recovered, her resentment against the man who had betrayed and dishonored his friend.

I may fail to convey what I thought of her maidenly acceptance of her share in this strange adventure, but I am certain that nobody but a person of exquisite instincts could have acted as she did the delicate and exacting part allotted her by my cousin.

The weather was still very quiet when I bade her good-night. I went to my cabin, and do not suppose I was ten minutes in my bed before I fell asleep. I awoke to a sound of a great roaring all about, accompanied by the cries of men on deck, the sharp flinging down of coils of rope, and the thunder of shaking canvas trembling in every fibre of the hull. My bunk was an athwart-ship one, and I had turned in, to employ the proper sea parlance, with my head to windward; but now the yacht was lying over on t'other side, and I awoke to find my heels in the air and the weight of my body upon my neck; but the angle of the craft was so sharp that it was not without a prodigious amount of heaving and floundering I managed to get my legs over and to sit upright.

A squall, thought I, feeling for my pillow, which I placed in the port end of my bedstead and once again lay down. A flash of sun-bright lightning glanced through the port-hole as though a gun had been fired into my cabin, and the interior glanced out into a noon-tide effulgence for one breathless instant, in which, however, I managed to catch sight of the angle formed by a coat with a stanchion, upon which it hung by a peg. Upon my word, it was as though the yacht was upon her beam-ends—such a heel as was not to be realized by one lying in a bunk or even sitting upright in it; then came the darkness like a sea of ink, rolling to the sight, in which the reflection of the flash still writhed, followed by a mighty shock of thunder, that died away in a hundred rattling peals as though 'twas high mountainous land all around the horizon honey-combed with caverns and every peak as resonant as a hollow dome.

A sharp squall! thought I, but there was too much noise for sleep.

It was all hands on deck I was pretty sure by the numerous scamperings over my head; the harsh voices of the sailors bawling at the ropes would be swept into faint cries by the rush of the wind, and now and again a heavy lumpish sound that put a quiver into every plank, followed by a snarling noise like the hissing of half a dozen locomotives blowing off steam, was warrant enough to ears not unused to such sounds that the *Bride* was taking large doses of water in pretty freely over her rail.

I lay quiet, and was presently sensible that the yacht was off the wind; the righting of her was no small comfort; she was manifestly going through it like a comet; the sea was now well aft, and the suggestion of swiftness I found in the mere feel of the hull, somehow or other, black as my cabin was and the blacker as it remained for the flash of lightning, was accentuated by the thunderous rush of each surge outstripping us in the race and hurling its black length along the vessel's side, and the fierce spitting and crackling of the smother of spume that was raised by the vessel's headlong flight, and that went raging and racing astern on top of the swelling ebony fold that swept forward from the opposite direction.

Humph! thought I, if this is a case of "up keeleg" with friend Finn he'll have to enter into something shrewder and surer than dead-reckoning to find his way back again into the *Shark's* wake. I had a mind to see what was happening, and after a spell of troublesome groping and clawing, during which I had like to have broke my nose by striking it against the edge of a chest of drawers built into a corner, I succeeded in lighting my lamp, and was presently snug in a pea-coat and a sou'-wester, which I had been wise enough to include in the slender sea outfit I had purchased for this voyage. The cabin light was always kept burning throughout the night, dimmed by one of the stewards, after we had retired to our berths, but with plenty of flame left to see by, and on emerging the first object I caught sight of was the figure of a man on his knees on the cabin floor in a posture of prayer, and apparently in an agony of fright. Nothing was to be heard of him until I had approached close, for the roaring of the wind and the washing and foaming of seas drowned all other noises; but on stooping to make sure of the fellow, whose hands were clasped over his eyes while he held his face upturned as he swayed upon his knees, I could hear him praying with all his might, with an energy indeed that might of itself have accounted for the drops of perspiration that glistened upon his brow, if it wasn't that his attitude of terror explained the secret of that moisture. It was Muffin.

There was something so shameful in the fellow's cowardice that all in an instant I lost my temper and gave him a kick which flung him at his length, face down, upon the deck. He set up a horrible howl.

"Oh, Lord! oh, mercy! we're gone! we're gone! Oh, if I was only on dry ground—"

Here I seized him by the collar.

"Get up, you fool," I cried. "Do you know where you are, you idiot? Cease! If you alarm Miss Jennings—" and I hauled him on to his legs, shaking him heartily as I did so.

"Oh, Mr. Monson," he whined, "is it you, sir? Tell me we ain't all dead and gone, sir! Oh, this is 'orrible, though! 'orrible! Never no more; never no more for me!"

"Be off to your berth at once," cried I, angrily, though my temper died out of me at the absurd sight of his yellow, working, terrified face, rendered ugly enough to challenge the skill of a Cruikshank by the manner in which, during his devotions, he had streaked his forehead and nose and his cheeks past his eyes with his plaster-like lengths of coal-black hair. He was for speaking, but I grasped him by the shoulder and ran him towards his berth, that lay some little distance forward of mine on the starboard side, and when he had shut himself in I made my way on deck, with a peep aft, as I went up the steps, where all seemed quiet.

The night was still very dark, but of a clearer dusk. The moon made a red streak low in the west among some ragged clouds that seemed to fall like a short flight of steps, every one edged with blood, to the sea-line, where the muddy crimson drained out, just showing the lurid staining of it now and again when some surge beneath reared an unbroken head to the lustre. The night was made to look amazingly wilder than it was in reality by that western setting jumble of ugly lustre and torn vapor like a flock of giant bats heading from the moon for some ocean solitude of deeper blackness. To windward there was a great lake of indigo blue in the sky in which a number of trembling stars were floating, and vast white puffs of cloud crossing it with the swiftness of scud in a gale; but to leeward it was just a mass of heaped-up gloom, one dye of dusk on top of another in blocks of blackness such as a poet might dream of in picturing the hellish walls and battlements of a beleaguered city of demons; and upon this mass of darkness that looked as substantial as stone to the eye there was a plentiful play and crackle of violet lightning; but no thunder, at least none that I could hear. It was blowing fresh, but the wind had taken off considerably within the last ten minutes; the

Bride was close-hauled; there was a strong sea on the bow, and she was plunging smartly, with at frequent intervals a brisk squall of spray over her head that rattled upon the deck like a fall of hail in a thunder-storm; a dark gleam would break first here and then there from her deck to her rolling, but the water was draining off fast, flashing in a loud hissing through the scupper-holes at every lee send, but with weight enough yet remaining in each rush of it to enable me to gather that it must have been pretty nearly waist-high between the bulwarks with the first shipping of the seas and the first down-rush of the fierce squall.

They had snugged the *Bride* to very small canvas; the play of the white waters round her threw out her shape clear as black paint on canvas; at moments she dived till you would think the tall black coil arching at her past the creaming glare crushed out of the sea by the smiting of her fore-foot must leap right aboard her; but her stanch and buoyant bow, the truest piece of ocean moulding I ever saw in a ship, would regularly swing with a leap to the peak of the billow, shattering it with a saucy disdain that seemed to be followed by an echo of derisive laughter in the yelling ring of the wind splitting upon the rigging or sweeping into the iron-hard cavities of the diminished spaces of wan and spectral canvas.

I took all this in as I stood a minute in the companion-hatch; then perceiving the figure of a man to windward almost abreast of me, I crossed to him. It was Finn.

"Very ugly squall that, Mr. Monson," said he, after peering at me to make sure of my identity, "it found us with top-s'l and t'-gallant s'l set, and took us slap aback. It was the most onexpected thing that ever happened to me; as onnatural as that there moon. Talk of keeping a lookout! I was staring hard that way, with the wind a pleasant air blowing off t'other side, and saw nothing and heard nothing until I felt it."

"You had to run?"

"Ay, but not for long, sir."

"How's her head now, Captain Finn?"

"Her proper course, Mr. Monson."

"Well, the weather is brightening. You'll be making sail again on your ship, I suppose, presently?"

"Ay, but let that muck blow away first," he answered, pointing with a shadowy arm into the mass of obscurity where the lightning still winked fitfully. "After such a blow-me-aback job as this I ain't going to trust the weather till I can see more of it."

I lingered a little watching the slow opening of the sky to windward, and the gradual unfolding of the stars down the velvet declivity, that looked as though purified by the cleansing of the black wet squall, and then bidding good-night to Finn, who seemed a bit subdued by the wildly disconcerting attack of the weather, that to a sober, vigilant seaman was about as uncomfortable a snub in its way as could be administered. I went below, intending to walk straight to my berth and go to bed again. On entering the cabin, however, I found the lamp turned up, and Wilfrid pacing the carpet with long strides, and with an agitation of manner that was grotesquely deepened by the occasional stagger of his gait by the plunging of the yacht and the hurried lift of his arm to clutch the nearest thing at hand for support. I concluded that he had been aroused by the commotion of the squall, but thought it strange he had not stepped on deck to see how things were. On seeing me he put his hand on the back of a fixed revolving chair, and swung, or rather reeled, himself into it, then leaned his cheek upon his hand in a posture of extreme moodiness, while he kept his eyes bent downward.

I took a seat opposite him, after a glance round in search of Miss Jennings, who, I thought, might also be up.

"The noise above disturbed you, I suppose, Wilfrid?" said I.

"I have not slept," he answered.

"Not since half-past nine? You went to bed then, you know, and it's now two o'clock," I exclaimed, looking at the dial under the skylight.

"I have not slept," he repeated.

"I wonder that the squall did not bring you on deck."

"For what purpose?" he exclaimed, gloomily. "I could hear Finn's voice; I could follow what the men were doing. If every squall we are likely to meet is to bring me from my bed, I may as well order a hammock to be slung for me on deck."

"What is the matter, Wilfrid?" said I, earnestly and soothingly. "Something, I fear, has happened to vex and bother you."

He passed his hand over his eyes, and looking down, said, "I have had a warning."

"A what?" I exclaimed.

"A warning," he answered, fetching a deep sigh and making as if to rise, retaining, however, his posture of profound melancholy, while he sent a slow, wandering look around, finally fastening his eye upon me.

"From whom came this warning, Wilfrid?" said I, cheerfully.

"Muffin? Egad, you'll be getting a warning from him soon, I reckon. I found the chap on his knees just now, sweating with fear and praying like clock-work. I gave him a kick, and I wonder the howl that he raised did not bring you running out of your cabin." I jabbered this off in a reckless, laughing way, though I watched him narrowly, too, all the time I was speaking.

"Nothing shall hinder me, Charles," he exclaimed, closing his right fist and letting it lie in a menacing way upon the table. "I have made up my mind to tear the creature who still remains my wife from the side of the man she has left me for; and before God" —he rolled his eyes up and raised his clinched hand—"my vow is this: that I will hunt them from port to port, through ocean after ocean, until I meet with them! *When* that shall be I know not; but this I *do* know—that my time will come and I can wait. But I must be on the move. Nothing could render life tolerable to me now but the sense of action, the animation and hope of pursuit."

"But the warning—" said I.

"Oh, to be vexed by ghostly exhortations—it is enough to craze one!" he exclaimed. "Heaven knows, resolution grows weak enough in me as it is at any thought of my little one that visits me. Oh no," he cried, with a sarcastic shake of the head and a singular smile, "do not believe that thoughts of my baby girl would cause me to falter even for one breathless instant on this course that I have made up my mind to pursue. But to think of the helpless lamb as alone—"

"My dear fellow," I interrupted, "the child could not possibly be in tenderer hands."

"I know, I know," he cried, with a sob in his voice, "but she is motherless, Charles; and then how precarious is life at that age! I may never see her again!"

He broke down at this, and hid his face.

"Come, come," said I, "your nerves have been strained by the incident of this afternoon, or, I should say, of yesterday afternoon—unduly, though intelligibly, excited by Puncheon's report of having passed the *Shark*. Endeavor to get some rest, old fellow. These warnings, these visions, mysterious voices sounding out of Heaven knows where, midnight shapes as thin as moonshine—Wilfrid, depend upon it, they all emanate from a disordered condition of that part of the body which the Chinese have most wisely selected as the true seat of the soul; I mean here," said I, patting my waistcoat.

He regarded me somewhat vacantly, and sat a while in silence,

sighed tremulously, and stepped to the foot of the companion-ladder, where he stood staring up into the arch of black night that filled the companion-entrance. Presently Finn rumbled out an order on deck. There was the flash of bright stars upon the gleaming ebony of the cabin windows with every heave of the yacht; the sea was moderating, and the loud humming of the wind aloft gradually fining into a dull complaining noise. Ropes were thrown down overhead; voices began to sing out. I uttered a loud yawn. Wilfrid turned and exclaimed, "Don't let me keep you up, Charles."

"It's all right," said I, "but why not go to bed, too? Or first describe this warning that you have had—express the nature of it. Perhaps, like the proverbial on-looker who sees most of the game, I might be able to help you with some reassuring suggestion."

But he merely shook his head; and now, feeling quite intolerably sleepy, and in no mood, therefore, as you will suppose, to reason with a mind so oppressed as his with superstitious melancholy, I called a cheery good-night to him, went to my cabin, and was soon asleep.

I was awakened by the brilliant daylight that filled my berth, and at once rose and sung out to the steward to prepare me a bath. All the time I bathed and dressed I was thinking of Wilfrid and of what he called his "warning." I supposed it was some voice that he had heard, and he had made it plain that it had referred, among other things maybe, to his little infant. Now, though of course I had known for years that he was "touched," as the expression goes, I had never understood that his craziness had risen to the height of hearing voices and beholding visions in his waking hours; and I was, therefore, forced to believe that his mind was far more unhinged at present than his manners and speech, peculiar as they unquestionably were at times, had indicated. Well, thought I, assuredly if he gets worse, if the symptoms should grow more defined, this chase will have to come to an end. I, for one, should most certainly call a halt. Why, what could be fuller of madness than his vow last night before me—to go on sailing from port to port, and traversing ocean after ocean, until he has captured her ladyship; as if a pursuit on such lines as these were going to end in anything better than driving all hands daft and converting the *Bride* into a floating lunatic asylum? So far, it is true, I have found method enough to keep my mind tolerably easy; but if poor Wilfrid is going to become very much worse, hang me, thought I, plying a pair of hair-brushes with very agitated hands, if Captain Finn don't haul his wind for the handiest port and set me ashore for one.

CHAPTER X.

I GO ALOFT.

It was a fresh, sweet ocean morning, one of the fairest I remember; the wind, a tender fanning from the west, warm enough to make one fancy an odor and balm of the tropics in it, leagues ahead as those parallels yet lay. The sky was one broad surface of curls and feathers of pearl-colored vapor, an interweaving, as it were, of many-shaped links of silken cloud shot with silver and amber and gold from the early sun. I never beheld a lovelier dome of sky so tender in glory and rich in delicate perfections of tints. The sea spread in a firm dark line to it, like a blue floor under some mighty roof of marble; the sun's wake came in a misty stream of light to the port bends of the yacht, where it was flashed by the mirror-like wet blackness of the glossy side back deep into the brimming azure of the brine in a great puff of radiance that made one think of a cloud of brightly illuminated steam ascending from the depths.

Everything was brilliant and clean and cheerful, the decks of the white softness of foam, brass sparkling, rigging flemish-coiled or festooned as by an artist's hand upon the pins; forward stood the long cannon radiant as polished jet, a detail that gave an odd significance to the saucy knowing "spring," as it is called, of the yacht that way. The cocks and hens in the coops were straining their throats, and blending with their cheerful voices was a noise of pigs; there was black smoke pouring away from the galley chimney, and now and again you got a whiff of something good frying for the men's breakfasts, for my cousin fed his sailors well. The *Bride*, with erect masts, was sliding over the wide folds of water, whose undulations were so long-drawn and regular as to be scarce perceptible in the motion of the vessel; there was air enough to crisp the sea, and where the sun's light lay the tremble was blinding; on either bow was a curl of silver, and pale eddyings alongside, with a line of oil-smooth water going away astern from under the counter; yet we were but creeping too, spite of the yacht being a pile of white cloths—every stitch she owned abroad to her top-gallant studding-sail.

The mate had charge, and was stumping the weather side of the quarter-deck in his sour way when I arrived.

"Good-morning, Mr. Crimp."

"Marning," he answered.

"Ugly squall that last night."

"Ugly? ay."

The fellow gave the word *sir* to no man, restricting its use when ashore to dogs, as Finn once told me; but his surly tricks of speech and manner were so wholly a part of him, so entirely natural, so unconsciously expressed, that it would have been as idle to resent them as to have quarrelled with him for having an askew eye or lost one's temper because his beard resembled rope-yarns.

"Anything in sight?" I asked, looking round.

"Ay," he answered.

"Where?" I exclaimed, running my eye over the sea.

"Up yonder," he responded, indicating with a gesture of his chin the top-gallant yard, where was perched the inevitable figure of a lookout man.

"But where away, Mr. Crimp—where away, sir?"

"On the starboard bow," he answered; "'tain't long been sighted."

Breakfast would not be ready for some time yet, and having nothing to do, I thought I would make a journey aloft on my own account, and take a view of the distant sail and of the spacious field of the glittering morning ocean from the altitude of the mast-head. I stepped below for a telescope of my own, a glass I had many a time ogled the sea with when I was doing penance for past and future sins in African and West Indian waters. Muffin was at the foot of the companion-steps holding a pair of Wilfrid's boots. He cast his eyes down and drew his figure in, though there was abundance of room for me to pass. A slow, obsequious, apologetic smile went twisting and curling down his lips; his yellow face had a burnished look; he was uncommonly clean-shaven, and his hair was brushed, or plastered, to the smoothness of his skull.

"Got your courage back?" said I.

"Thank you, yes, sir," he answered, humbly, with his eyes respectfully cast down. "Richard's himself again this morning, sir, as the saying is. But it was a 'orrible time, sir."

"You came near to making it so," said I. "Have you been to Sir Wilfrid yet?"

"Yes, sir."

"How is he?"

"Asleep, sir," he replied, in a blandly confidential way.

"Glad to hear it," I exclaimed; "don't disturb him. He passed a bad night down to two or three o'clock this morning." I was going; suddenly I stopped. "By-the-way," said I, rounding upon the fellow, "how long have you been in Sir Wilfrid's service?"

My question appeared to penetrate him with a consuming desire to be exact. He partially closed one eye, cocked the other aloft like a hen in the act of drinking, and then said, with the air of one happy in the power of speaking with accuracy, "It'll be five months to the hour, sir, come height o'clock Friday evening next."

"During the time that you have been in his service," said I, carelessly, "have you ever heard him speak of hearing voices or seeing visions?"

"Woices? No, sir," he answered; "but wisions," he added, with a sigh, and lengthening his yellow face into an expression of deep concern, "has, I fear, sir, more'n once presented theirselves to him."

"Of what nature, do you know?"

"Sir Wilfrid's a little mysterious, sir," he responded, in a greasy tone of voice, and looking down as if he would have me understand that with all due respect he was my cousin's valet, and knew his place.

I said no more, but made my way on deck with a suspicion in me that the fellow had lied, though I hardly knew why I should think so. I trudged forward, and finding three or four of the men hanging about the galley, I pulled out five shillings and gave the money to one of them, saying that I was going aloft, and wished to pay my footing, for I was in no temper to be chased and worried. This made me free of the rigging, into which I sprang, and had soon shinned as high as the top-gallant yard, upon which I perched myself so noiselessly that the man who overhung it on the other side of the mast, and who was drowsily chewing upon a quid of tobacco, with his eye screwed into Wilfrid's lovely telescope, had no notion I was alongside of him. I coughed softly, for I had known seamen to lose their lives when up aloft by being suddenly startled. He put a whiskered face past the mast, and stared at me as if I was Old Nick, out of the minutest pair of eyes I ever saw in the human head, mere gimlet-holes they seemed for the admission of light.

"Thinking of your sweetheart, Jack?" said I, with a laugh, ignorant of his name, but counting Jack to be a sure word.

"Can't rightly say *what* I was a-thinking of, sir," he answered, hoarsely; "'twarn't my sweetheart anyways, seeing that the only

gell I was ever really partial to sarved me as her ledship sarved Sir Wilfrid yonder," indicating the quarter-deck with a sidewise motion of his head.

"Cut stick, eh?" said I.

"Wuss than that, sir," he answered. "If she'd ha' taken herself off and stopped at that I dunno as I should have any occasion to grumble; but she prigged the furniture that I'd lain in agin getting married. Ay, *prigged* it. The boiling amounted to fourteen pound tew, a bloomin' lot o' money for a poor seafaring man to be robbed of for the sake of a master chimney-sweep." He cast a slow, disgusted look around, and expectorated with an air of loathing.

"I hope you got the master chimney-sweep locked up," said I.

"No fear!" cried he, talking very fast; "smite me, your honor, if that there gell didn't tarn to and swear that that furniture was hers, bought out of her own savings, and that she guv me the money to order it with. Thinking o' my sweetheart!" he grumbled, lifting the telescope in an abstracted manner to his eye, "if it worn't for women dummed if this 'ere earth wouldn't be worth a-living in."

I smothered a laugh, and catching sight of the sail shining faintly in the blue air, leagues and leagues distant, as it seemed, I pointed the glass, and easily distinguished the royal, top-gallant sail, and a snatch of the top-sail, of a ship heading directly for us.

"I wonder if she'll have any news?" said I.

"Beg your pardon, sir," exclaimed the man, "but could you tell me how long it's reckoned in the cabin this here ramble's a-going to last?"

"What was the nature of the voyage you signed for?"

"Why," he replied, "a yachting cruise to Table Bay and home."

"It'll not exceed that, I believe," I exclaimed.

"And if we picks up that there *Shark*, and recovers the lady afore we git to the Cape, shall we keep all on or shift our hellum for Southamptin again?"

"Captain Finn will be able to tell you more about it than I," I responded, in a tone that silenced him, though his tiny eyes looked athirst for information as he regarded me aslant over one of his huge whiskers.

The height from which I surveyed the vast plain of sea, the spirit of whose loneliness seemed to find the one touch of emphasis it needed to render its magnitude realizable by human instincts in that remote flaw of ship's canvas which broke the continuity of the

boundless horizon, filled me with a feeling of exhilaration I cannot express; the sweet mild ocean breeze high on that slender yard sank through and through me, and vitality to its most secret recesses was quickened by it into a very intoxication of life—new, free, ardent; the air hummed gently in a vibratory metallic note as though it were some echo of a distant concert of harps and violins; far down the hull of the yacht, plentiful as was her beam in reality, looked like a long, slender plank rounded at the bows, the whiteness of the deck showing with a sort of radiance, as though it were thinly sheeted with crystal, upon which the shadows of the rigging, masts, and canvas lay dark and beautifully clear, with a fitful swaying of them to the heave of the fabric, off polished and brilliant things, such as the skylight or the brass decorations, when flashes of fire would leap forth, to be veiled again in the violet gloom of the recurrent shade. The thin curve of form on either hand the cut-water looked like frosted silver; my eye went to the airy confines of the ocean spreading out into a delicate haze of soft azure light where it washed the marble of that magnificent morning firmament, and then it was that, sharper than ever I had before felt it, there rose the perception in me of the incalculable odds against our sighting the yacht we were in pursuit of, so measureless did the ocean distance appear when, with gaze going from the *Bride's* mast-head, I thought of the distance that made the visible and compassable sphere, big as it was, as little as a star compared with the heavenly desert it floats in.

When I looked down again I observed Miss Jennings watching me from the gangway, with her hand shading her eyes. I raised my hat and she bowed, and being wishful of her company, I bade my friend Jack keep his eyes polished, as the piece that was nailed to the mast would help to lessen the loss that his sweetheart had occasioned him, and descended, hearing him rumbling in his gizzard as I got off the foot-rope, though what he said I did not catch.

"What is there to be seen, Mr. Monson?" was Miss Jennings's first question, with a delicate fire of timorous expectation in her eyes.

"Only a ship," said I.

"Not—not—"

"No, not the *Shark* yet," I exclaimed, smiling.

"I am stupid to feel so nervous. I dare say I am as passionately anxious as Wilfrid to see my sister in this vessel safe—and separated from—from—" she faltered, and quickly added, bringing her hands together and locking them, "But I dread the moment to arrive when the *Shark* will be reported in sight."

"Well, if we *are* to pick up that craft," said I, "we shall do so, and then there'll be an end on't. But I give you my word, Miss Jennings, the ocean looks a mighty big place from that bit of a stick up there."

"Too big for this chase?"

"Too big, I fear, to give Wilfrid the chance he wants."

She sent a bright glance at the top-gallant yard, and said, "Does not that great height make you feel dizzy?"

"Ay, as wine does. There is an intoxication as of ether in the air up there. Oh, Miss Jennings, if I could only manage to get you onto that yard—see how near to heaven it is!—you would then be able not only to say that you looked like an angel, but that you felt like one."

She laughed prettily, and turned as if to invite me to walk. After a bit I spoke of the squall last night. It had not disturbed her. Then I told her of Wilfrid's melancholy perturbation, on which her face grew grave, and her air thoughtful.

"He did not tell you the nature of the warning?" she inquired.

"No. It evidently had reference to his baby. I wished to ascertain whether it was a voice or a vision, though I really don't know *why*, for an hallucination is an hallucination all the world over, and it signifies little whether it be a sheeted essence to affect the eye or a string of airy syllables to affright the ear."

"I am sorry, I am sorry," she exclaimed, anxiously; "it is a bad symptom, I fear. Yet it ought not to surprise one. The shock was terrible—so recent, too! Scarcely a fortnight ago he felt safe and happy in his wife's love and faith—"

"Maybe," I interrupted; "but I wouldn't be too sure, though. When I last met him—I mean some while before he came to ask me to join him in this trip—his manner was very clouded, I thought, when he spoke of his wife. I fancy even then suspicion was something more than a seed. But still, as you say, it is all desperately recent, and it certainly is a sort of business to play havoc with such a mind as his. Did you ever hear of his having warnings or seeing visions before?"

"Never."

"I asked his valet that question just now, and he told me he did not know that his master heard 'woices,' but he believed he was troubled with 'wisions,' as he called them."

"Wilfrid has been very secret, then. My sister spoke much to me of the oddness of his character—made more of it, indeed, than

ever I could witness — but, then, one understands why now," she exclaimed, with an angry toss of her head; "but she never once hinted at his suffering from delusions of the kind you name. How should his man know, then? Wilfrid is not a person to be so very confidential as all that with his servant. I never liked Muffin, and I believe he is a story-teller."

"So do I," said I, "and a coward to boot;" and I told her of my finding him on his knees, and how I had prostrated him with a kick. This provoked one of her cordial, sweet, *clearing* laughs. It was a music to fit to gayer thoughts than we had been discoursing, and presently we were chatting lightly about dress, society, some maestro's new opera, and other light topics, very much more suitable for a yacht's quarter-deck under such a morning heaven as was then shining upon us than the raven, owl, and bat-like subjects of ghosts, warnings, visions, and insanity.

The breakfast-bell rang; Muffin arrived with a soap-varnished face and a humble bow, and in greasy accents delivered his master's compliments to us, and please we were not to wait breakfast for him. But when we were half through the meal Wilfrid came from his cabin and seated himself. He looked worn and worried; his expression was that of a man who has succeeded in calming himself after a secret bitter mental conflict, but whose countenance still wears the traces of his struggle. He called for a cup of tea, which, with a slice of dry toast, formed his breakfast. Now and again I saw him glancing wistfully at Miss Jennings, but his eyes fell from her when she looked at him, as though he feared the detection of some wish or thought in the manner of his watching her. He inquired languidly about the weather, the sail the yacht was under, and the like.

"There'll be a ship in sight over the bow," said I, "by the time we are ready to go on deck."

"Ha!" he exclaimed, instantly briskening, "we must speak her. Were it to come to twenty vessels a day passing us we should hail them all. But it is the wind's capriciousness that makes the fretting part of an excursion of this kind. Here are we creeping along as though in tow of one of our boats, while where the *Shark* is there may be half a gale driving her through it as fast as a whale's first rush to the stab of a harpoon."

"Heels were given to us in the small hours of this morning, though," said I. "We covered more space of sea in five minutes than I should like to swim if I had a month to do it in."

"Oh, but she was off her course," exclaimed Wilfrid.

"Only to the first of the squall," I exclaimed. "When I went on deck she was lying fair up again, and crushing through it with the obstinacy of a liner."

He glanced at me absently, as though he barely attended to my words, and then looked round him, as I supposed, to observe if Muffin and the stewards were out of hearing. He lay back in his chair, eying Miss Jennings for a little with a thoughtful regard that was made pathetic by the marks of care and grief in his face.

"Laura," he said, "I am worrying about baby."

"Why, Wilfrid?" she answered, gently.

"Oh, it may be a mere instinctive anxiety—some secret misgiving, well founded, but quite inexplicable, and therefore to be sneered at by friend Charles here, who knows not yet the subtleties of a flesh-and-blood tie, as mere sentiment."

"But why allow a fancy to worry you, Wilfrid?" said I.

"I fear it is no fancy," he answered, quickly.

"I told Miss Jennings," said I, "that you have been vexed and upset by what you interpreted into a warning."

"Did it particularly refer to baby?" she asked.

"Wholly," he responded, gloomily.

"But, confound it all, Wilfrid," cried I, somewhat impatiently, "won't you put this miserable vision into words? What form did it take? A warning!—if you choose to view things asquint they're full of warnings. Consider the superstitions which flourish; the signs of luck and of ill-luck; the meaning of the stumble on the threshold, the capsized salt-cellar, and the rest of the inventions of the wicked old hags who ride a cock-horse on broomsticks. Why," I cried, talking vehemently, with the idea of breaking through the thickness upon his mind, though it was no better than elbowing a fog, "I protest, Wilfrid, I would rather swing at your lower yard-arm, and be cut down after a reasonable time to *plomb* the deep peace of the green silence beneath our keel, than live in a torment of apprehension of shadows, and convert life into a huge mustard-poultice to adjust my quivering anatomy, staggering onward to the grave."

He surveyed me with a lack-lustre eye while he listened.

"Might not this warning, as you call it, Wilfrid," said Miss Jennings, "have been some brief, vivid dream, the impression of which was keen enough, when you awoke, to make you imagine you had viewed what had appeared with open eyes?"

"No!" he answered, emphatically; "what I saw I saw as I see you."

"Then it wasn't a voice?" I exclaimed.

"No matter," he said; "God's eye is upon the innocent. Surely He will protect my little one. Still—still—" He seemed to struggle with some thought, and paused.

I made up my mind to attempt a bold stroke. "Wilf," said I, "your child must be dearer to you than your wife. Since you are uneasy about the bairn, why not abandon a pursuit which, I give you my word, seems to me about as aimless as a chase after the flying shadow of a cloud, and shift your helm for home, where you will be able to have the child by your side, and where there will be no need for warnings relating to her to worry you?"

A dangerous light came into his eyes; his strangely cut nostrils enlarged and trembled; half a dozen dark moods went like ripples of shadow over his face. I regarded him steadfastly, but I will own not without a good deal of anxiety, for his bearing at this moment had more of the madman in it than I had ever before witnessed. He breathed deep several times before speaking.

"You are right," he said; "my child is dearer to me than my wife, but my honor stands first of all. For God's sake do not craze me with such suggestions. Look at me!" he cried, extending his arms, "gripped here," clasping his left hand, "by my child, that in its sweet innocence would withhold me from this pursuit; and dragged here"—and here he clinched his right hand with a menacing shake of it—"by a sense of duty that *must* have its way, though it should come to my never setting eyes on my baby again. Charles"—his voice sank—"at *your* hands I should have expected something better than such advice as this. If you are weary of the voyage—"

"No, no," I interrupted.

"Why torment me, then," he shouted, "by representing this pursuit as idle as a chase of shadows? Is it so? Great Heaven, man, you yourself read out the entry in Captain Puncheon's log-book."

"Well, well, Wilfrid," said I, soothingly, "I am very sorry to have said anything to annoy you. The fact is, I am too prosaic in my views of things to be as helpful as I should like to be in a quest of this sort. Come, shall we go on deck now, and see if that chap which I sighted from the top-gallant yard has hove into view yet?"

The poor fellow rose slowly from his chair, straightening up his figure till he looked twice as tall again as he was. His anger had left him.

"Oh for the privilege," he exclaimed, "of being able to catch but a single glimpse of the future! Would to Heaven I had been born

a saint, with a glory around my head, for by that light only is it possible to interpret the hieroglyphs in which the page of life is printed."

"Miss Jennings," said I, "your sunny hair comes so near to the sort of nimbus my cousin desires that I am sure if you would cast your eyes upon the mystical page that puzzles him you could read it aloud to us both by the light of those golden tresses."

"Charles," exclaimed Wilfrid, shortly, "you are for making fun of everything;" and he stalked to his cabin, but only to fetch his pipe, as I afterwards found.

I could not discover, however, that Miss Jennings wholly agreed in Wilfrid's notion of my ridiculing propensity.

CHAPTER XI.

THE PORTUGUESE BRIG.

RIGHT over the bows on either hand the sky had cleared since the early morning; the fairy drapery of linked, prismatic, shell-like cloud had lifted, leaving the sea-line a dark blue sweep of water against the delicate effulgence of the heavens, and like a star climbing above that most exquisite horizon shone the sail that was approaching us, still distant a fair eight miles, but already distinctly visible from the low altitude of the *Bride's* quarter-deck. Sir Wilfrid, leaning over the side, sent a long, yearning look at her; then, with a glance at the man on the top-gallant yard, he walked over to Finn, who had relieved the mate at eight bells, and conversed with him. I got a chair for Miss Jennings, fetched her novel—the end of the first volume of which seemed still as far off as the Cape of Good Hope—and a rug for her feet, and having made her comfortable, I loaded a pipe and squatted myself on deck under the lee of the main-mast.

I was not, perhaps, in the very sweetest of tempers, for though what I had said below might have been a bit provoking, Wilfrid had turned upon me for it a little too hotly methought. This expedition, to be sure, had a special interest for *him*, as it had a special interest for Miss Jennings; but so far as *I* was concerned, it was a mere sympathetic undertaking. My cousin, to be sure, was "wanting," but that consideration was not going to render any indignation I might unwarily provoke in him the more endurable. My quarrel, however, just then lay with myself. I was beginning to consider that I had joined Wilfrid in this cruise too hurriedly; that had I insisted upon more time for reflection I should have declined the adventure, for the very good reason that I was unable to see how I could be of the least use to him in it. The ocean makes people selfish; its monotony presses upon and contracts the mind as its visible girdle circumscribes the sight. Thought is forced inward, and the intellect devours itself as the monkey eats its tail. I was already pining somewhat for the diversions of the shore. Had I been sensible of any limit to the daily and nightly routine of eating, sleeping, keeping a

lookout, and discussing probabilities, my humor might have lightened somewhat: but on what date was this voyage to end? Where was this white fabric that was floating in beauty over the quiet waters going to carry me? Heavy clouds of smoke floated from my lips when I thought that for months and months I might be sundered from my club, from the opera, of which I was a very great lover, from the engaging recreation of billiards, from the quarter of a hundred of pleasures with which the idle man of means loads the blunderbuss of life to shoot at and kill the flying hours as they pass.

Poor Wilfrid, though! I thought with a sigh; and an emotion of pity rose in me as a rebuke when I glanced at his long, awkward figure, thought of the bitter heartache that left him only when he slept, of his love for his little one, of the dreadful grief and dishonor that had come to him, of this apparently aimless pursuit upon the boundless surface of the ocean of a faithless woman, with the subtle distressing quality of madness in all he did, in all he thought, to make his conduct a sadder thing than can be described.

I peeped around the mast for a short view of Miss Jennings. She seemed to have lighted on a chapter in the novel that was interesting. Under the droop of her long lashes her half-closed, violet eyes showed with a drowsy gleam; her profile had the delicacy of a cameo, clear and tender, against the soft gray of the bulwarks past her. Deuced odd, thought I, that I should find her prettiness so fascinating, as though, forsooth, she was the first sweet girl I had ever seen! I filled another pipe and sat a while puffing slowly, with these lines of haunting beauty running in my head:

"Have you seen but a bright lily grow
Before rude hands have touched it?
Have you marked but the fall of the snow
Before the soil hath smutch'd it?
Have you felt the wool of the beaver—
Or swan's-down ever?
Or have smelt o' the bud o' the brier?
Or the nard in the fire?
Or have tasted the bag of the bee?
Oh, so white! Oh, so soft! Oh, so sweet is she!"

The poet is also the prophet; and maybe, thought I, when old Ben Jonson planned this fairy temple of words he had his eye on some such another little delicate goddess as that yonder.

But there was to happen presently something of a kind to send sentiment flying.

Bit by bit the cloud-mailed sky had drawn away down into the northward, until far past our mast-heads that way it was clear blue heaven, with an horizon ruling it of a sort of transparent sharpness that made you imagine you saw the atmosphere beyond through it as though it were the edge of some huge lens. The breeze was weak, and the yacht's pace very leisurely; there were hints of a calm at hand, here and there in certain long, glassy swathes which wound like currents among the darker shadow of the wrinkling breeze upon the water; to every small roll upon the long, sleepy undulation the main-boom swung in with a short rattle of canvas in the head of the sail, and a flap or two forward with the smite of the mast by the square top-sail, as though there were hands aloft lazily beating a carpet.

The vessel ahead was steering dead for us, her masts in one. She was much smaller than I had supposed from the first glimpse I caught of her from the mast-head—a little brig, apparently, her cloths showing out rusty to the brilliance as she neared us, albeit afar they had shone like a star of white fire. Her hull was of a dirty yellow —a sort of pea-soup color—and the foot of her foresail was spread by a bentinck-boom. She was without an atom of interest in my eyes—a small foreigner, as I supposed, sluggishly lumbering home to some Spanish or Italian port with her forecastle filled with chocolate-colored Dagos, and the cabin atmosphere poisonous with the lingering fumes of bad cooking.

Wilfrid and Finn stood looking at her together, the latter raising a glass to his eye from time to time. I knocked the ashes out of my bowl and crossed over to them.

"It will be strange if she has any news to give us of the *Shark*," said I.

"We will speak her, of course," said Wilfrid.

"Looks as if she meant to give us the stem," exclaimed Finn, with a glance aft at the fellow at the helm: "she is steering dead on for us, as if her course were a bee-line and we were athwart it."

"I expect she'll not be able to talk to you in English," said I.

"What is her country, do you think, Mr. Monson?" asked Miss Jennings, closing her volume and joining us.

"Italian. What say you, captain?"

"Well, I can't rightly tell what she is," he answered, "but I know what she ain't—and that's English." He stepped aft, bent on the ensign, and ran it aloft.

"Does she see us?" exclaimed Wilfrid. "Really she is steering as if she would run us down."

I took the captain's glass and brought it to bear. She was bow on, and there was no sign of a head over the forecastle-rail—nothing living in the rigging or upon the yards either; the foresail concealed the run of her abaft.

"She appears derelict," said I, "with her helm secured amidships, and blowing like the wind—as she listeth."

"Time to get out of her road, I think," grumbled Finn. "Down hellum!"

The turn of a spoke or two brought the stranger on the lee bow. Then it was that, on taking another view of her through the glass, I observed a couple of men standing near a jolly-boat, that swung at a pair of heavy wooden davits like a Nantucket whaler's on the quarter. One of them wore a red cap resembling an inverted flower-pot; the other, while he addressed his companion, gesticulated with inconceivable vehemence.

"Foreigners of a surety!" said I; "they'll have no news for us."

All continued quiet; the two vessels approached each other slowly; the stranger now proving herself, as I had supposed her, a brig of about a hundred and eighty tons, as dirty a looking craft as ever I saw, stained in streaks about the hull, as though her crew washed the decks down with the water in which they boiled their meat; her rigging slack and gray for want of tar; the clews of her sails gaping at a distance from her yard-arms; and at her main-mast head an immense weathercock, representing a boat with what I supposed to be a saint standing up in it, with gilt enough left upon the metal of which it was formed to flash dully at intervals as the rolling of the vessel strung the sunlight off and on to it. As she lifted to the floating heave of the sea she showed a bottom of ugly green sheathing rich with marine growths, dark patches of barnacles, sea-moss, and long trailings of weed rising vividly green from the sparkle of the brine.

"What a very horrid looking boat," observed Miss Jennings.

As the girl said this I saw the fellow at the stranger's wheel revolve it with frantic gestures, as though some deadly danger had been descried close aboard; the brig came heavily and sluggishly round right athwart our course, showing no colors, and dipping her channels to the run of the folds with the weary motion of a water-logged vessel, and so lay all aback. Finn looked on, scarcely understanding the manœuvre, then bawled out, "Hard down! Hard down! Chuck her right up in the wind! Why, bless my body and soul, what are the fools aiming at?"

The yacht, nimbly answering her helm, came to a stand, her square canvas to the mast, her fore and aft sails fluttering.

"Hail her, Finn!" cried Wilfrid, with excitement.

"No need, sir; they're coming aboard," answered the captain; and sure enough there were the men, the only two besides the man at the helm who were visible, working like madmen to lower away their jolly-boat. In their red-hot haste they let her drop with a run, and the fat fabric smote the water so heavily that I looked to see her floating in staves alongside. Then down one fall, with the agility of a monkey, dropped the man in the red nightcap into her and unhooked the blocks, jumping about like a madman. His companion swung himself down by the other fall, and in a trice both men, sitting so far in the head of the boat as to cock her stern high up while her nose was nearly under, were pulling for the yacht as though the devil himself were in pursuit of them.

"What do they want—the *Bride?*" exclaimed Wilfrid, breaking into a huge roar of laughter, with a slap of his knee. He had been eying the approach of the boat with a sort of high, lifting stare—head thrown back, nostrils round and quivering, like an impatient horse's.

"The desire of the moth for the star!" said I to Miss Jennings. "But the simile won't hold; yonder red nightcap spoils the fancy of the moth."

"Shall we receive them aboard, sir?" exclaimed Captain Finn.

"Certainly," responded Wilfred, with another short shout of laughter.

"Unship that there gangway," sung out Finn; "the steps over the side, one of ye."

The two strange creatures pulled with amazing contortions. Small wonder that the heap of child-like disposition that pretty well made up the substance of Wilfrid's manhood should have been stirred into extravagant merriment by the wild movements of the two fellows' bodies, the windmill-like flourishings of their oars, the flopping and flapping of the red cap, the incessant straining and twisting of the chocolate faces over the shoulder to see how they were heading, the shrill exclamations that sounded from the instant the fellows were within ear-shot, and that never ceased until they had floundered and splashed alongside.

I never beheld two more hideous men. Their skins were begrimed with dirt, and their color came near to the complexion of the negro with sun and weather and neglect of soap; the hair of the

seaman that wore the dirty red nightcap fell in snake-like coils upon his back and shoulders, black as tar and shining as grease. He wore thick gold hoops in his ears, and a faded blue sash round his waist; his feet were naked, and for the like of them it would be necessary to hunt the forests of Brazil. The other man wore a slouched felt hat, a pair of gray trousers jammed into half Wellington boots, a jacket confined by a button at the neck, the sleeves thrown over his back, while his dark arms, naked to the elbows, were hairy as a baboon's, with a glimpse to be caught of a most intricate net-work of gunpowder and Indian-ink devices covering the flesh to the very finger-nails. This creature had a very heavy mustache, backed by a pair of fierce whiskers, with flashing though bloodshot eyes, like a blot of ink upon a slice of orange-peel.

We were in a group at the gangway when they came sputtering alongside, flinging down their oars and walloping about in the wildest conceivable scramble as they made fast the painter and clawed their way up, and the instant they were on our deck they both let fly at us in a torrent of words, not attempting to distinguish among us, but both of them addressing first one and then another, all with such mad impetuosity of speech, such smiting of their bosoms, such snapping of their fingers, and convulsive brandishing of their fists, that the irrecognizable tongue in which they delivered themselves was rendered the most hopelessly confounding language that ever bewildered the ear. It was quite impossible to gather what they desired to state. First they would point to our ensign, then to their brig, then to the long gun upon our forecastle, meanwhile talking with indescribable rapidity. Finn tried to check them; he bawled, "Stop! stop! You no speakee English?" but they only started and let drive again the moment he ended his question.

"There's no good in all this," said Wilfrid; "we must find out what they want. What the deuce is their language, Charles, d'ye know?"

"A sort of Portuguese, I imagine," said I; "but a mighty corrupt specimen of that tongue, I should think."

"I will try them in French," said he; and approaching the fellow in the red nightcap he bawled in French, with an excellent accent, "What is wrong with your ship? What can we do for you?"

Both men shook their heads and broke out together afresh. It was amazing that they should go on jabbering as though we perfectly understood them, when one glance at our faces should have assured them that they might as well have addressed the deck on which they stood.

"Try' em in Latin, Wilf," cried I.

He addressed a few words to them in that tongue, but his English accent extinguished the hint or two they might have found in the words he employed had he pronounced them in South European fashion, and after glaring at him a moment with a deaf face, the red-capped man stormed forth again in a passion of speech, accompanied by the most incredible gesticulations, pointing to his brig, to our flag, to the cannon as before, winding up in the delirium of his emotion by flinging his cap down on deck and tearing a handful of hair out of his head.

Our crew were all on deck, and had come shouldering one another aft as fast as they dared, where they stood looking on, a grinning, hearkening, bewhiskered huddle of faces. I thought it just possible that one of them might understand the lingo of our grimy and astonishing visitors, and suggested as much to Captain Finn. He called, "Do any one of you men follow what these chaps are a-saying?"

A fellow responded, "It's Portugee, sir. I can swear to that, though I can't talk in it."

"Try them in Italian, Laura," said Wilfrid.

She colored, and in a very pretty accent, that floated to the air like the soft sounds of a flute after the hoarse, hideous, and howling gibberish of the two Dagos, as I judged them, she asked if they were Portuguese. The eyes of the fellow in the slouched hat flashed to a great grin that disclosed a very cavern of a mouth under his mustache widening to his whiskers, and he nodded violently. She asked again in Italian what they required, but this fell dead—they did not understand her; but, possibly imagining that *she* could comprehend them, they both addressed her at once, raising a most irritating clattering with their tongues.

"It looks to me," said Finn, "as if it was a case o' mutiny. Don't see what else can sinnify their constant pointing to that there gun and our flag and then their brig."

I sent a look at the vessel as he spoke, and took notice now of a number of heads along the line of the main-deck rail, watching us in a sort of ducking way, by which I mean to convey a kind of coming and going of those dusky knobs which suggested a very furtive and askant lookout. She was not above a quarter of a mile off. The wheel showed plain, and the man at it kept his face upon us continuously, while his posture, Liliputianized as he was, betrayed extraordinary impatience and anxiety. The craft lay aback, the light wind hollowing her sails inboard, and her ugly besmeared hull rolling in a manner that I suppose was rendered nauseous to the eye by

her color, her form, her frowzy, ill-cut canvas, and her sheathing of sickly hue, foul with slimy weed and squalid attire of repulsive sea-growth upon the long and tender lifting and falling of the sparkling blue. There were some white letters under her counter, but, though I took a swift peep at them through Finn's telescope, the shadow there and the long slant of the name towards the stern-post rendered the words indecipherable. The glass showed such heads along the rail as I could fix to be strictly in keeping with the filth and neglect you saw in the brig and with the appearance of the two men aboard of the schooner. Most of them might have passed for negroes. There were indications of extreme agitation among them, visible in a sort of fretful flitting, a constant looking up and around and abaft in the direction of the man at the wheel.

I thought I would try my hand with the red-capped worthy, and striding up to him, I sung out, "Capitano?"

He nodded, striking himself, and then, pointing to his companion, spoke some word, but I did not understand him. By this time the crew had come, shoving one another a little farther aft, so that we now made a fair crowd all about the gangway. Every man's attention was fixed upon the two Portuguese. It was so odd an experience that it created a sort of license for the crew; and Finn was satisfied to look on while first one and then another of our men addressed the two fellows, striving to coax some meaning out of them by addressing them in "pigeon" and other forms of English, according to that odd superstition current among seamen that our language is most intelligible to foreigners when spoken in a manner the least intelligible to ourselves.

We of the quarter-deck were beginning to grow weary of all this. The hope of being able to pick up news of the *Shark* had gone out of Wilfrid's mind long ago; the humor, moreover, of the two creatures' appearance and apparel was now stale to him, and with folded arms he stood apart watching their gesticulations and listening to their jargon—in which it seemed to me they were telling the same story over and over and over again—with tired air and gloomy brow. I drew Finn apart.

"What is the matter with them, think you?"

"I dorn't doubt it's a mutiny, sir."

"It looks like it, certainly; but how can we help them?"

"We *can't* help them, sir. The best thing we can do, I think, is to order 'em off. You can see, Mr. Monson, his honor's growing sick of the noise."

I started suddenly.

"Why, Finn, look!" I cried; "see! they have trimmed sail on the brig and she is under way!"

It was indeed as I had said. Unobserved by us, the people of the vessel had squared the main-yards and flattened in the head-sheets, and there she was away to windward, pushing slowly through it with a brassy wrinkling of water at her stem, her crew running about her as active as ants, while I noticed in the difference of costume that a new man had replaced the fellow who was at the wheel.

"Mind," I shouted, "or, by Jupiter, they'll run away with the ship and leave this brace of beauties on our hands!"

A single glance enabled Finn to see how it was. In a breath he sprang upon the red-capped man, caught him by the collar, twisted his head around in the direction of the brig, while he yelled in his ear, "Lookee! lookee! your ship go! your ship go! Jumpee, jumpee, or you loosee ship!" It was not likely that the grimy creature would have met with a ghost of a hint of the truth in the "lookees" and "jumpees" of friend Finn, but his nose having been slewed in the right direction, he instantly saw for himself. He broke out in a long, ringing howl, which I took to be some tremendous sea-curse in the Portuguese language; and calling his companion's attention to the brig by striking him with his clinched fist between the shoulders, and then indicating the vessel with both arms out-stretched in a melodramatic posture that made one think of Masaniello, he uttered another wild roar that was no doubt a further example of Portuguese bad language, and went in a sprawl to the gangway, followed by his comrade. In a trice they were over the side and in the boat, pulling furiously in the direction of the brig.

"Better trim sail, Captain Finn, so as to lie up for that vessel," exclaimed Wilfrid. "We must see those men aboard and the little drama played out, though 'tis vexatiously delaying."

It was now blowing a very light air of wind, yet there was weight enough in it to hold steady the canvas of the Portuguese brig even to the lifting of her foresail, lumpish as those cloths were made by the boom that spread the clews; and one saw by the wake of her that she was stirring through it at a pace to render the pursuit of the boat long and possibly hopeless, if the crew refused to back their yards for the two fellows. The boat was a fat, tub-like fabric, apparently heavy for her size, and the rowers pulled with such alternate heat and passion that, though they made the water buzz and foam about the bows, their motion was as erratic—first to right, then to

left, then a spasmodic heave round, as though they meant to return to us—as the course of a fly climbing a pane of glass. The whole picture was thrown out strong and clear by the background of sparkling azure water melting into a sort of trembling faintness off the horizon to above the height of the brig's masts against the sky, which from there ran up in a tint of deepening blue till it whitened out into glory round about the sun. The boat rose and fell upon the long ocean heave, splashed wildly forward by the two rowers, who again and again would turn their mahogany-colored faces over their shoulders to yell to the withdrawing vessel. The brig's crew stood in a crowd aft watching, most of them, as the glass disclosed, in a loafing, lounging posture, their bare arms folded or their hands sunk in their breeches-pockets, while one or another occasionally pointed at us or the boat, with a theatrical attitude of leaning back as he did so that made one fancy one could hear the laughter or the curses which attended these gestures. On high rustily glittered the amazing old weathercock or dog-vane of the saint in his boat, from which would leap with pendulum regularity a dull flame sunward, timing a like kind of fire, which flashed wet from the dirty yellow and sickly green of the hull, as her side rolled streaming to the noontide blaze.

"I say, Wilfrid," cried I, "it doesn't seem as if those chaps meant to let that boat approach them."

"What's to be done?" he exclaimed.

I looked at Finn. "If they don't pick those two fellows up," said I, "*we* shall have to do so, that's cocksure. But they are a kind of beauties whose room is better than their company, I think, as the crew would find out when we approached the equinoctial waters."

"Ay, sir," cried Finn. "It would never do to have the likes o' them aboard, your honor," addressing Sir Wilfrid. "No, no, the brig must pick 'em up. Dang their cruel hearts! I never seed a scurvier trick played at sea in all my days."

"But what's to be done?" cried Wilfrid, impatiently and irritably. "Could one of our boats overhaul the brig and put the two fellows aboard her?"

Finn shook his head.

"See here, Wilf," said I, "suppose we let slip a blank shot at her out of that eighteen-pounder yonder? The dirty herd of scow-bankers may take us to be a man-of-war. And another idea on top of this!" cried I, bursting into a laugh. "Is there anything black aboard that we can fly at the mast-head? It should prove a warrant of our honesty that must puzzle them gloriously."

"Would a black shawl do, Mr. Monson?" said Miss Jennings.

"The very thing," said I, "if it's big enough."

She immediately went below.

"I think a blank shot's a first-class idea," exclaimed Finn, "but as to a black flag—" and he cocked his eye dubiously at the mast-head, while his face visibly lengthened.

"Why a *black* flag, Charles?" cried Wilfrid.

"Why, my dear Wilf—the pirate's bunting, you know. The rogues may take us for a picaroon—no telling the persuasive influence of a black banner upon the nerves of such gentry."

"Noble! noble!" shouted Wilfrid, slapping his leg; "frighten them, Finn, frighten them. Why, man, they can't be *all* fools, and some of them at least will very well know that that ensign up there"—pointing to the commercial flag at our peak—"is not her Britannic Majesty's red cross. But a black flag—oh yes, by all means, if we can but muster such a thing. And get that gun loaded, will ye, Finn? Get it done at once, I say."

The skipper walked hurriedly forward as Miss Laura arrived with a black cashmere or crape shawl—I do not recollect the material. We held it open between us.

"The very thing," I cried, and full of excitement—for here was something genuine in the way of an incident to break in upon the monotony of a sea trip—I bent the shawl on to the signal halyards that led from the maintop-mast head and sent it aloft in a little ball, ready to break when the gun should be fired.

Meanwhile all was bustle forward. It is a question whether Jack does not love firing off a cannon even better than beating a drum. Miss Jennings walked right aft as far as she could go, holding her fingers in readiness for her ears, and saying to me as she passed that sudden noises frightened her. Wilfrid stood alongside of me, glancing with a boyish expression of excitement and expectation from the seamen congregated round the gun to the little black ball at the mast-head. The yacht was slowly overhauling the brig, but almost imperceptibly. The boat maintained an equidistance between us, and was struggling, wabbling, and splashing fair in a line with our cut-water and the lee quarter of the Portuguese craft. The two rowers exhibited no signs of exhaustion, though I expected every minute to find one or both of them give up and disappear, dead beaten, in the bottom of their tub.

"All ready forward, sir!" shouted Finn; "will your honor give us a signal when to fire?"

As he sung out the group of seamen hustled backward from the gun and thinned into meagre lines of spectators at a safe distance.

"Fire!" bawled Wilfrid.

There was a glance of flame past the bow port, a roar that tingled through the decks into one's very marrow, and the sea turned blind with white smoke, iridescent as a cobweb, over the bows of the *Bride.* I tugged at the signal halyards, broke my little ball, and the black shawl floated out fair from the mast-head, as sinister a piratic symbol as one could have desired, and not an atom the less malignant in significance for wanting the old-fashioned embellishments of the cross-bones and skull. I saw the Jacks forward looking up at the sight with grinning wonderment. However, it was easy to see by their way of laughing, staring, and turning to one another, that they twigged the motive of that wild marine exhibition. I sprang to the peak signal halyards and hauled the ensign down, for the black flag combines but ill with the union-jack, and then went to the side to see what the brig was about. Either she did not understand our meaning, or was resolved not to take any hint from us. She held on doggedly without a touch of the braces or a shift of the helm by the length of a spoke, with her people watching us and the pursuing boat from over the taffrail, a cluster of sulphur-colored faces, as they looked at that distance, but harmonizing excellently well, I thought, with the dingy yellow of the canvas rising in ungainly spaces over their heads and the sickly hue of the brig's hull with its shiny, pease-soup-like reflection in the water to the lift of the squalid fabric upon some polished brow of swell.

"Wilfrid," cried I, "they don't mean to pick up their boat."

"It looks like it," said he. "What's to be done? There's something confoundedly insulting in the rogue's indifference to our gun and colors."

"Better consult with Finn," said I.

He called to the skipper, who came to us from the forecastle.

"I say, Finn, what are we to do? We don't want those two filthy fellows aboard this yacht; and yet, if that brig don't pick them up, we can't, of course, let them remain adrift."

"Arm a boat's crew," said I; "you have weapons enough below. Take those two fellows out of yonder boat and compel the brig to receive them. I'll take charge with pleasure if Finn'll permit."

Finn, a slow, sober, steady old merchant seaman, did not seem to see this. The expression of worry made his long face comical with

the puzzled twist at the corners of his mouth, which looked to be, in his countenance, where most men's noses are situated.

"Or," said I, observing him to hang in the wind, "make them really believe that those are the colors we sail under"—pointing to the shawl—"by slapping a round-shot at them in sober earnest, leaving the missile to take its chance of missing or hitting."

"That's it," almost shrieked Wilfrid, in his excitement; "yes, that'll save the botheration of boat lowering and arguefication and perhaps bloodshed, by George! Run forward now, Finn, and let fly a round-shot at that ugly brute; hit her if you can, no matter where, that they may know we're in earnest, and that they may believe if they don't heave to we shall sink them. No remonstrance, Finn, for Heaven's sake! Jump, my dear fellow. Dash it! man," he cried, passionately, with a quite furious gesture in the direction of the brig, "that's not the object of our chase."

Finn, with an air of concern, but awed also by Wilfrid's temper and insistence, hurried on to the forecastle. I watched them load the gun a second time, and burst into a laugh when I saw two fellows rise out of the fore-hatch, each of them hugging an eighteen-pound shot to his heart.

"Only one ball at a time," shouted Wilfrid, conceiving very likely that they meant to double-shot the gun.

"Ay, ay, sir," responded Finn.

The crew backed away as before. The stout, whiskered seaman, with a face that made one think of a red apple snugged in a setting of horse-hair, who had previously fired the gun, and who was apparently the *Bride's* gunner, sighted the piece with a deliberateness that made me expect wonders. We all held our breath. I fixed my eye on the brig to observe, if possible, where the shot struck her. Then, crash! Had the cannon been loaded to the muzzle the blast could not have been more deafening. The thunder of it swept with a thrill out and away fiercer than the tremble of the first shock through the deck, and was almost immediately followed by a loud and fearful yell from the forecastle. I thought the gun had burst.

"Merciful powers! what has happened?" cried Wilfrid.

Captain Finn came bowling aft fast as his legs would travel.

"What is it? what is it?" my cousin and I roared out in one voice.

"The shot's struck the boat, your honors, and *sunk her!*" bellowed Finn.

I looked, and, sure enough, where the boat had been there was nothing to be seen but the violet slope of the swell softly drawing

out of the cloud of powder-smoke that was settling in lengthening, glistening folds towards the brig! I thought I observed something dark, however, and snatching up Finn's telescope from the skylight top, I levelled it, and made out the head of the man with the red nightcap holding by an oar or bit of wreckage. I shouted out that one of the men was alive in the water. The dismay was universal, but there was no disorder, no commotion. By waiting a little, the *Bride*, even as she was heading, would have floated to the spot where that melancholy red beacon was bobbing; but the delay this would have involved was not to be dreamed of. With a smartness that excited my admiration, man-of-war's-man as I had been in my time, our largest boat, a six-oared fabric, with sour old Crimp in the stern-sheets, was lowered and pulled away with splendid precision in the direction of the red nightcap. In a few minutes they had got the fellow inboard; they then hung upon their oars, looking round and round; but the other unfortunate creature, he of the slouched hat and black and flashing eyes, had found a sailor's grave. I sought with the glass over a broad field of water, but could see nothing. There was not a vestige left of the boat save what the red-capped chap had clung to.

"One of them killed! Heaven have mercy upon us!" groaned Wilfrid in my ear, and his appearance was full of dreadful consternation.

Meanwhile the brig ahead was holding steadily on, her crowd of people aft gazing at us as before. I took a view of them; they all held a sort of gaping posture; there were no dramatic gesticulations, no eager and derisive turning to one another, no pointing arms and backward leaning attitudes. They had as thunder-struck an air as can be imagined in a mob of men. What they supposed us to be *now*, after our extermination of the boat and one of the two fellows who had sought our assistance, it was impossible to conjecture.

Our boat, that had sped away from us about four times faster than we were moving through the water, hung with lifted oars over the spot where our cannon-ball had taken effect, until the *Bride* had slowly surged to within hail; then up stood sour Crimp.

"What are we to do?"

"Have you got both men?" bawled Finn, who perfectly well knew that they hadn't.

"No; there was but one to get, and here he is," and Crimp pointed to the bottom of the boat.

"Put him aboard his ship," cried Finn. "If they refuse to receive him, find out if there's e'er a one of 'em that can speak English, and

then tell them that if they don't take him we shall arm our men and compel 'em to it; and if *that* don't do, we'll keep on firing into 'em till they follow the road that's been took by their jolly-boat."

His long face was purple with temper and the effort of shouting, and he turned it upon Wilfrid, who nodded a fierce, excited approval, while I cried, "That's it, that's it; they *must* take him!"

Crimp held up his hand in token of having heard the captain, then seated himself; the oars fell and flashed as they rose wet to the sun, every gold-bright blade in a line, and the foam went spinning away from the bows of the little craft in snow to the magnificent disciplined sweep of those British muscles. In a jiffy she was on the brig's quarter, with Crimp erect in her, gesticulating to the crowd who overhung the rail. I kept the telescope bearing on them, and it seemed to me that the whole huddle of them jabbered to Crimp all together, an indistinguishable hubbub, to judge from the extraordinary contortions into which every individual figure flung itself, some of them going to the length of spinning round in their frenzy, while others leaped upon the rail and addressed the boat's crew with uplifted arms, as though they called all sorts of maledictions down upon our men. This went on for a few minutes; then I saw the bow-oar fork out his boat-hook and drag the boat to the main channels, into which, all very expeditiously, two or three brawny pairs of arms lifted the red-capped man. Then four of our fellows sprang into the chains, handed the little creature over the rail, and let him drop inboard. They then re-entered their boat, and fell astern of the brig by a few fathoms, holding their station there by a soft plying of oars, Crimp's notion probably being, as ours was, indeed, that the Portuguese crew would presently send our friend the red-cap to follow his mate.

We waited, watching intently. On a sudden I spied the red-cap in the heart of the mob of men that had clustered again near the wheel. His gesticulations were full of remonstrance; his people writhed round about him in the throes of a Portuguese argument, but it seemed to me, as I followed their gestures and their way of turning their faces towards us, that their talk was all about our schooner—as though, indeed, their mutinous passions had been diverted by our cannon-shot in a direction that boded no particular evil to the red-capped man.

"They'll not hurt the creature, I believe," said I.

"Call the men aboard, Finn," exclaimed Wilfrid, "and get the *Bride* to her course."

CHAPTER XII.

A SECOND WARNING.

I HAULED down the shawl from the mast-head, carefully unbent, folded, and gave it to Miss Jennings, who stood with Wilfrid watching the Portuguese brig. We had hoisted in our boat, and the men were busy about the decks coiling up after having trimmed sail.

"Once more heading a fair course for the *Shark*," said I, with a glance at the compass. "This has been a neat morning's work. A few incidents of the kind should make out a lively voyage."

"Oh, but it's dreadful to think of that poor man having been drowned!" exclaimed Miss Jennings. "I was watching the boat before the gun was fired. In an instant she vanished. She might have been a phantom. She melted out upon the water as a snow-flake would. I pressed my eyes, for I could not believe them at first."

"Horrible!" exclaimed Wilfrid, in a hollow, melancholy voice; "what had that miserable creature done that we should take his life? Have we insensibly—insensibly—courted some curse of Heaven upon this yacht? Who was the villain that did it?" He wheeled round passionately. "Finn—Captain Finn, I say!" he shouted.

The captain, who was giving directions to some men in the waist, came aft.

"Who was it that fired that shot, Finn?" cried my cousin, in his headlong way, jerking his head as it were at Finn with the question, while his arms and legs twitched and twisted as though to an electric current.

"A man named O'Connor, Sir Wilfrid," responded Finn.

"Did he do it expressly, think you?"

"I wouldn't like to say that, your honor. The fellow's a blunderhead. I inquired if there was e'er a man for'ard as could load and sight a cannon, and this chap stands up and says that he'd sarved for three years in a privateer, and was reckoned the deadest shot out of a crew of ninety men."

"Call him aft," said Wilfrid. "If he aimed at that boat intentionally it's murder—call him aft!"

He took some impatient strides to and fro, with a face that worked

like a ship in a sea-way with the conflict of emotions within him, while Finn, going a little way forward, sung out for O'Connor. Meanwhile we were rapidly widening the distance between us and the brig. I protest it was with an honest feeling of relief that I watched her sliding into a toylike shape, with promise of nothing showing presently but some radiant film of her top-mast canvas in the silver azure that streaked by a hand's-breadth, as it looked, the whole girdle of the horizon; for one was never to know but that her people might send the red-capped man adrift for us to pick up, or worry us in some other way.

Finn arrived, followed by the Irishman who had discharged the gun. His immense black whiskers stood out thick, straight, inflexible as the bristles of a chimney-sweep's brush, contrasting very extraordinarily with the bright apple-red of his cheek and the blue, Hibernian, seawardly eye that glimmered under a dense black thatch of brow. He stood bolt-upright, soldier fashion, with his arms straight up and down by his sides like pump-handles, and fixed an unwinking stare upon whoever addressed him.

"You fired that gun, Captain Finn says," exclaimed Wilfrid.

"Oi did, your honor."

"What made you take aim at the boat?"

"Your honor, by the holy eleven, I took aim at the brig. There's something wrong with the pace."

"Wrong with the piece. What d'ye mean?"

"It was cast with a kink, sorr; it dhroops amidships, and shoots as Misther Crimp's larboard oye peeps, your honor, though, loike his oye, it manes well."

"Nonsense," I cried, "you must have covered the boat to hit it."

"By all that's sacred, then," cried the man, "I had the natest observation of the brig's maintop-masht as ever oye could bring the muzzle of a pace to soight. The gun was cast with a kink, sorr."

"My belief is that you're utterly ignorant of guns," cried Wilfrid. "The concussion was fierce enough to shake the yacht to pieces."

"'Twas your honor's design to froighten 'em."

"But not to murder them, you dolt," shouted Wilfrid. "D'ye know I could have you *hanged* for this?"

"It was but a haythen Portuguay, sorr," answered the fellow, preserving his ramrod-like posture and unwinking stare.

"Tell him to go forward, Finn; tell him to go forward," cried Wilfrid, "and see that he never has any more to do with that gun on any account whatever, d'ye understand?"

The seaman knuckled his forehead and wheeled round, but methought I could just catch a glimpse past his whisker of a sudden protrusion of the cheek as though he was signalling with his tongue to a brother-Jack who was flemish-coiling a rope not very far from where he was standing.

The luncheon-bell rang and we went below. At table we could talk of nothing but the unhappy Portuguese whom our round-shot had sent to the bottom. Muffin's face of respectful horror was a feature of the time which I recall more vividly than even the disaster itself. This man, though he was in attendance on Wilfrid as a valet, regularly stood behind his master's chair at meals. It was Wilfrid's whim to have him at hand. He did not offer to wait unless it was to procure anything my cousin might require when the stewards were busy with Miss Jennings and myself, or one or both of them absent. His air of deferential consternation was exceedingly fine as he listened to our talk about the annihilated boat and the foundered foreigner, "Who," said I, with a glance at his yellow visage, the shocked expression of which he tried to smother by twisting his lips into a sort of shape that might pass as a faint obsequious simper, and by keeping his eyelids lowered, "let us trust was cut in halves, for then his extinction would be painless; for, after all, drowning, though it is reckoned an agreeable death, after consciousness has fled, is mortal agony, I take it, while the sensation of suffocation remains."

Muffin's left leg fell away with an exceedingly nervous crooking of it in the trouser, and he turned up his eyes an instant to the upper-deck with so sickly a roll that despite myself I burst into a laugh, though I swiftly recovered myself.

"It is strange, Charles," exclaimed my cousin, in a raven-like note, "that a ghastly incident of this kind should sit so lightly on your mind, considering that you have quitted the sea for years and have led a far more effeminate life ashore than I, who have been roughing it on the ocean when very likely you were lounging with a bored face in an opera-stall or dozing over a cigar in some capacious club arm-chair. Had you been chasing slavers or pitching cannon-shot into African villages down to the present moment, I could almost understand your indifference to a business that's going to haunt me for the rest of my days."

"Nonsense!" I exclaimed; "it was a bad job, I admit, but a pure accident, not more tragical than had the boat capsized and drowned the man. There would be nothing in a twenty-fold uglier mis-

hap to haunt you. But I'll tell you what, though," I continued, talking on to avert the sentimental argument which I saw strong in Wilfrid's face, "the incident of this morning points a very useful moral."

"What moral?" he demanded.

"Why, that we must not be in too great a hurry to speak every sail we sight."

"Finn knows my wishes; we must hear all we can about the *Shark*," cried Wilfrid, warmly.

"The very vessel that we neglect to speak," exclaimed Miss Jennings, softly—she had spoken but little, and it was easy to see through the transparency of her unaffected manner that the tragic affair of the morning had made a very deep impression on her—"might prove the one ship of all we pass that could most usefully direct us."

"Two to one!" said I, giving her a bow and smiling to the look of coy reproach in her charming eyes. "Of course, Miss Jennings, I have no more to say. At least," I added, turning to Wilfrid, "on the head of speaking passing ships, though the moral I find in this forenoon trouble is not exhausted."

"Well," said he, a little imperiously, leaning towards me on one elbow, with his nails at his lips and the spirit of restlessness quick as the blood in his veins in every lineament.

"Well," said I, echoing him, "my suggestion is that your long-tom's murderous mission should be peremptorily cut short by your ordering Finn to strike the noisy old barker at once down into the hold, where he'll be a deuced deal more useful as ballast than as a forecastle toy for the illustration of Irish humor."

"No!" shouted Wilfrid, fetching the table a whack with his fist; "so say no more about it, Charles. Strange that *you*, who should possess the subtlest and strongest of any kind of human sympathy for and with me—I mean the sympathy of blood—should so absolutely fail to appreciate my determination and to accept my purpose! That girl there," pointing with his long arm to Miss Laura, "can read my heart, and of her sweetness justify and approve all she finds there. But *you*, my dear Charles"—he softened his voice, though he continued speaking with warmth, nevertheless—"*you*, my own first cousin, *you* to whom my honor should be hardly less dear than your own—*you* would have me abandon this pursuit—forego every detail of my carefully prepared programme—blink with a cynical laziness at my own and my infant's degradation, and

turn to the law—to the law, forsooth!—for the appeasement or extinction of every just yearning and of every consuming desire of my manhood. No, by G——!" he roared, "Fate may be against me, but even *her* iron hand can be forced by a heart goaded as mine has been and is."

He rose from the table, and without another word went to his cabin.

We had been for some time alone—I mean that Muffin and the stewards had left us. When my cousin was gone I looked at Miss Jennings.

"Forgive me, Mr. Monson," she exclaimed, with a little blush, and speaking with an enchanting diffidence, "but I fear—indeed I am sure—that any, even the lightest, suggestion that runs counter to Wilfrid's wishes irritates him. And," she added, almost in a whisper, "I think it is dangerous to irritate him."

"I have no wish to irritate him, believe me, Miss Jennings," said I. "I desire to be of some practical help, and my recommendations have no other motive. But I give you my word if this sort of thing goes on I shall grow selfish, nay, alarmed if you like. I certainly never anticipated these melodramatic displays, these tragic rebukes, when I accepted his offer of the voyage. Pray consider. If Wilf, poor fellow, should grow worse, if his actions should result in exhibiting him as irresponsible, what's to be done? Heaven forbid that I should say a word to alarm you." She shook her head with a smile. I was a little abashed, but proceeded nevertheless: "We are not upon dry land here. The ocean is as full of the unexpected as it is of fish. Finn is a plain, steady man, with brains enough, but then he is not in command in the sense that a captain is in command when we speak of a ship whose skipper is lord paramount. He will obey as Wilfrid orders; and I say, Miss Jennings, with all submission to your engaging, to your beautiful desires as a sister, that if Wilfrid's humor is going to gain on him at the rate at which I seem to find it growing, it will be my business, as I am certain it will be my duty, for everybody's sake as well for yours and his own, so to contrive this unparalleled pursuit as to end it swiftly."

She was silent—a little awed, I think, by my emphatic manner, perhaps by a certain note of sternness, for I had been irritated, besides being nervous; and then, again, my distaste for the trip worked very strongly in me while I was talking to her.

We were a somewhat gloomy ship for the rest of the day. I noticed that the seamen wore tolerably grave faces at their several jobs, and it was easy to gather that, now they had had time to digest the

incident of the morning, it was as little to their taste as it was to ours aft. Indeed, it was impossible to tell what kind of omen they might manufacture out of so tragic an affair. Sailors were very much more superstitious in those days than they are now; the steam fiend has wonderfully cleared the atmosphere of the forecastle, and the sea-goblin has long since made his final dive from the top-gallant rail to keep company with the mermaid in her secret bower of coral in a realm fathoms deep beneath the ocean's ooze. O'Connor tried very hard to look as if he felt that on the whole he almost deserved to be hanged for his blundersome extermination of the Portugee heathen; at least this seemed his air, when, as he sat stitching on a sail in the waist, he suspected a quarter-deck gaze to be directed at him. But it is hard for a man with merry blue eyes, and cheeks veritably grinning with ruddiness in the embrace of a huge, hearty pair of carefully doctored whiskers, to look contrite. The Irishman did his best, but I laughed to see how the instant he forgot his part nature jovially broke out in him again.

Crimp had charge that afternoon, and when I arrived on deck with a cigar in my mouth, leaving Miss Jennings and her maid hanging together over a hat whose feather in some way or other had gone wrong, I asked the mate what was his opinion of the accident of the morning.

"Ain't got any opinion about it at all," he answered.

"It was an accident, let us believe," said I.

"Pure hignorance, more like," he answered. "That there O'Connor's regularly ate up with pride. He's all bounce. Says he's descended from kings, and if he had his rights he'd be at the head o' Ulster or some such place as that 'stead of an able seaman. *He* know anything 'bout firing off cannons!" making a horrible face and going to the side to spit.

"Did they understand what you said aboard the brig when you talked to them from the boat?"

"Ne'er a word."

"Was the red-capped man hurt?"

"Dazed. Eyes pretty nigh out on's cheeks. He was too full o' salt-water to curse, I allow, so when we hauled him into the boat he fell on his knees and prayed. A bloomin' poor job; a measly mean business! Knocking of a boat to pieces an' drownding of a man. What's the good o' that there gun? Only fit to kick up a plaguy shindy. Next time it may bust, and then, stand by! for I once see an explosion."

"Is there anything wrong with the piece, as O'Connor suggests?" said I, much enjoying the old chap's sourness, which I may say was not a little in harmony with my mood that afternoon.

"Couldn't tell if ye offered me all ye was worth. My business ain't guns. I shipped to do my bit and my bit I'll *do*, but the line's chalked a mighty long way this side o' hordnance."

I walked on to the forecastle to inspect the gun for myself. O'Connor watched me with the whole round of his face, broad and purple as the rising moon. The gun was of an elderly fashion, but it looked a very substantial weapon, with a murderous grin in the gape of it, and a long slim throat that warranted a venomous delivery. The kink the Irishman spoke of was altogether in his eye.

I returned to the quarter-deck, relighted my cigar, stowed myself comfortably away in the chair I had at an earlier hour procured for Miss Jennings, and pulling from my pocket a little handy edition of one of Walter Scott's novels, was speedily transported leagues away from the ocean by the spells of that delightful wizard. Thus passed the afternoon. Miss Jennings remained below, and Wilfrid lay hid in his cabin. It was very pleasant weather. The sky was clear blue from line to line, with just a group of faint bronze-browed clouds of a dim cream at the horizon looming in the azure air far away down in the north-west. The wind was cool, though salt, a pleasant breeze from the east, with a trifle of northing in it, and very steadily the yacht travelled quietly over the plain of twinkling waters, cradled by a soft western heaving. She made no stir forward saving now and again a sound as of the pressure of a light foot upon tinderish brushwood; every sail that would draw was packed on her, to her triangular lower studding-sail, the reflection of which waved in the tremulous blue like a sheet of quicksilver, fluctuating as it drained downward.

Still it was dull work. I would often break away from Scott to send a glance at the skylight, where I could just get a peep at the ruddy glow of Miss Laura's hair as she sat at the table, with her maid near her, and heartily wished she would join me. Crimp's company was like pickles—a very little of it went a long way. Had etiquette permitted, I should have been glad to go among the men and yarn with them, for I could not doubt there was a store of amusing experiences lying behind some of the rugged hairy countenances scattered about the decks. Indeed, no summons ever greeted my ear more cheerfully than the first dinner-bell; for, whether one has an appetite or not, sitting down to a meal on board ship is something to do.

Nothing that need make a part of this story happened that night. Wilfrid was reserved, but his behavior and the little he said were collected enough to make one wonder at the lengths he would occasionally go the other way. He brought a large diary from his cabin, and sat writing in it up to a short while before going to bed. I cannot imagine what he had to put down, unless, indeed, he were posting up the book from some old date. It found him occupation, however, and he was a good deal in labor, too, throughout, I thought, often biting the feather of his pen, casting his eyes up, plunging his fingers into his hair and frowning upon the page, and comporting himself, in a word, as though he were composing an epic poem. I played at beggar-my-neighbor with Miss Jennings, showed her some tricks at cards, and she told my fortune. She said she could read my future by looking at my hand, and I feel the clasp of her fingers still, and smell the perfume of her hair, and behold the brightness of it, and see her poring upon my palm, talking low that Wilfrid should not be disturbed; tracing the lines with a rosy finger-nail, with an occasional lift of her eyes to mine, the violet of them dark as hazel and brilliant in the oil-flames—it might have happened an hour ago, so keen is this particular memory.

It was as peaceful an ocean night as any man could imagine of the weather up in the seas which our yacht was still stemming; moonless, for the planet rose late now, but spacious and radiant with stars. There was the phantasm of a craft when I went on deck about a mile on the bow of us, in the spangled dusk looking like ice, so fine and delicate was the white of her canvas; but no notice was taken of her. Finn trudged over to the gloom to leeward when I rose up through the hatch, possibly mistaking me for my cousin, and manifestly anxious to shirk the job of having anything to do with the stranger. I watched her pass—a mere wraith of a ship she looked, sliding her three stately spires, that seemed to melt upon the eye as you watched them under the red tremble and green diamond-like sparkling of the luminaries which looked down upon her. By the time she had faded out like a little puff of steam in the dumb shadow astern, my pipe was smoked out, and I went below and to bed, scarce having exchanged three words with Finn, and musing much on my fortune that Miss Laura had read in my hand—that my "line of life" was very long, that in middle-life I should meet a woman who would fascinate me, but that, nevertheless, I should die as I had lived—a bachelor.

Next morning Wilfrid did not appear at the breakfast-table.

Muffin informed me that his master had passed a very bad night, had not closed his eyes, indeed, and for hour after hour had paced the cabin, sometimes going on deck.

"Is he ill, do you think?" I inquired.

"Not exactly ill, sir," he answered, in his sleekest manner, with the now familiar crook of one knee and his arms hanging straight up and down.

"What then?" I demanded, perceiving that the fellow had more to say, though his very humble and obsequious respectfulness would not suffer him to express much at a time.

"I fear, sir," he exclaimed, looking down, "that yesterday's 'orrid tragedy has preyed upon his nerves, which, as you are of course aweer, sir, is uncommonly delicate."

I thought this probable, and as the man was going to his master's cabin with a cup of tea from the breakfast-table, I told him to give Sir Wilfrid my love, and to say that I should be glad to look in and sit with him. He returned to tell me my cousin thanked me, but that he would be leaving his berth presently, and would then join me in a pipe on deck.

There was a fresh breeze blowing, and the yacht was plunging through it in a snow-storm, rising buoyant to the bow surge with a broad dazzle of racing water over the lee rail, and a smother of white roaring in a cataract from under her counter. There was wind in the misty shining of the sun and in the spaces of dim blue between the driving clouds. The ocean was gay with tints, flying cloud-shadows of slate, broad tracts of hurrying blue, rich and gloriously fresh, with a ceaseless flashing of the heads of the dissolving billows, dashes of lustrous yellow to the touch of the sun, that you would see sweeping a rusty ball of copper through a mass of smoke-like vapor, and then leaping out, moist and rayless, into some speeding lagoon of clear heaven. The horizon throbbed to the walls of the dimness that circled the line all the way round, and my first glance was for a ship; but all was bare ocean. From time to time the fellow on the top-gallant yard ogled the slope over either bow in a way that made me imagine some sort of hope of the *Shark's* heaving into view had come to the sailors out of this rushing morning. I waited for Miss Jennings, thinking she would arrive on deck; but, after stumping to and fro for a half-hour or thereabouts, and passing the skylight, I saw her and Wilfrid in close conversation, standing almost directly beneath, he gesticulating with great energy, but speaking in a subdued voice, and she watching him with a troubled

face. Passing the skylight again, a little later on, I caught sight of Wilfrid's figure marching up and down with irregular, broken strides, while the girl, leaning with her hand upon the back of a chair, continued to gaze at him, with now and again a little movement of the arm which suggested that she was endeavoring to reassure or to reason with him.

I got alongside of Finn, and fell into a yarn with him. One thing led to another, and Lady Monson's name was mentioned.

"Was she a pleasant lady?" said I.

"Ay, to look at, your honor. Up to the hammer. A little too much of her, some folks might think; but such eyes, sir! such teeth! and talk of *figures!*" and here he delivered a low prolonged whistle of admiration.

"She was a tolerably amiable lady, I suppose?" said I, carelessly.

"Well, sir, if you'll forgive me for saying of it, that's just what she *wasn't*," he replied. "She was one of them parties as can be very glad and very sorry for themselves and for nobody else. She steered Sir Wilfrid as I might this here *Bride*. She needed but to set her course and the craft answered the shift of helm right away off. Ye never saw her, sir?"

"Never."

"Well, she hadn't somehow the appearance of what I tarm a marrying woman. She looked to be one of them splendid females as can't abide husbands, for the reason that being made up of wanity, nothing satisfies 'em but the sort of admiration that sweethearts feels. I took notice once that, she being seated in a cheer, as it might be there," said he, indicating a part of the deck with a nod of his long head, "Sir Wilfrid draws up alongside of her to see if she were comfortable and if he could run on any errand for her. She scarcely gave him a look as she answered short as though his merely being near fretted her. But a minute arter up steps a gent from the cabin, the Honorable Mr. Lacy, and dawdles up to her, pulling at his bit of a whisker and showing of his teeth over a long puking of 'Haw! haws!' and 'Yasses;' and then see the change in her ladyship! Gor bless my heart and soul, your honor, 'twarn't the same woman. She hadn't smiles enough for this here honorable. Her voice was like curds and whey. She managed the color in her cheeks, too, somehow, and bloomed out upon the poor little dandy when a minute afore her face to her husband was as blank as a custard. No, Mr. Monson, sir, her ladyship wasn't a marrying woman. She was one of them ladies meant by natur' to sit in a gilt

cheer in the heart of a crowd of young men, all a-bowing to and a-worshipping of her; very different from her sister, sir. That little lady down below there I allow 'll have the true makings of an English wife and an English mother in her, for all she's an Australian."

"I suppose, then, you were not very much surprised when you heard of Lady Monson's elopement?"

"No more surprised, your honor, than a man can be when a thing that he's been expecting has happened. But she's not going to stick to the colonel. If his honor don't overhaul the *Shark* and separate 'em, she'll be separating herself long afore the time it ud occupy the schooner to sail round the world. Lord love 'ee, sir, if I were to hear of her heeloping with some African king, atop of an elephant, it wouldn't surprise me. When a woman like her allows a chap to cut her cable he must be a wiser man than e'er a prophet of them all that's writ about who's going to tell you where the hull 'll strand or bring up."

As he delivered himself of these words Sir Wilfrid showed in the hatch, handing Miss Jennings up the ladder, and my companion started away on a lonely quarter-deck walk. The girl looked very grave and worried; my cousin, gaunt and haggard, with a fire in his weak, protruding eyes that was like the light of fever or of famine. He grasped my hand and held it while he sent a look around. I spoke lightly of the fine breeze and the yacht's pace and the good runs we should be making if this weather held, finding something in his instant's assumption of a hearty demeanor, a sort of strained liveliness far more affecting than his melancholy, that was like a request to me not to venture upon any sort of personal inquiries. He called to Finn to know the speed, then said: "Charles, give Laura your arm, will you? There's too much wind to sit. She looks a little pale, but a few turns will give roses to her cheeks. My head aches, and I must keep below out of this air till I am better."

Miss Jennings took my arm, for there would happen a frequent lee swing, with a rise of the bow and a long slanting rush to the whole weight of the cloths till you could have spooned up the white water over the side with your hand, that rendered walking difficult and fatiguing. Very soon I placed chairs under the weather-bulwarks, snugging her with rugs and shawls, and in the comparative calm of that shelter we were able to converse.

"Wilfrid looks very ill this morning," said I.

"He has had another warning," she answered.

"The deuce he has. When?"

"Last night."

"What sort of a warning is it this time?"

"Precisely the same as the first one," she replied.

"I am grieved, but not surprised," said I. "I very much fear he is going from bad to worse. I still hold with the views I expressed last evening. A time may, nay a time must come, when you yourself, Miss Jennings, ardent as is your sisterly desire, will look to me for some resolution that shall preserve us, and himself, too, from the schemes of a growing distemper." She was silent. "Did he tell you," I continued, "the nature of the warning?"

"Yes," she answered.

"In confidence? If so, of course—"

"No," she interrupted; "he came from his cabin after breakfast, when you had gone on deck, and I saw at once that something was very wrong with him. I was determined to get at the truth, and questioned him persistently, and then he told me all."

"*All!*" exclaimed I, opening my eyes, for the word seemed to indicate some very large matter lying behind his confession.

"What he has seen," she said, "for two nights running has been a mysterious writing upon his cabin wall."

"Humph!" said I.

"Do you remember, Mr. Monson, that he told us of a dream in which he had seen a boat with a sort of sign-board in it, on which was inscribed the word 'Monday' in letters of flame? Well, he sees the same sort of fiery scrawl now in his cabin."

"What is the nature of the message?"

"He says that the words are 'RETURN TO BABY!'"

"He has dreamed this," said I, "or it is some wretched trick of the sight or brains; but I would rather believe it a dream."

"It is an illusion of some kind, no doubt," she exclaimed, "but it is strange that it should occur, be the cause what it will, on two successive nights and much about the same time. No wonder the poor fellow is depressed this morning. It is not only that he fears this warning as signifying that something is seriously wrong with baby, and that it is a mysterious command to him to return to her at once; he dreads that it may occur again to-night and to-morrow night, continuously indeed, until it actually drives him mad by obliging him to make up his mind either to neglect his child or to abandon his pursuit of his wife."

"The long and short of it is, Miss Jennings," said I, "that when it comes to one's being thrown with a man whose mind is a misfit,

that's apt to shift like an ill-stowed cargo to any breeze of wind that heels the craft over, one must 'stand by,' as sailors say, for troublesome half-hours and bewilderingly unexpected confrontments."

But there was no use in my telling her the wish was strong in my mind that if it was to be Wilfrid's unhappy destiny to grow worse, then the sooner he acted in such a way as to force all hands to see that it would be at his own as well as at our peril to leave him at large and to suffer him to preserve control over the movements of the yacht, and by consequence the lives and fortunes of those who sailed in her, the better; for, I protest that even in the thick of my talk with the girl I never sent a glance at the white roll of spinning waters twisting and roaring away alongside without a sense of the absurdity of the whole business, the aimlessness of the pursuit, the futility of it as a project of revenge, its profound idleness as a scheme of recovering Lady Monson, guessing, as any one could, from my cousin's talk and from what Laura Jennings had let fall, that if Wilfrid *should* succeed in regaining his wife he wouldn't know what in the world to do with her!

CHAPTER XIII.

I INTERPRET THE WARNING.

The strong wind blew throughout the day, and the yacht made a gallant run, floating buoyant in foam from one blue knoll to another, with nothing living outside our decks saving a gray gull that overhung the seething line torn up by the furrow of our keel. A bright lookout was kept aloft. Rarely did I send a glance that way but that I saw one or another of the men whose duty lay in overhanging the top-gallant yard sweeping the windy, sallow sky, against which the ridged horizon was beating, with Wilfrid's polished, lance-bright tube.

In the first dog-watch, before we sat down to dinner, the breeze thinned and the ocean flattened out into a softly heaving surface, flowing in folds of tender blue to the dark orange of the west, where lines of the hectic of the crimsoning orb hung like mouldy stains of blood. All cloths were crowded on our little ship, and when, after dinner, I came on deck, I found her sliding through the evening shadow, large and pale, like a body of moon-tinctured mist that floats off some great mountain-top and sails stately on the indigo blue air, melting as it goes, as our canvas seemed to dissolve to the deepening of the dusk upon its full bosoms. A sailor was playing a concertina forward, and a man was singing to it. Here and there upon the forecastle was a dim grouping of outlines, with a scarlet tipping of the darkness by above half a score of well-sucked tobacco-pipes, making one think of a constellation of fire-flies, or of a cluster of riding lights.

I had asked Miss Jennings to join me on deck, but she declined on the plea—which two or three sneezes emphasized in the most reassuring way—that she felt chilly, and was afraid of catching cold. Wilfrid produced his diary again, if a diary it was, and sat writing. I tried to court him into a walk and a smoke, but he said no; he had a fancy for writing just then; it was a humor whose visits were somewhat rare, and, therefore, the mood being on him, he wished to encourage it, as he had a very great deal to commit to paper.

"Well," said I, "I'll just go and smoke one cigar, and then, with

your permission, Miss Jennings, I'll endeavor to win a sixpence from you at beggar-my-neighbor again, and you shall tell me my fortune once more."

I yawned as I stepped on deck. Dull enough work, by George! thought I. Only think of this sort of thing lasting till we get to the Cape, with Wilfrid's intention that even by *that* time, if we don't fall in with the *Shark*, little more than a beginning shall have been made! Let me once see the inside of Table Bay, and her ladyship may go hang for any further pursuit that *I* shall be concerned in. The worst of it was that poor Wilfrid's troubles, warnings, health, and the like, engrossed Miss Jennings. Nearly all our talk was about my cousin. I had hoped that the sunshine of her nature, that was bright in her laugh just as you seemed to see it glowing in her hair, would have somewhat cleared the gloom that Wilfrid cast upon our social atmosphere; but she seemed to lie under a kind of spell; it was keen womanly sympathy, no doubt, beautiful for its sincerity, animated, too, by an honorable sensitiveness—by the feeling, I mean, that the runaway was her sister, and that she to that degree at least shared in the responsibility of the blow that had been dealt the poor fellow's fond and generous heart. All this was doubtless as it should be; nevertheless, her qualities went to fashion a behavior I could not greatly relish, simply because it came between us. Her thoughts were so much with my cousin and her sister's wrong-doing that the side of her I was permitted to approach I found somewhat blind.

All was now quiet on deck; the concertina had ceased; the watch below had gone to bed; those who were on duty stowed themselves away in various parts, and sat, mere shapes of shadow, blending with the deep gloom between the bulwarks, nodding, but ready to leap to the first call. There were many shooting-stars this night; one of them scored the heavens with a bright line that lingered a full ten minutes after the meteor had vanished in a puff of spangles, and it was so glittering as to find a clear reflection in the smooth of the swell, where it writhed, broadened, and contracted like a dim silent serpent of prodigious length. There was some dew in the air, and the sparkle of it upon the rail and skylight flashed crisply to the stars to the quiet rise and fall of the yacht upon the black invisible heave that yearned the whole length of her, with an occasional purr of froth at the cut-water, and a soft, rippling, washing noise dying off astern into the gloom. The phosphorus in the sea was so plentiful that you might have thought yourself inside the tropics. It glared like sheet-lightning under each ebony slope running westward, and in

every small play of froth there was the winking of it, like the first scratching of lucifer-matches. Under the counter where the wake was, the streaming of this light was like a thin sheathing of the water there with gold-beater's-skin, rising and falling, and of a greenish tint, of the light of the moon. The flash of the sea-glow forward when the bow broke the swell would throw out the round of the staysail and jib as though the clear lens of a bull's-eye lamp had glanced upon the canvas. This greenish, baffling twinkling, this fading and flickering of flames over the side, thickened the obscurity to the sight within the rails. Somehow, too, the mystic illumination seemed to deepen the stillness that lay upon the deep, spite of the welter and the breeze, that had weight enough to lift a streak of foam here and there. It might be that the sight of those fires made one think of the crackling and noise of flame, so that the very dumbness of the burning lay like a hush upon the darkling surface, with nothing aboard us to vex it, for our canvas swelled silent as if carved in mother-of-pearl, and not so much as the chafe of a rope or the stir of a sheave in its block fell from above to trouble the ear.

I spied a figure standing a foot or two before the main-rigging, leaning over the side. Not knowing whether Finn or Crimp had the watch, and supposing this man to be one of them, I approached close and peered.

"Is that you, captain?" said I, for the shadow of the rigging was upon him to darken him yet.

"No, sir, it's me, Mr. Monson. Muffin, sir."

He had no need to mention his name, for his greasy, most remarkable voice, along with its indescribable tone of insincere, habitual obsequiousness, would have proclaimed him Muffin had he spoken as one of a crowd out of the bottom of a coal-mine.

"Feel sick?" said I.

"No, I am obliged to you, sir," he answered, with a simper in his tone. "I am taking the liberty of breathing the hair just a little, sir."

"I suppose you'll not be sorry to get home again, Muffin?"

"Indeed, sir," he exclaimed, "I shall be most humbly thankful, I assure you."

"You're an Englishman, aren't you?"

"Oh dear, yes; quite English, sir. Born at 'Ammersmith, sir."

"Then you ought to be very fond of the sea."

"I should be more partial to it, sir, I believe," said he, "if it was a river. I have a natural aversion to the hocean, sir. I can swim and

I can row. I've pulled on the Serpentine, sir, and four years ago I made a voyage to the Continong as far as Cally, and found the water very hentertaining. But there's so much hocean here, sir, that it's alarming to think of. On a river, Mr. Monson, sir, one can never seem distant; but here—why, sir, if my mother's 'ouse was in one of them stars, it couldn't seem farther off, and every day I suppose 'll make the distance greater."

"That you must expect," said I, turning, with a notion of seeking Finn or Crimp.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he said, "but could you tell me what them fires are that's burning in the water?"

"Phosphorus," said I.

"Phosphorus?" he ejaculated, as though startled, "hoh, indeed, sir! And might I wenture to ask why it is that the water don't put it out?"

"There are more kinds of fire than one," said I, laughing; and not much relishing the prostrative nature of the fellow's respectfulness, I walked aft.

Close to a boat that hung inboard by the davits, only a few strides from where Muffin was standing, I espied another figure standing with his back against the rail. It proved to be Mr. Jacob Crimp.

"Plenty of fire in the water to-night," said I.

"Is there?" he answered, slowly rounding his sturdy little figure to look. "I ain't took notice."

"Have you followed the sea many years, Mr. Crimp?" said I, feeling the need of a chat, and willing, moreover, to humor the quizzical mood that commonly came to me when I conversed with this sour little chap.

"Thirty year."

"A long spell!"

"Sight too long."

"I suppose you'll be settling down ashore soon?"

"Ay, if I ain't drownded. *Then*, settling ashore with me'll sinnify a hole in the airth."

"Come, come!" said I, "after thirty years of hard labor there'll be surely dollars enough for a clean shirt and a roof. But you may be married, though?"

"No, I ain't," he answered, with a snap like cocking a gun.

"Well, a sailor is a fool to get married," said I. "Why should a man burden himself with a wife whose society he cannot enjoy, with whom he accepts all the obligations of a home without the privilege of occupying it, save for a few weeks at a time?"

"Well, I ain't married, so I don't care. It's nothin' to me what other men do. Talk o' settling! If you come to my berth I'll show you the fruits of thirty year of sea sarvice—an old chest, a soot or two of clothes, and 'bout as much ready cash as ud parchase a dose of ratsbane." Here emotion choked him and he remained silent.

At this moment a low, mocking, most extraordinary laugh came out of the blackness upon the sea in the direction I happened to be gazing in. The sound was a distinct *Ha, ha, ha!* and before the derisive, hollow, mirthless note had fairly died off the ear, a brisk, angry voice, within apparently a pistol-shot of us, exclaimed, "*That yacht is cursed!*" A laugh like the first followed, and then all was still.

Crimp started, and I was grateful to Heaven he did so, since it was an assurance the noise had been no imagination of my own. I will not deny that I felt exceedingly frightened: my legs trembled like an up-and-down lead-line in a strong tide-way. It was not only the suddenness, the unexpectedness of such a thing; it was the combination of deep gloom upon the waters, the play of the phosphoric fires there, the oppressive mystery of the sombre vastness stretching from over our rail, as it seemed, to the immeasurably remote dim lights of heaven lying low upon the edge of the ocean, and languishing in the darkness there.

"Did you hear it?" I cried, in a subdued voice, to Crimp.

"Ay," responded the man, in a startled voice. "I don't see anything; do you?"

I peered my hardest. "Nothing," I exclaimed. "Hush! the cry may be repeated."

We strained our eyes, and ears too, but all was silent; nor was there any livelier sparkle in the liquid dusk to indicate the dip of an oar or the stirring of the fiery water by a boat's stem.

"Did the fellow at the wheel hear it, think you?" said I.

We both stepped aft, the mate looking to right and left, and even up at the stars overhead, as though he feared something would tumble down upon us out of the dark air. He approached the man who was at the helm, and said, "Thomas, did you hear anybody a-laughing-like just now out on the quarter there?"

"No," answered the man.

"Are ye a bit deaf?"

"Ne'er a bit."

"And you mean to say you heard *nothin'?*"

"Nothin',"

Grumbling with astonishment and perplexity, Crimp turned to me. "If it were fancy," he muttered, "call me a dawg's flea."

I believed I could see Muffin's figure still leaning over the rail. Had he heard the voice? As I passed the skylight I looked down and perceived him standing, with drooped head and folded arms, before Wilfrid in the cabin. My cousin appeared to be giving him some instructions. Advancing yet a little, I discovered that what I had taken to be the valet's figure was merely a coil of rope on a pin, the outline of which was blackened up and enlarged to the proportions and even the posture of a human shape by the illusive character of the obscurity made by the shrouds just there. I threw my half-finished cigar overboard.

"Enough to make a man feel as if he'd like to be turned in," said Crimp. "It's gone blooming cold, ha'n't it?"

"It's the most puzzling thing that ever happened to me," said I; "but of course if we were in the secret we should find nothing wonderful in it. In the West Indian waters, you know, there is a fish to be caught that talks well enough to put a ship about. Who's to tell, in a midnight blackness of this sort, what amazing marine thing may not rise to the surface and utter sounds which an alarmed ear would easily interpret into something confoundedly unpleasant?"

"What did it say?" inquired Crimp.

"Why, after the laugh, '*That yacht's cursed!*' then another laugh. So it seemed to be," said I, with my eyes going blind against the blackness whence the noise had proceeded.

"That's just what I heard," said Crimp, gruffly, "exactly them words. Two ears ain't a-going to get the same meaning out of what's got no sense in it to start with."

"Pooh!" I exclaimed, mentally protesting against an argument that was much too forcible to be soothing. "What could it have been, man, if it were not, say, some great bird, mayhap, flapping past us unseen, and uttering notes which, since they sounded the same to you and me, would have sounded the same to the whole ship's company had they been on deck listening?"

"Beats all my going a-fishing, anyhow," growled Crimp, going to the rail and looking over.

"Well, take my advice and don't speak of it," said I; "you'll only get laughed at, especially as the fellow at the wheel heard nothing."

"His starboard ear's calked; he's hard o' hearing," rumbled Crimp.

I walked to the taffrail and looked astern. There was nothing to be seen but faint, phantasmal sheets of phosphoric light, softly undulating with the brighter glow of our wake. I was really more agitated than I should have liked to own, and I must have stood for nearly a quarter of an hour speculating upon the incident and striving to reassure myself. One thought led to another, and presently I found myself starting to a sudden odd suspicion that came into my head with the vivid gleam of a broad space of the sea-glow that flashed out bright as though it reflected a lantern hung over the side from the run of the yacht, where the bends hollowed in from the stern-post. It was a suspicion that had no reference whatever to the voice that Crimp and I had heard, yet it did me good by drawing my mind away from that bit of preternaturalism, and a few minutes later I found myself below, alongside of Miss Jennings.

"The cigar you lighted to-night must have been an unusually big one," said she, with a light glance, in which, however, it was easy to see that she noted my expression was something different from what was usual in me.

I smiled, and measuring on my finger, told her that I had smoked but that much of the cigar, and thrown the rest of it overboard. Wilfrid sat at the table, with a tumbler of seltzer and brandy before him, and he was filling his large meerschaum pipe as I arrived.

"Help yourself, Charles," said he, pointing to the swing-tray that was full of decanters. "I was about to join you on deck. How goes the night?"

"Dark, but fine; the wind just a small pleasant air. I am tired, or I should accompany you."

"We are sailing, though, I hope?" said he.

"Ay, some four knots or thereabouts, and heading our course. We have no right to grumble. It has blown a fine gale all day, and from the hour of our start down to the present moment I think we have had fairer weather and brisker breezes than we had a right to hope for."

He emptied his tumbler, lighted his pipe, and said that he would go and take a turn or two. "If I should loiter," he added, "don't sit up. If I am not to sleep when I turn in, the night will be all too long for me were I to go to bed at four o'clock in the morning."

As he mounted the cabin steps I rose to mix a glass of seltzer and brandy, and when I returned to my seat near Miss Jennings she at once said, "I hope nothing has happened to worry you, Mr. Monson?"

"Why do you ask?"

"You had a slightly troubled look when you came into the cabin just now."

"What will you think," said I, "if I tell you that *I* have had a warning?"

Her eyes glittered to the rounding of the brows, and her lips parted as though with a sigh of surprise. I shook my head, looking with a smile at her. "I see how it is. If I am candid, you will think there are *two* instead of one!"

"No, no," she cried.

I was in the midst of telling her about the voice Crimp and I had heard when Muffin passed through the cabin, seemingly from his own berth on his way to his master's. He held a little parcel of some kind. On arriving at the opening of the short alley, or corridor, that divided the after berths, he stopped, looked round, and said in his humblest manner, "I beg your pardon, sir, but *is* the bayronet in his cabin, d'ye know, sir?"

"He's on deck," I answered.

"Thank you, sir," he exclaimed, and vanished.

I proceeded with my story and finished it.

"It must have been some trick of the hearing, Mr. Monson," exclaimed the girl; "some sea-fowl winging slowly past, as you suggest, or—it is impossible to say. I can speak from experience. Often I have been alone and have heard my name called so distinctly that I have started and looked round, though there might have been nobody within a mile of me. The senses are conjurers; they are perpetually playing one tricks, and, which is very mortifying, with the simplest appliances."

"True enough that, Miss Jennings. The creak of a door will be a murdered man's groan sometimes. I remember once being at a country house and holding a pistol in my hand ready to cover the figure of a man that was watching the old-fashioned building with burglarious intentness; which same man, after I had stood staring at him for a long twenty minutes, was resolved by the crawl of the moonshine into his original fabric and proportions of a neatly clipped bush. No; I shall not suffer that mysterious voice to sink very deep. It was passing strange, and that's all. I hope sour old Crimp has some sense of the ridiculous, and will keep his mouth shut. Heaven deliver us if he should take it upon himself to tell Wilfrid a mysterious sea-voice sung out just now that this yacht was cursed!"

I rose, with a glance at the skylight. "Excuse me for a few minutes. I am going to Wilfrid's cabin to confirm a suspicion that has entered my head. Should my cousin arrive while I am absent, endeavor to detain him here until I return. I shall know how to excuse myself for entering his bedroom."

She looked at me wonderingly, but asked no questions. I walked swiftly but softly to the corridor aft. Wilfrid's cabin was on the port side. It was the aftermost berth, two cabins there having been knocked into one. I turned the handle of the door and entered. The flame of a silver-bright bracket-lamp filled the place with light. It was a very handsome sea apartment, with no lack of mirrors, hangings, small costly furniture, all designed for the comfort and happiness of her ladyship. I nimbly closed the door behind me, and stood for an instant beholding the precise spectacle I had entered fully expecting to witness. It was Muffin, who stood close against the bulkhead at the foot of the bunk my cousin occupied, grasping in his left hand a small white jar such as might be used for jam, while in the other hand he flourished a brush, with which he was apparently painting or scoring marks upon the bulkhead as I entered. The occasional kick of the rudder, with frequent creaking, straining noises arising from the movement of the yacht, hindered him from hearing me turn the handle of the door and from being conscious of my presence, while I stood looking on. He had made some progress with his mysterious lettering; for, having dipped the brush into the jar, he fell to writing a big B after several preliminary flourishes of his arm as though he had a mind to give an artistic curve to the letter; he was then beginning to paint a small A, though the brush left no mark, when I exclaimed, "How many b's are there in baby?"

He looked round slowly, keeping his right hand, nevertheless, lifted, and preserving his posture in all save the turn of his head, as though he had been blasted into motionlessness by a flash of lightning. I walked up to him.

"So," said I, "*you* are the warning, eh? *You* are the mysterious fiery message which has distracted my cousin for the last two days and nights, and which, if continued, must end in driving him mad? You scoundrel!"

He faced round, his right hand slowly sinking to his side like a pump-handle gradually settling. For a moment there was a look of malevolent defiance in his face, but it yielded to one of consternation, terror, eager entreaty.

"Mr. Monson, sir," he exclaimed, in a voice that was the very double-distilled extract of oily accent, "I am discovered, sir; I meant the honorable bayronet no 'arm. My 'umble wish is to get 'ome."

"What is that stuff you have there?"

"A remedy for wermin, sir, which they told me was numerous on board ship."

"Open that port-hole!"

He did so after giving me a look as if he suspected I meant to squeeze him overboard through the aperture.

"Out now with that pot and brush."

He tossed them into the sea. I turned down the lamp till only the feeblest glimmer of flame remained, and then, sure enough, there stole out upon the bulkhead, in a feeble, green, glittering crawling that seemed to wink upon the sight with its coming and going, the words "*Return to Ba—*"

"Rub that off at once," said I, "and be quick about it, too. If Sir Wilfrid arrives I shall have to explain; and he's a man to shoot you for such an act as this."

He pulled a pocket-handkerchief out of his coat-tail, and fell to rubbing the bulkhead with a terrified hand, backing to see if the letters were gone, then applying himself afresh, breathing hard meanwhile and manifesting much fear, for no doubt he believed that my hint that Wilfrid would shoot him was very well founded, seeing that he had a half-crazy man to deal with in his master. He rubbed till nothing was left of the letters. I turned up the lamp and ordered him out of the cabin. He was about to address me.

"Not a word," I cried, subduing my voice, for though my temper was such that I could scarce keep my hands off him, yet I was exceedingly anxious, too, that Wilfrid should not overhear me nor come to his berth and find me in it with his valet. "Get away forward now to your own cabin."

"For God's sake, Mr. Monson, don't tell Sir Wilfrid, sir," he exclaimed, in a hoarse, broken tone.

"Away with you! I promise nothing. This is a matter to think over. I shall require to talk with you in the morning."

I held open the cabin door, and he passed out in a sidewise fashion, as if he feared I should hit him, and then travelled swiftly forward, with such a twinkling of the white socks bulging over his pumps as made me believe he ran. My cousin was still on deck. Miss Jennings gazed at me earnestly; I looked to see if the coast

was clear, and exclaimed: "It proved as I had supposed. I have interpreted the warning Wilfrid has received."

She gazed at me in silence.

"The mysterious handwriting is Muffin's," I continued. "The flaming admonition is wrought by a brush dipped in a phosphoric composition for—for—beetles!"

"You mean to say, Mr. Monson—" She paused to take a long breath, while her eyes shone with astonishment.

"The long and short of it is, Miss Jennings," said I, "that our friend Muffin hates the sea; he has been cursing the voyage from the bottom of his soul pretty nearly ever since we started, and has hit upon this device to appeal to Wilfrid's instincts as a father, and to his poor, weak, credulous nerves as—as—well, as a man not wholly sound, in the hope, not ill-founded, that provided the warning be repeated often enough, my cousin *would* return to baby."

"The horrid wretch! You actually found him—"

"Yes, he had got as far as *Return to Ba*—"

"Shall you tell Wilfrid?"

"No," I answered, "not a word must be said to him on the subject. I told Muffin—and I believe in my own notion, too—that if my cousin were to hear that the sufferings occasioned him by the mysterious writing on his cabin wall were due to a trick of his valet, he would pistol the scoundrel. No, we must keep our counsel. I shall confer with Finn in the morning, and contrive that our melancholy humorist be wholly and effectually sundered henceforth from all intercourse with this end of the yacht."

Well, she was thunderstruck, and could hardly be brought to credit that a servant should play his master so cruel a trick. I told her that in my opinion Muffin would do well as keeper of a private lunatic asylum, since so artful a wretch might be warranted to drive any one whose nerves were not "laid up" with galvanized iron strands into a condition of sullen imbecility or clamorous lunacy within any time specified by the friends and relatives of the sufferer. When, however, the pretty creature's surprise had somewhat abated, she expressed herself as wonderfully grateful that the discovery had been so early made. "Had the writing been continued," she said, "I am sure it would have ended in completely crazing poor Wilfrid. And I am glad, too, for another reason, Mr. Monson—it proves, at all events, that there was nothing insane in your cousin's fancy of a warning. After all, the healthiest-minded person would be startled and dismayed, and afterwards, perhaps, dangerously affected, by find-

ing a reference to his baby shining out upon him in the dark, night after night."

"I believe I should have got up and rubbed the reference out," said I, "had it glimmered upon me."

"But you are not Wilfrid. What made you suspect Muffin?"

"I suspected not Muffin, but a trick, and *then* that Muffin must be the man. It came to me with the sight of a bright sheet of phosphoric fire flaming off the yacht's quarter as I overhung the rail, staring into the gloom and puzzling over the cry Crimp and I had heard. One can't give a reason for the visitations of fancy. Instinct I take to be the soul's forefinger, with which it points out things to the reason."

"I hope it will point to the true cause of the mysterious voice you heard," she exclaimed, smiling, but with something of uneasiness in her face nevertheless.

We continued chatting a little; she then went to her cabin. Soon after she had withdrawn, Wilfrid arrived. He yawned, and without seating himself, spoke of the weather, the yacht's progress, and other commonplace matters. For my part, I had too much on my mind just then to feel in the humor to detain him, so after a few sentences as carelessly spoken as I could manage, I advised him, after his sleepless nights, to try once more for a spell of rest; and so saying, went away to my own berth.

CHAPTER XIV.

MUFFIN GOES FORWARD.

I ROSE next morning shortly after seven, bathed, and went to the cabin for a cup of coffee. I could see through the skylight that it was a fine day. The air showed a bright blue against the glass, and a rich temple of sunlight was on the thick crystal of every weather port-hole, the glory rippling with the reflective throbbing and running of the sea as it broke upon the polished panels abreast or flashed in the confronting mirrors. The ocean was quiet, too; the heave of the yacht was gentle, though the heel of her gave assurance of a breeze of wind. The two stewards were busy in the cabin. I knew that Finn would have the forenoon watch, since Crimp had had charge from eight to midnight, and I called to the head-steward to know if the captain was about.

"Not yet, sir, I believe."

"Take my compliments to him, and say I should like to see him at once, if possible—here in the cabin, I mean."

While I waited, Muffin, hearing my voice, came from his berth. I watched him out of the corner of my eyes; he slowly advanced, in a sort of writhing way, making many grimaces as he approached, as if in the throes of rehearsing a speech, and presently stood before me, first casting a look at the second steward, who was polishing a looking-glass, and then clasping his hands before him and hanging his head.

"Mr. Monson, I 'umbly ask your pardon, sir. May I beg that out of your kind 'art you will overlook my doings last night? Sir, I do not find myself partial to the hocean, and my desire is to return 'ome, sir. I meant no 'arm. I would not wrong an 'air of Sir Wilfrid's 'ead. My five years' character from the Right Honorable the Lord Sandown speaks to my morals, sir. I am sincerely remorseful, Mr. Monson, and trust to be made 'appy by your forgiving me, sir."

I listened to what he had to say, and then exclaimed: "My forgiveness has nothing to do with the matter. You are not a fit person to wait upon Sir Wilfrid Monson, and— But I shall have something to tell you a little later on. Meanwhile you can go."

He said, unctuously, "Am I to take Sir Wilfrid his 'ot water as usual, sir?"

"Yes," I said, "continue to wait on him."

He plucked up at this, and withdrew with an ill-dissembled smirk upon his countenance. Presently Captain Finn came trundling down the cabin steps, cap in hand, his long face bright with recent cleansing, and full of expectation. I asked him to sit, and then, without a word of preface, I bluntly told him about the "warnings" my cousin had received for two nights running, and how last night my suspicion in some unaccountable way having been aroused, I entered the baronet's berth and found Muffin painting the sentence in a vermin-killing composition of phosphorus. Finn whistled.

"The weasel!" he cried; "how is he to be punished for this? Will ye have him ducked from the yard-arm, or seized up aloft, or played on with the hose for spells of half an hour, or whipped up for a grease-down job that'll last him nigh a day? Say the word, sir. I feel to want the handling of a chap whose veins look to run slush, to judge by his color and the lay of his hair."

"No," said I; "no need to deal with him as you suggest. But he must be turned out of this end of the vessel and sent into the forecastle. Before we decide, however, can you make use of him?"

"Ay can I. Leave him to me, your honor," said Finn, grinning. "I'll make a man of him."

"Steward," I called, "send Muffin to me."

The valet arrived, looking hard at Finn. I made some excuse to get the stewards out of the cabin, and then said: "Now, Muffin, attend. You are at once to decide whether you will go forward among the men, live with them in the forecastle, and do such work as Captain Finn appoints, or whether Sir Wilfrid shall be told of last night's business, that he may deal with you as he thinks proper."

Finn gazed at him with a frown and a cheek purpled by indignation and contempt. The fellow fixed his dead black eye on me, and said, "I would rather go 'ome, sir."

"I dessay you would!" burst out Finn. "How will 'ee travel? By locomotive or post-chay? By my grandmother's bones, if one of my men had played such a trick on me as you've played on your master, I'd spread-eagle him with these here hands if he was as tall as my main-mast, and lay on till there wasn't a rag of flesh left to tickle."

I motioned silence, with an indication with my head in the direction of Sir Wilfrid's berth.

"Take your choice, and be sharp about it," said I, turning hotly to Muffin, whose very sleekness at such a time was a kind of insolence in him somehow; "either decide to be dealt with by Sir Wilfrid, who probably will shoot you for what you have done, or go to him after he has risen, tell him that you have made up your mind to discontinue your services as a valet, and that you have requested Captain Finn to place you upon the articles as a boy."

"Ay, as a boy," echoed Finn, in a half-suppressed note of storm, and fetching his leg a mighty thump with his clinched fist.

Muffin's left leg fell away, he clasped his hands in a posture of prayer upon his shirt-front, and after looking in a weeping way from Finn to me, and from me to Finn, he said, snuffling as he spoke, "Gentlemen, give me an arf-hour to think it over, I beg of you."

I pulled out my watch. "I must have your decision by eight o'clock," said I. "See to it. If you do not decide for yourself, I shall choose for you, and give my cousin the whole truth; though for your sake," I added, with a menacing look at him, "as well as for his, I am very desirous indeed that he should remain ignorant of your conduct. Go!"

I sat talking with Finn. His indignation increased upon him as we spoke of Muffin's behavior.

"It was enough to drive his honor clean mad, sir," he exclaimed. "Why, though there's little I believes in outside what my senses tells me of, I allow I should feel like jumping overboard if so be on putting out the light I found a piece of adwice wrote upon the dark in letters of fire. But I'll work his old iron up for that job. There's something leagues out of the ordinary in that there slush-made cove, sir. 'Tain't that I hobjects to a man who never looks me in the eye. But there's something in the appearance of that there Muffin which makes me think that if he could pull his heart out of his breast he'd find it like a piece of rotten ship's-bread, full of weevils and holes."

"The man is pining for the shore," said I. "The fellow thought to work upon the weak side of my cousin's intellect. He meant no more, I believe, than to frighten Sir Wilfrid into returning. He remains a very good valet all the same, though we must have him out of this. He will not be the only servant in the world who has procured his or her ends by working on the master's or mistress's fears."

"Well, I suppose not, sir," said Finn; "taking men-servants all round, they're a bad lot. I never yet see one, specially if he wore

big calves and had got white hair, but that I felt a longing to have him at sea for a month. By-the-way, sir, talking of this here Muffin's mystifying of his honor, what d'ye think, Mr. Monson, sir? Blowed if old Crimp, who I shouldn't ha' credited with a single idea outside the tar-bucket, hain't gone and fallen superstitious! When I relieved him at midnight he up and spins a long twister about you and him having heard a woice holloaing a curse upon this yacht away out on the starboard quarter somewhere."

He broke into a low, deep sea-laugh, which he endeavored to check by clapping his hand to his mouth.

"We heard something," said I, "that sounded like a voice, and we made out the noise to signify the same thing. It may have been a bird, or some mysterious fish come up to breathe, or some singular sound produced by the yacht herself; no matter what, I have dismissed it from my mind."

"Poor old Jacob!" he continued, smothering another laugh; "why, sir, he'd actually thought hisself into a clam when I went on deck, and said he reckoned this part of the hocean much colder than the coast o' Greenland. Jacob's being so werry commonplace is the reason of my thinking nothin' of the yarn. Had he even a little bit more mind than belongs to him I'd be willing to allow his story was a queer one; but he's so empty of any sort o' intellects, short of the ones that he needs to enable him to keep a lookout and attend to the navigation of the craft, that his werry hollowness touches t'other extreme of a brain chock-a-block with fantastical ideas; by which I mean that I'd as lief attend to a madman's notion of a strange woice as to Jacob's. Not but that he ain't as trustworthy, practical a sailor as I could wish to have by my side if I ever found myself in a quandary."

I cast my eye at the clock under the skylight. As I did so Muffin came sliding towards us with exactly the same sort of gait and countenance you would expect in a well-practised funeral mute. He approached close before speaking, and postured in front of me, preserving a respectful silence, while he kept his eyes fastened on the deck.

"Well?" said I.

"I've been considering the matter, sir, and beg to state that I've made up my mind."

"Well?" I repeated.

"It might 'urt Sir Wilfrid's feelings, gentlemen, if you, Mr. Monson, sir, explained away the cause of what had alarmed him, and I'll

not deny that as his strength of mind isn't such as to give him control over his passions, sir, I should go in fear. Which being so, I'm willing to tell him that I desire to discontinue my services as valet, and should be glad to become what I've 'eard Capt'n Finn describe as an 'and until such times as we fall in with a ship that may be willing to carry me 'ome. To which, Mr. Monson, sir, and you, Capt'n Finn, I trust, gentlemen, both, you'll have no objection."

I preserved my gravity with difficulty.

"Very well," said I, witnessing in the vague, indeterminable twinkle of the unpolished jet of his eye that he detected in me the mirth I flattered myself I had concealed; "after breakfast you will convey your resolution to Sir Wilfrid, of course taking care to insist if he should object, for after what has happened, your connection with him must *cease*."

"As you wish, sir," he exclaimed, giving me a bow with the whole spine of him; "but, gentlemen, I should like to state that whatever may be the work Capt'n Finn puts me to, I would rather do it as an 'and than as a boy."

I felt a bit sorry for the poor devil. It seemed to me that he had accepted his alternative with some pluck.

"A boy is the next grade to ordinary seaman," said I; "you will be a hand just the same."

"What can you do?" exclaimed Finn, running his eye over the figure of the man with an expression that was not one of quite unmixed contempt. "Can 'ee go aloft?"

The fellow clasped his hands, and turned up the whites of his eyes. "Not to save my precious soul, sir."

"You can row," said I.

"I'll feather an oar agin any Thames waterman," exclaimed Muffin.

"Enough has been said," I exclaimed, rising. "The stewards wait to lay the cloth for breakfast;" and so saying, I mounted on deck, followed by the captain, who, after I had exchanged a few words with him, went forward to break his fast before relieving old Crimp.

There was a large, full-rigged ship on the weather-beam. We were slowly passing her. She was an East Indiaman, I think, of a frigate-like stateliness, with her white band and black ports, and her spacious rounds of canvas tapering in spires to the delicate gossamer of the topmost cloths. The red ensign was waving at her peak as it was at ours, but then she was from England, as we were, and had

no more news to give us than we her. The bosoms of her canvas arched towards us, with the rigging under each curve fine as wire against the sky, that sloped to the horizon, white and blinding as irradiated steel with the eastern gushing of glory there. There was just swell enough to heave a little space of her coppered fore-foot out of the glittering brine, that came brimming to her in a liquid blue light, and the rhythmic flash of the metal over the curl of snow at the stem gave an inexpressible grace to the dignity and majesty of the lofty and swelling fabric of cream-colored cloths, each softened by an airy pinion of shadow at its lee clew. 'Twas wonderful, the magic that ship had to vitalize and to subdue to human sympathy the brilliant, weltering wilderness of the morning ocean. She carried the thoughts away to the Thames and to Gravesend, to leave-takings and weeping women, and the coming and going of boats, to the hurricane note of the Jacks getting the anchor, to the waving of handkerchiefs up on the poop, to the smell of hay for the live-stock, the gabble of poultry, the cries of children, the loud calls of officers, the ceaseless movements of passengers, stewards, friends, sailors, crowding and elbowing, talking, shaking hands, and crying upon the main-deck. All this, I say, she made one think of, with a fancy, too, of the rushing Hoogly, a burning atmosphere sickly with the smell of the incense of the hubble-bubble, with a flavor of hot curry about, a dead, black body gliding slowly past the lip of the rushing stream against the ship's bow, and seething to the gangway ladder, the fiery cabins o' nights vibratory with the horns of the mosquitoes, like a distant concert of jews-harps mingling with the distant unearthly wail of the jackal. Pooh! 'twas a fit of imagination for its torrid atmosphere and Asiatic smells to make one mechanically mop the brow with one's handkerchief. Why, far off as that Indiaman was, the clear, cool wind seemed to breeze down *hot* from her, with an odor of bamboo and cocoanut-rope and chafing gear, wrought from the jungle with strange aromas of oils along with the shriek of the paroquet and the hoarse musings of the macaw. I turned to surly old Jacob.

"Good-morning, Mr. Crimp."

"Marning."

"Fine ship out yonder."

"Well, I've seen uglier vessels."

I approached him close. "Heard any more voices, Mr. Crimp?"

"No," he answered, thrusting his fingers into the door-mat of oakum, upon his throat, "and I don't want to."

"I advised you to keep your counsel," said I, "but I find that you have spoken to Captain Finn."

"Who wouldn't? My mind ain't a demijean, smother me! It's not big enough to hold the likes of last night's job. Told the capt'n? 'Course I did."

I saw that he was a mule of a man, and not proper to reason with. I said, with an air of indifference: "Have you thought the thing over? Was it a bird, as I said at the time, or a noise breaking out, perhaps, from the inside of the yacht, and, by deception of the hearing, sounding in syllables, apparently, away out upon the sea?"

He eyed me dully, and after a stupid, staring pause, exclaimed, "I wish *you* hadn't heard it."

"Why?"

"Why? 'Cause then I might ha' believed it was *my* fancy; but as I says to the capt'n, two collected intellects ain't going to get the same meaning out o' what's got no sense. I hope that this here trip may turn out all right, that's all. I've been a-going to sea now for thirty year, but smite me if ever I was in a wessel afore that was damned in the first watch by a woice a-sounding out of the blackness with nothin' for it to come from."

The breakfast-bell now rang, and I went below not a little surprised by this exhibition of superstitious alarm in so sour and matter-of-fact a seaman as Jacob Crimp. For my part, though I admit the thing greatly puzzled me, it was only as some conjuring trick might. Perhaps, with old Crimp, I should have been better satisfied had but one of us heard the voice; or, presuming us both to have caught the sound, had we each made a different sentence of it. *There* lay the real oddness of the incident, but as to supposing there was anything supernatural in it, I should have needed the brains of my cousin, who could interpret Muffin's stale and vulgar trick into a solemn injunction, perhaps from Heaven, to think so.

Wilfrid joined us at breakfast; he made a good meal, and was easy in his spirits. I asked him if he had been troubled with any more warnings. He answered no, nothing whatever had occurred to disturb him. He had slept soundly, and had not passed so good a night for days and days. "But," said he, with a glance round the cabin, for the valet had been hanging about, though he did not station himself behind his master's chair as heretofore, "if I were ashore I should be prepared for another kind of warning. I mean a warning from Muffin, if I may judge by his face and manner. Something is wrong with the fellow."

"You once suspected his sanity," said I, smiling. "Upon my word, I cannot persuade myself that such a dial-plate as his covers sound clock-work. He strikes wrongly, I'm sure. He don't keep true time, Wilf."

"Do you think so, really?" he exclaimed, with some anxiety.

"Do you believe Muffin to be perfectly sound, Miss Jennings?" said I, giving her a significant glance.

"I should be very sorry to trust him," she answered, with a spirited gaze at Wilfrid.

The subject dropped. Our conversation went to the Indiaman, that lay for a little, while we sat at the breakfast-table, framed in the cabin port-hole abreast of us, coming and going with the light reel of the yacht, but whenever set for a moment, then the most dainty and lovely image imaginable, like to some small, choice, wondrous carving in mother-of-pearl of a ship shot with many subtle complexions of light, as though you viewed her through a rainbow of fairy-like tenuity. Then, having talked of her, we passed on to our voyage, till on a sudden a fit of sullenness fell upon Wilfrid, and he became moody; but happily I had by this time finished my breakfast, and as I had no notion of an argument, nor of courting one of his hot, reproachful, vexing speeches touching his own anguish and my coldness, I left the table, telling Miss Jennings that she would find her chair, rugs, and novel ready for her on deck when she should be pleased to join me.

She arrived alone in about half an hour. There was something so fragrant in her presence, so flower-like in her aspect, that she could not approach you but that it was as though she brought a nosegay with her whose perfume had a sweetness for every sense of the body. We had not been long together, yet already I might have guessed what had happened with me by noticing in myself the impatience with which I desired her company, the repeated glances I would send at the companion-hatch if I expected her on deck, the very comfortable feeling of satisfaction, the emotion, indeed, of quiet delight that possessed me when I had her snug by my side in her chair, with no one to break in upon us but Wilfrid, who troubled us very little in this way. I remember, this morning, when I took the novel off her lap to see what progress she had made in it, thinking, as my glance went in a smile from the mark in the middle of chapter the third to her eyes, in which lay a delicate light of laughter, that before long we should be having the weather of the tropics, the radiant ivory of the equinoctial moon, the dew-laden stillness of the equa-

torial calm, and that there might come night after night of oceanic repose for us to enjoy—and enjoy alone; but I almost started to the fancy, for it was a sort of secret recantation, a quiet confession of my heart to my reason, that though, to be sure, this voyage was to be viewed as a goose-chase, I was beginning to feel willing that it should not be so brief as I was quite lately trusting it would prove. No wonder the old poets represented love as a kind of madness, seeing that a man who suffers from this disorder will, like a madman, experience twenty different moods in an hour.

"You do not appear to find the dukes and earls of this star-and-garter novel very engaging company," said I, placing the book in her lap again.

"It is a good sort of novel to dream over," said she; "the moment I look at it I find my mind thinking of something else."

"A pity Wilfrid cannot read," said I; "but his mind, like the poet's eye, glances too much. There are two unfailing tests of brain power—the appreciation of humor, and the capacity of concentration."

"Might not a very clever man laugh at a very silly joke?" she asked.

"Yes, but his laugh will be of a different sort from a stupid fellow's at the same joke. Where did you leave Wilfrid?"

"In the cabin. Muffin came up to me just now, apparently on his way to his master, and begged me in a most strange, suppliant, hollow way to implore you not to allow Sir Wilfrid to suspect that the handwriting was a trick; 'for,' said the man, 'if he gets that notion into his head he will suspect me, and then, miss,' he said, 'the baronet might take my life, for if he's scarcely responsible for what he does when he's in a good temper, what would he not be capable of when he's in a dreadful passion?' This was in effect what he said. His language and manner are not to be imitated. I told him very coldly that neither of us was likely to tell Sir Wilfrid, not because we should not be very pleased to see him punished by his master as he deserved, even though it came to his shooting him," she exclaimed, lifting her eyes to mine with roguish enjoyment of Muffin's terror, "but because we were anxious that Sir Wilfrid should be spared the humiliation of the discovery."

"Muffin will be out of this end of the ship before noon," said I.

"What have you arranged?"

"His name will be entered in the articles as a boy; that is, as a sailor below the grade of an ordinary seaman."

"Is he to work as a sailor?"

"Finn will try him."

"The poor wretch!" she cried, looking aloft; "have you ever observed his feet? Such a man as that cannot climb."

"They'll put him to deck-work," said I, "scrubbing, polishing, scraping, painting." She fell silent, with her gaze upon the open book. Presently she sent a slow, thoughtful look along the sea, and sighed.

"Mr. Monson, I wonder if we shall fall in with the *Shark?*"

I shook my head.

"But why no?" she exclaimed, with a pretty pettishness.

"She might be yonder at this moment," said I, pointing to the light-blue horizon that lined like an edging of glass the sky upon our starboard beam. "Who is to tell? Our field is too big for such a chase."

"We shall find them at Table Bay, then," she said, defiantly.

"Or, rather, let us hope that they will find us there. But suppose we pick the *Shark* up; suppose we are lying in Table Bay when she arrives. What is to happen? What end is to be served? On my honor, if Lady Monson were my wife—" I snapped my fingers.

"You are cold-hearted."

"I am practical."

"You would not extend your hand to lift up one who has fallen?"

"Do not put it so. The girl I marry will, of course, be an angel." Her lips twitched to a smile. "If she expands her wings and flies away from me, am I to pick up a blunderbuss with the notion of potting her as she makes sail? No, let her go. She is, indeed, still an angel, but a bad angel. A bad angel is of no use to a man. She poisons his heart; she addles his brains; she renders his sleep loathsome with nightmares; she buries a stiletto in the vitalest part of his honor. *Follow* her, forsooth! I could be eloquent," said I, with a young man's confident laugh; "but I must remember that I am talking to Laura Jennings."

We were interrupted by Wilfrid. He came slowly forking up through the hatch in his long-limbed way, and approached us with excitement in his manner.

"Mad!" he cried, with a look over his shoulder. "Mad, as you say, by George! You were both right, and I am deuced glad to have made the discovery. Why, here was this fellow, d'ye see, Charles, hanging about me at all hours of the day, free to enter my room at any time when I might be in bed and sound asleep! Confoundedly odd, though."

"Are you talking of Muffin?" said I.

"Ay, of Muffin, to be sure."

"He's not gone mad, I hope?"

"I think so, anyway," he answered, with a wise nod that was made affecting to me by the tremble in his lids, and the childish assumption of shrewdness and knowingness you found in his eyes and the look of his face.

"What has he done?" asked Miss Jennings, playing with the leaves of the volume on her knee.

"Why, he just now came to my cabin," answered my cousin, sending a glance at the skylight, "and told me that he was weary of his duties as a valet, and desired to be at once released. I said to him, 'What do you mean? We're at sea, man. This is not a house that you can walk out from!' He answered he knew that. He desired to go into the forecastle and work as a sailor—as a sailor! Figure Muffin astride of a lee yard-arm in a gale of wind!" He broke into one of his short roars of laughter, but immediately grew grave, and proceeded: "There was a tone of insolence in the fellow that struck me. It might have been because he had made up his mind, expected that I should refuse, and had come resolved to bounce, even to offensively bounce me into consenting. Besides, too, there was an expression in his eye which satisfied me that yours and Laura's suspicions were sound—were sound. But I did not need to witness any physical symptom of mental derangement. Enough, surely, that this sleek, obsequious, ghostly, though somewhat gouty rascal, whom I cannot imagine fit for any post in the world but that of valet, should throw up his comfortable berth with us in the cabin to become what he calls 'an 'and.' Ha, ha, ha!" His vast, odd shout of laughter rang through the yacht from end to end.

"Of course," said I, "you told him to go forward?"

"Oh, certainly. I should not love to have a lunatic waiting upon me. Why, damme, there are times when I have let that fellow shave me. But—I say, Charles—Muffin as an 'and—eh?"

He turned on his heel, shaking with laughter, and walked up to Finn, to whom I heard him tell the whole story, though repeatedly interrupting himself with a jerky, noisy shout of merriment. He asked the skipper what work he could put Muffin to, and Finn rumbled out a long answer, but they stood at too great a distance to enable me to catch all that was said. Presently Finn put his head into the companion-hatchway and called. After a little Muffin

emerged. Wilfrid recoiled when he saw the man, turned his back upon him, and stepped hastily right aft past the wheel. I whispered to Miss Jennings: "Did you mark that? Each will go in terror of the other now, I suppose; Wilfrid, because he thinks Muffin mad, and Muffin because he thinks that Wilfrid, should he get to hear the truth, will shoot him."

"This way, my lad," cried Finn, in a Cape Horn voice, and a half-smile that twisted the hole in the middle of his long visage till it looked like the mouth of a plaice. They both went forward and disappeared. The sailors, who were at work about the deck, stared hard at Muffin as he passed them, shrewdly guessing that something unusual had happened, and not a little astonished to observe the captain conducting him between-decks to the mariners' parlor. Soon the skipper came up, and called to a large, burly, heavily whiskered man, who, as I had gathered, was a sort of acting boatswain, though I believe he had not signed in that capacity, but had been appointed by Finn to oversee the crew as being the most experienced sailor on board. The skipper talked with him, and the heavily whiskered man nodded vehemently, with a broad smile that compressed his face into a thousand wrinkles, under the rippling of which his little eyes seemed to founder altogether. Then Finn came aft, and Wilfrid and he fell to pacing the deck.

Miss Jennings read; I smoked occasionally, giving her an excuse to leave her book by asking a question, or uttering some commonplace remark. I was lying back in my easy, lounging deck-chair, with my eyes sleepily following the languid sweep of the maintopmast head, where the truck showed like a circle of hoar-frost against the airy blue that floated in its soft, cool, bright tint, to the edges of the sails, whose brilliant whiteness seemed to overflow the bolt-ropes, and frame them with a narrow band of pearl-colored film, when Miss Jennings suddenly exclaimed, "Oh, Mr. Monson, do look!"

I started, and following the direction of her gaze, spied Muffin standing near the galley, rigged out as a sailor. There may have been a slop-chest on board—I cannot tell; perhaps Finn had borrowed the clothes for the fellow from one of the seamen; anyway, there stood Muffin divested of his genteel frock-coat, his gentlemanly cravat, and black cloth unmentionables, and equipped in a sailor's jacket of that period, a coarse colored shirt, rough duck or canvas breeches, whose bell-shaped extremities entirely concealed his gouty ankles. His head was protected by a nautical straw hat, somewhat battered, with one long ribbon floating down his back, under the

brim of which his yellow face showed with the primrose tincture of the Chinaman; while his dead black eyes, gazing languishingly our way, looked the deader and the blacker for the plaster-like streak of hair that lay along his brow, as though one of the Jacks had scored a line there with a brush steeped in liquid pitch.

"Heavens, what an actor the fellow would make!" said I, the laugh that seemed to have risen to my throat lying checked there by wonder and even admiration of the astonishing figure the man cut in his new attire. The burly, heavily whiskered salt rolled up to him. What Muffin said I could not hear, but there was the air of a respectful bow in the posture of his odd form, and my ear easily imagined the oily tone of his replies to the huge sailor. They crossed to the other side of the deck out of sight.

Shortly afterwards I left my seat to join Wilfrid, and then the first object that I beheld on the port side of the vessel was Muffin washing the side of the galley, with a bucket of water at his feet, and the heavily whiskered man looking on. Well, thought I, turning on my heel with a laugh, 'twill make home the sweeter to him when he gets there, and meanwhile Wilfrid will be free from all further phosphoric visitations.

CHAPTER XV.

I BOARD A WRECK.

The time slipped by. Life is monotonous at sea, and though the days seem to have speeded quickly past when one looks back, they appear to be crawling along on all fours when one looks ahead. We sighted nothing that carried the least resemblance to the vessel we were in chase of. Within a week we spoke two ships, both Englishmen, one a fine, tall, black clipper-craft from Sydney, New South Wales, full of colonials bound to the Old Country for a cruise among the sights there; the other a little North-country brig, laden down to her chain-plates, in charge of the very tallest man I ever saw in my life—this side, I mean, of the giants who go on show—with a roaring voice that smote the ear like the blast of a discharged piece; but neither vessel gave us any news of the *Shark*. No craft of the kind had been sighted or heard of by either of them.

It was as I expected. For my part, the adventure remained a most ridiculous undertaking, and never more so than when I thought of the speck a ship made in the vast blue eye of the wide ocean. We fell in with some handsome breezes for travelling, several of which drove us through it in thunder, with a hill of foam on either quarter, and an acre of creaming white, spreading under the chaste golden beauty the yacht carried on her stem-head. The wind flashed blue into the violet hollows of the canvas, the curves of whose round breasts shone out past the shadowings to the sun, and rang splitting upon the iron taut rigging of the driven craft, with joyous hunting-notes in its echoings, as though the chase were in view, and there were spirits in the air hallooing us into a madder speeding.

Wilfrid and Finn and I hung over the chart, calculating, with sober faces, finding our position to be there, and then there, and then there, till we worked out an average speed from the hour of our departure that caused the skipper to swear if the *Shark* was not already astern of us she could not be very far ahead, unless a great luck of wind had befallen her; a conjecture scarce fair to put down as a basis to build our figures upon, since it was a hundred to one that her fortune in the shape of breezes had been ours. For, be it

remembered, we were in a well-scoured ocean; the winds even north of the "rains" and "horse latitudes" were in a sense to be reckoned on, with the trades beyond as steady in their way as the indication of a jammed dog-vane, and the "doldrums" to follow—the equinoctial belt of cat's-paws and molten calms, where one sailor's chance was another's the wide world round.

But so reasoned Finn, and I was not there to say him nay, yet it was difficult to hear him without a sort of mental shrug of the shoulders, though it was a talk to smooth down the raven plume of Wilfrid's melancholy "till it smiled." My cousin managed very well without his valet, protested indeed that he felt easier in his spirits since the fellow had gone forward, as though all unconsciously to himself he had long been depressed by the funeral face of the man.

"Besides," said he, in his simple, knowing way, with a quivering of the lids that put an expression of almost idiot cunning into the short, pathetic peering of his large, protruding eyes, "he was with me when my wife left my home; he it was who came to tell me that Lady Monson was not to be found; it was he, too, who put Hope-Kennedy's letter into my hand, though it was picked up by one of the house-maids. These were thoughts that would float like a cloud of hellish smoke in my brain when he was hanging about me, and so I'm glad to have him out of my sight; yes, I'm the better for his absence. And then," he added, lowering his voice, "his behavior proves that he is not sound in his mind."

That Muffin was as well content with the arrangement as his master I cannot say. They kept him at work forward upon small, mean jobs, and he seldom came aft unless it was to lend a hand in pulling upon a rope. Yet, after a little, I would see him in a dog-watch on the forecastle, with a huddle of seamen on the broad grin round him. One special evening I remember, when the watch had run out into the dusk, and it might have been within half an hour of eight bells, I arrived on deck from the dinner-table, and heard, as I supposed, a woman singing forward. The voice was a very good, clear soprano, with a quality in it that might have made you imagine a middle-aged lady was turning up. The song was "The Vale of Avoca." The concertina accompaniment was fairly played. I listened with astonishment for some time, wondering whether Miss Jennings's maid had got among the men, and then called to Crimp.

"Who's that singing?" said I.

"Him they've nicknamed the mute," said he.

"What, Muffin?"

"Ay! sounds as if he'd swallowed his sister, and she was calling out to be released."

There happened inside this particular week with which I am dealing an incident much too curious not to deserve a place here. All day long it had been blowing a fresh breeze from north-east, but as the sun sank the wind went with him, and about an hour before sunset there was a mild air breathing, with scarce weight enough in it to blow the scent off a milkmaid, as sailors say, though it was giving the yacht way, as you saw by the creep of the wrinkles at her stem, working out from the shadow of the yacht's form in the water into lines that resembled burnished copper wire, in the red, western light. Miss Laura and Wilfrid were on deck, and I was leaning over the rail, with a pipe in my mouth, all sorts of easy, dreamy fancies slipping into me out of the drowsy passage of the water alongside, with its wreath of foam-bells eddying, or some little cloudy seething of white striking from our wet and flashing side into a surface which hung so glass-like, with the crimson tinge in the atmosphere sifting down into it, that you fancied you could see a hundred fathoms deep. Presently, running my eyes ahead, I caught sight of some minute object three or four points away, on the weather bow, which every now and again would sparkle like the leap of a flame from the barrel of a musket. I stepped to the companion, picked up the telescope, and made the thing out to be a bottle, the glass of which gave back the sunlight in fitful winkings to the twists and turns of it upon the ripples.

"What are you looking at?" cried Wilfrid.

"A bottle," I answered.

"Ho!" he laughed, "what you sailors call a dead marine, ha? What sort of liquor will it have contained, I wonder, and how long has it been overboard?"

The glass I held was Captain Finn's; it was a very powerful instrument, and the bottle came so close to me in the lenses that it was like examining it at arm's-length.

"It is corked," said I.

"Can we not pick it up?" exclaimed Miss Jennings.

"Oh, but an empty bottle, my dear," exclaimed Wilfrid, with a shrug.

I examined it again. "I tell you what, Wilfrid, that it is corked should signify there is something in it. Who troubles himself to plug an empty bottle when it is flung overboard, unless it is intended as a messenger?"

He was instantly excited. "Why, by all means, then—" He broke off, looking around. The mate had charge; he was sulkily pacing the deck to leeward, with a lift of his askew eye aloft, and then a stare over the rail, all as regular as the recurrence of rhymes in poetry. "Mr. Crimp!" called Wilfrid. The man came over to us. "Do you see that bottle?"

Crimp shaded his eyes and took a steady view of the water towards which my cousin pointed, and then said, "Is that there thing flashing a bottle?"

"Yes, man; yes."

"Well, I see it right enough."

"Get it picked up, Mr. Crimp," said Wilfrid.

The mate walked aft. "Down hellum!" he exclaimed to the fellow who was steering. The wheel was put over, and the bottle was brought almost directly in a line with the yacht. The top-gallant sail "lifted," but what air blew was abaft the beam, and the distance was too short to render necessary the handling of the braces and sheets. Crimp went a little way forward and hailed the forecastle, and presently a man stood ready at the gangway with a canvas bucket slung at the end of a line. A very small matter will create a great deal of interest at sea. Had the approaching bottle been a mermaid, the group of sailors could not have observed it with livelier attention, nor awaited its arrival with brisker expectations. Presently, *splash!* the bottle was cleverly caught, hauled up, dried, and brought aft.

"It's not been in the water long," said I; "the wooden plug in the mouth looks fresh."

"Mr. Crimp, sing out for a corkscrew," cried Wilfrid.

"No good in that," cried I; "break the thing; that will be the speediest way to come at its contents."

I held the bottle to the sun a moment, but the glass was thick and black, and revealed nothing. I then knocked it against the rail; the neck fell, and exposed a letter folded as you double a piece of paper to light your pipe with. I pulled it out and opened it; Miss Laura peeped over one shoulder, Wilfrid over the other; *his* respirations swift, almost fierce. It was just the thing to put some wild notions about the *Shark* into his head. From the forecastle the sailors were staring with all their eyes. The paper was quite dry; I opened it carefully, with an emotion of awe, for trifling as the incident was, apparently, yet to my fancy there was the mystery and the solemnity of the ocean in it, too. Indeed, you thought of it as

having something of the wonder of a voice speaking from the blue air when your eye sought the liquid expanse out of whose vast heart the tiny missive had been drawn. It was a rude, hurried scrawl in lead-pencil, and ran thus:

"*Brig 'Colossus.' George Meadows, Captain. Waterlogged five days; all hands but two dead; fast breaking up. No fresh-water. Raw pork, one cask. Who finds this, for God's sake, report!*"

The word September was added, but the writer had omitted the date—probably could not remember it after spelling the name of the month. I gave Crimp the note that he might take it forward and read it to the men, telling him to let me have it again.

"They will all have perished by this time, no doubt," said Wilfrid, in his most raven-like note.

"Think of them with raw pork only! The meat crystallized with salt; the hot sun over their heads; not a thimbleful of fresh-water; the vessel going to pieces plank by plank; the horrible anguish of thirst made maddening by the mockery of the cold fountain-like sounds of that brine there flowing in the hold, or washing alongside with a champagne-like seething! Oh," groaned I, "who is that home-keeping bard who speaks of the ocean as the mother of all? The mother! A tigress. Why, if old Davy Jones be the devil, Jack is right in finding an abode for him down on the ooze there! Mark how the affectionate mother of all torments its victims with a hellish refinement of cruelty before strangling them; how, if the land be near enough, she will fling them ashore mutilated, eyeless, eaten, in horrible triumph and enjoyment of her work, that we shuddering radishes may behold and understand her power."

"Cease, for God's sake!" roared Wilfrid; "you're talking a nightmare, man! Isn't the plain fact enough?" he cried, picking up the broken bottle and flinging it in a kind of rage overboard; "why garnish?"

"I want to see the ocean properly interpreted," I cried. "Your poetical personifications are clap-trap. Great mother, indeed! Great grandmother, Wilfrid. Mother of whales and sharks; but when it comes to man—"

"Oh, but this is impiety, Mr. Monson," cried Miss Laura; "it is really dangerous to talk so. One may *think*—but here we are upon the sea, you know, and that person you spoke of just now" (pointing down) "might with his great ears—"

"Now, Laura, my dear," broke in Wilfrid, "can't we pick up a wretched bottle and read the melancholy message it contains with-

out falling ill of fancy?" He went to the skylight: "Steward, some seltzer and brandy here! Your talk of that salt-pork," he continued, coming back to us, "makes my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth. I would give much for a little ice, d'ye know. Heigho! Big as this ocean is, I vow by the saints there's not room enough in it for the misery there is in the world!" with which he set off pacing the deck, though he calmed down presently over a foaming glass; but he showed so great a dislike to any reference to the bottle and its missive that, to humor him, Miss Jennings and I forbore all allusion to the incident.

It was next forenoon, somewhere about the hour of eleven o'clock, that the lookout man on the top-gallant yard—whom I had noticed playing for some time the polished tubes, which glanced like fire in his lifted hands as he steadied the glass against the mast—suddenly bawled down with a voice of excitement, "Sail, ho!"

Wilfrid, who was lounging on the skylight, jumped off it. I pricked up my ears; Miss Laura hollowed her gloved hands to take a view of the man aloft.

"Where away?" cried Finn.

"Right ahead, sir."

"What do you make her out to be?"

The seaman levelled the telescope again; then, swinging off from the yard by his grip of the tie, he sung out: "She looks to be a wreck, sir. I don't make out any canvas set."

"She'll be showing afore long, your honor," said Finn, and he cast his eye upon the water to judge of our speed.

All night long it had blown a weak wind, and the draught was still a mere fanning, with a hot sun, that made the shelter of the awning a necessary condition of life on deck by day; a clear, soft, dark-blue sky westward, and in the east a broad shadowing of steam-like cloud, with a hint in the yellow tinge of it low down upon the sea of the copper sands of Africa, roasting noons and shivering midnights, fever and cockroaches, and stifling cabins; so that, merely wrinkling through it, as it were, it was not until we had eaten our lunch, bringing the hour to about a quarter before two o'clock, that the vessel sighted from aloft in the morning had risen above the rim of the ocean within reach of a glass directed at her over the quarter-deck rail.

"It will be strange," said I, putting down the telescope, after a long stare at her, "if yonder craft don't prove the *Colossus*. Look at her, Wilfrid; a completer wreck never was."

He seized the glass. "By George, then," he cried, "if that's so, the two men that paper spoke of may be still alive. I hope so, I hope so. We owe Heaven a life, and it is a glorious thing to succor the perishing." His hand shook with excitement as he directed the glass at the vessel.

Points of her stole out as we approached. She had apparently been a brig. Both masts were gone flush with the deck; bowsprit too; channels torn from their strong fastenings, and whole lengths of bulwark smashed level. I supposed her cargo to have been timber, but her decks showed bare, whence I gathered that she was floating on some other sort of light cargo—oil, cork—no telling what, indeed. She swayed wearily upon the long ocean-heave with a sulky, sickly dip from side to side, as though she rocked herself in her pain. There was a yard, or spar, in the water alongside of her, the rigging of which had hitched itself in some way about the rail, so that to every lurch on one side the boom rose half its length, with a flash of the sun off the wet end of it; and this went on regularly, till, after watching it a bit, I turned my eyes away with a shudder, feeling in a sense of creeping that possessed me for an instant, the sort of craziness that would come into a dying brain aboard the craft, to the horrible maddening monotony of the rise and fall of that spar.

"Such a picture as that," whispered Miss Jennings softly in my ear, "realizes your idea of the ocean as a tigress. What but claws could have torn her so? And that soft caressing of the water—is it not the velvet paw stroking the dead prey?"

"There's a man on board!" cried Wilfrid, wildly; "look, Charles."

He thrust the glass into my hand while he pointed with a vehement gesture. I had missed him before, but the broadside opening of the wreck to our approach disclosed his figure as he sat with folded arms and his chin on his breast in a sleeping posture against the companion, that remained intact, though the wheel, skylight, and all other deck fixtures that one could think of were gone. I eyed him steadily through the lenses, but though he never raised his head nor stirred his arms, which lay folded, yet owing to the roll of the hulk it was impossible to say that his body did not move.

"There's the word *Colossus*," said I, "painted plainly enough upon her bow. Yonder may be the writer of the letter received. Wilf, you should send a boat. He may be alive—God knows! But though *he* be dead there might be another living."

"Finn," cried Wilfrid, "bring the yacht to a stand and board that wreck instantly, d'ye hear?"

"Ay, ay, sir!"

"I'll make one of the boat's crew, with your good leave, captain," I sung out.

"Take charge by all means, Charles," said Wilfrid.

"With pleasure," said I. "See two things in the boat, Finn, before we start—fresh-water and a drop of brandy or rum."

The yacht's top-sail was backed, the helm put down, and the vessel's way arrested. We came to a halt within half a mile of the wreck. The ocean swung smoothly in wide-browed folds that went brimming to the hulk in rounds polished enough at times to catch the image of her till she showed as she leaned from us with her reflection leaning, too, as if she had broken in halves and was foundering. The boat was lowered and brought to the gangway; I jumped in and we shoved off. Five fellows pulled, and on a sudden I had to turn my head away to smother a laugh, while I seemed to wave a farewell to Wilfrid and Miss Laura, on noting that one of the rowers was no less a man than Muffin. Whether he had thrust himself into this errand through some thirst for any momentary change in the discipline of his shipboard life, or whether Finn had remembered that the fellow talked much of being able to feather an oar, and had ordered him into the boat, I cannot tell, but there he was, as solemn as a sleeping ape, his old straw hat pulled down to his nose, and his eyes steadfastly fixed upon the oar that he plied. He pulled well enough, but his anxiety to keep time and to feather besides was exceedingly absurd, and it cost me no small effort to master my face, though the struggle to look grave and ignorant of his presence was mightily helped in a minute by the sight of the silent figure seated upon the wreck's deck.

I earnestly overhauled with my eyes the wallowing fabric as we approached her; but saving that lonely man motionless in his posture of slumber, there was nothing to be distinguished outside the melancholy raffle of unrove rigging and ropes' ends in the bow, vast rents in the planks of the deck, splinters of bulwark, stanchion, and the like. The fellow that pulled stroke was the big-whiskered man that acted as boatswain, named Cutbill. I said to him as he came stooping towards me for the sweep of his oar, "She's so jagged the whole length of her broadside that I believe her stern, low as it lies, will be the easiest and safest road to enter by."

He looked over his shoulder, and said; "Ay, sir. But there is no

need for you to trouble to step aboard. I'll overhaul her if you like, sir."

"No, I'll enter her. It's a break, Mr. Cutbill. But you will accompany me, for I may want help."

He shook his head. "You'll find nothing living there, sir."

"No telling till we've found out, anyway," said I. "Oars!" I sung out.

We floated under the wreck's counter, hooked on, and waiting for the lift of the swell, I very easily sprang from the boat's gunwale to the taffrail of the hulk, followed by Cutbill. The decks had blown up, and the sort of drowning rolling of the hulk rendered walking exceedingly dangerous. The water showed black through the splintered chasms, with a dusky gleam in the swaying of it like window-glass on a dark night; and there was a strange noise of sobbing that was desperately startling, with its commingling of sounds like human groans, and hollow frog-like croakings, followed by blows against the interior caused by floating cargo driven against the side, as if the hull was full of half-strangled giants struggling to pound their way out of her.

From the first great gap I looked down through, I remember recoiling, with a wildness that might easily have rolled me overboard, to the sight of a bloated human face, with long hair streaming, floating on the surface of the water athwart the ragged orifice. It was like putting one's eye to a camera-obscura and witnessing a sickening phantom of death, saving that here the horror was real, with the weeping noises in the hold to help it, and the great encompassing sea to sweep it into one's very soul as a memory to ride one's sleepless hours hag-like for a long term.

We approached the figure of the man. He was seated on a three-legged stool, with his back resting against the companion. I stooped to look at his face.

"Famine is the artist here!" I cried instantly, springing erect. "My God! what incomparable anguish is there in that expression!"

"See, sir," cried the burly sailor by my side, in a broken voice, and he pointed to a piece of leather that lay close beside the body. One end of it had been gnawed into pulp, which had hardened into iron again to the air and the sun.

"Yes, the letter we picked up," said I, "stated there was a cask of raw meat on board."

"*That* was chewed for thirst, sir—for thirst, sir!" exclaimed the

seaman. "I suffered once, and bit upon a lump of lead to keep the saliva a-running."

"Best not linger," said I. "Take a look forward, will you?"

He went towards the forecastle; I peered down the little companion-way; it was as black as the inside of a well, with the water washing up the steps within reach of my arm. There could be nothing living down there, nor indeed in any other part of the wreck if not on deck, for she was full of water. The men in the boat astern were standing up in her, with their heads bobbing together over the line of the taffrail, to get a view of the figure, for it was seated on the starboard side, plain in their sight, all being clear to the companion; yet spite of that lump of whiskered, mahogany faces, with Muffin's yellow chops in the heart of it to make the whole group as commonplace as a sentence of his, never in all my time did so profound a sense of desolation and loneliness possess me as I stood bringing my eyes from the huge steeping plain of the sea to that human shape, with its folded arms and its bowed head. Heavens, thought I, what scenes of human anguish have the ocean stars looked down upon! The flash past of the ghastly face in the hold beneath—that bit of gnawed leather, which even had you thought of a dog coming to such a thing would have made your heart sick—the famine in that bowed face where yet lay so fierce a twist of torment that the grin of it made the slumberous attitude a horrible sarcasm—

"Nothing to be seen, sir," exclaimed Cutbill, picking his way aft with the merchantman's clumsy rolling step.

I went in a hurry to the taffrail and dropped into the boat, he followed, and the fellow in the bow shoved off. Scarce, however, had the men dropped their oars into the rowlocks, each fellow drawing in his breath for the first stretch back, when a voice hailed us from the deck:

"*For God's sake don't leave me!*"

"Oh!" shrieked Muffin, springing to his feet and letting his oar slide overboard; "there's some one alive on board!"

"Sit, you lubber!" thundered the fellow behind him, fetching him a clip on the shoulder that brought him in a crash to his hams, while the man abaft picked up the oar.

Every face wore an expression of consternation. Cutbill's, that looked like a walnut-shell between his whiskers, turned of an ashen hue; he had stretched forth his arms to give the oar its first swing, and now they forked out, paralyzed into the stiffness of marlinespikes by astonishment.

"Smite my eyes," he muttered, as though whispering to himself, "if it ain't the first dead man's voice *I* ever heard!"

"Back water!" I cried out, for the swell had sheered the boat so as to put the companion-way between us and the figure. I stood up and looked. The man was seated as before, though spite of the sure and dreadful expression of death his famine-white face bore, spite of my being certain in my own mind that he was as dead as the creature whose face had glimmered out upon the black water in the hold, yet the cry to us had been so unmistakably real, had come so unequivocally, not indeed only from the wreck, but from the very part of the hulk on which the corpse was seated, and I found myself staring at him as though I expected that he would look around at us.

"There's no one alive yonder, men," said I, seating myself afresh.

"What was it that spoke, think 'ee, sir?" exclaimed the man in the bow, bringing his eyes full of awe away from the sheer hulk to my face.

"Mr. Monson, sir, I 'umbly beg pardon," exclaimed Muffin, in the greasy, deferential tone he was used to employ when in the cabin, "but there must be something living on board that ship, unless it were a sperrit."

"A spirit, you fool!" cried I, in a passion, "what d'ye mean by such talk? There's nothing living on that wreck, I tell you. Jump aboard any one of you who doubts me and he can judge for himself."

Muffin shook his head; the other men writhed uneasily on the thwarts of the boat.

"Cutbill and I overhauled the vessel; she's full of water. What is on her deck you can see for yourselves, and nothing but a fish could live below. Isn't that right, Cutbill?"

"Ay, sir," he answered; and then, under his breath, "But what voice was it that hailed us, then?"

"Come, give way!" I cried, "they'll be growing impatient aboard the yacht."

The oars dipped, feathered, flashed, and in an instant the blue sides of the smart and sparkling little craft were buzzing and spinning through the foam. It was like coming from a graveyard to the sight of some glittering, cheerful, tender, poetic pageant to carry the eye from the hull to the yacht. She seemed clad by the contrast with new qualities of beauty. You found the completest expression of girlish archness in the courtesying of her shapely bows,

with a light at her fore-foot like a smile on the lip when she lifted her yellow sheathing there, pouting, as one might say, from the caressing kiss of the blue brine, to gleam like gold for a moment to the sunlight. We swept alongside and I sprang on board.

"The poor creature is dead, I suppose?" exclaimed Wilfrid, inspecting the wreck through a binocular glass.

"Yes," I answered, "dead as dead can be; too dead to handle, faith. I might have sought in his pockets for some hints to found a report upon, but his face had the menace of a fierce whisper."

"It seems cruel to leave him unburied," said Miss Laura, with her soft eyes full of pity, and the emotions begotten of the presence of death.

"That hulk must soon go to pieces," said I, "and then she will give him a sailor's funeral."

"When Nature acts the part of high priestess, if there be such a part," exclaimed Wilfrid, in a low, tremulous voice, not without a kind of sweetness in its way, thanks, perhaps, to the mood of tender sentiment that was upon him, "how grandly she celebrates the humblest sailor's obsequies! How noble is her cathedral! Observe the altitude of that stupendous roof of blue. How sublime are the symphonies of the wind; how magnificent the organ notes which they send pealing through this great echoing fabric! Nature will give yonder poor fellow a nobler funeral than it is in our power to honor him with. But, Charles," he cried, with a sudden change of voice, and, indeed, with a new manner in him, "have you ever remarked the exquisite felicity with which Nature invents and fits and works her puppetshows? Take yonder scene at which we have been suffered to steal a peep. What could be more choicely imagined than that a dead man should have charge of such a dead ship as that, and that the lookout he is keeping upon her deck should be as black as the future of the vessel he still seems to command?"

"Well, well," said I, "all this may be as you put it, Wilf. But all the same, I am glad to see that top-sail yard swung and that spectre there veering astern. I protest my visit has made me feel as though I must lie down for a bit;" and, in sober truth, the body I had inspected, coupled with the thrill of amazement that had shot through me to the voice we had heard, had proved a trifle too much for my nerves, topped, as it all was, with certain superstitious stirrings, the crawling, as it might be, upon the memory of that ghostly, insoluble hail, along with the workings of an imagination that was

too active for happiness when anything approaching to a downright horror fell in its way. So I went below and lay upon a sofa, but had scarcely hoisted my legs when Wilfrid arrived, bawling to the steward for a bottle of champagne, and immediately after came Miss Jennings, who must needs fetch me a pillow, and then, as though she had a mind to make me feel ridiculous, saturate a pocket-handkerchief with eau-de-cologne, all which attentions I hardly knew whether to like or not till, having swallowed a bumper of champagne, I hopped off the couch with a laugh.

"A pretty sailor I am, eh, Wilfrid?" cried I; "a likely sort of figure to take command of the Channel Fleet! Miss Jennings, your eau-de-cologne has entirely cured me."

"What's to be the next incident now—the *Shark?*" exclaimed Wilfrid. He thrust his hands deep into his trousers-pocket, and marched into his cabin, head hanging down.

CHAPTER XVI.

WE SIGHT A SCHOONER-YACHT.

I HAPPENED to be alone on deck after dinner, having left Wilfrid at his diary and Miss Jennings in her cabin, where she had gone to make ready to join me, as she had said. The wreck had faded out before sundown, melting upon the flashing purple under the sinking luminary like the memory of a nightmare off a mind upon which is streaming a light of cheerfulness. The night was clear but dark, with a pleasant wind, through whose dryness the stars looked down purely. The yacht was sailing a fair six knots, as I gathered when I stepped from the companion to the lee rail, and peered over in a wool-gathering way at the emerald gushings and eddyings of the phosphoric fires which winked in the cloudy paleness along the bends, and fled into the dimness of glowworms to the spectral racing of our wake.

I was worried and oppressed by a sort of heaviness of spirit. I had acted a cheerful part at dinner, but there was little of my heart in the tongue I wagged. The recollection of the motionless figure seated upon the wreck, and, darker yet, the memory of that bloated, long-haired, phantom face sliding in the space of a breath across the gap in the shattered deck, with the sobbing wash of the black water on which it floated to put a dreadful meaning of its own into the livid, nimble vision, went for something—nay, went for a good deal, no doubt; but it was the hail that had come from the wreck which mainly occasioned my perplexity and agitation, and, I may add, my depression. Twice now had syllables, sounding from where there were no lips to pronounce them, reached my ears. Had I alone heard them I should have been alarmed for my reason, not doubting an hallucination, though never for an instant believing in the reality of the utterance; but the voices had been audible to others, they were consequently real, and for that reason oppressive to reflect upon. The shadow of Wilfrid's craziness lay on his ship; the voyage was begun in darkness, and was an aimless excursion, as I thought, with no more reasonable motive for it than such as was to be found in the contending passions of a bleeding heart. Hence

it was inevitable that any gloomy incident which occurred during such an adventure as this should gather in the eye of the imagination a very much darker tincture than the complexion it would carry under sunnier and more commonplace conditions of an ocean run.

While I lay over the rail lost in thought I was accosted by Finn.

"Beg pardon, Mr. Monson; couldn't make sure in this here gloom whether it was you or Sir Wilfrid. May I speak a word with 'ee, sir?"

"Certainly, Finn."

"Well, now, sir, if that there old Jacob Crimp ain't gone and took on so joyful a frame of mind that I'm a land-crab if his sperrits ain't downright alarming in a man whose weins runs lime juice."

"Old Crimp!" cried I; "what's the matter with him?"

"Why, he comes up to me and says, 'Capt'n,' he says, 'there's Joe Cutbill, Jemmy Smithers, that funeral chap Muffin, and the others who was in the boat which went to the wreck this afternoon, all swearing that they heard a voice in the air,' and so saying, he burst out a-laughing like a parrot. 'A woice!' says he. 'So me and Mr. Monson aren't the only ones, d'ye see? Damme,' says he, 'if it don't do my heart good to think on't. There's the whole bloomin' boiling of us now,' says he, 'to laugh at, capt'n; not Jacob Crimp only,' and here he bursts into another laugh."

"What does the old chap want to convey?" said I.

"Why, sir, joyfulness as that he no longer stands alone as having heard a woice; for though, to be sure, you was with him that night, and some sound like to a cuss rose up off yon quarter, he feels like being alone in the hearing of it; for, ye see, a man in his position can't comfortably hitch on to a gent like you, and it was the harder for him for that the man at the wheel swore that he never heard the cry."

"He is superstitious, like most old lob-scousers, no doubt," said I. "Have the others been talking about this mysterious hail from the wreck?"

"Ay, sir; 'tis a pity. It's raised an oneasiness 'mong the men. There's that Irish fool O'Connor, him that foundered the Dago, going about with a face as long as a wet hammock, and swearing that 'tain't lucky."

"I don't know about its being unlucky," said I, "but it certainly is most confoundedly curious, Captain Finn."

I saw him peering hard at me in the dusk. "But surely your honor's not going to tell me there *was* a woice?" said he.

"As we were shoving off," said I, "we were hailed in God's name to return. Every man of us in the boat heard it. There were but two bodies in the wreck, as stone-dead as if they had died before the days of the flood. What say you to *that*, Captain Finn?"

He pulled off his hat to scratch his head. After a pause, he exclaimed, slowly: "Well, I'm fer leaving alone what isn't to be onderstood. There were ghosts maybe afore I was born, but none since; and the dead h'an't talked, to my knowledge, since New Testament times. Old Jamaicy rum isn't to be had by dropping a bucket over the side, and if a truth lies too deep to be fished up by creeps, better drop it, says I, and fix the attention on something else."

"You tell me the men are uneasy?"

"Ay, sir."

"Do you mean all hands?"

"Well, your honor knows what sailors are. When they're housed together under one deck they're like a box of them patent lucifer-lights—if one catches, the whole mass is aflame."

"It's a passing fit of superstition," said I. "Give it time. Best say nothing about it to Sir Wilfrid."

"Bless us, no, sir. Sorry it's raised so much satisfaction in that there old Jacob, though. A laugh in Jacob don't sound natural. Any sort o' joyfulness in such a constitution is agin nature."

At this point Miss Jennings arrived on deck, and Finn, with a shadowy fist moving at his brow, stepped to the opposite rail, where his figure was easily distinguished by the stars he blotted out.

"I hope your spirits are better," said Miss Laura.

"I should be glad to turn the silent sailor of that wreck out of my memory; but my spirits are very well."

"Wilfrid noticed your depression at table, but he attributed it entirely to the dreadful sight you witnessed on the wreck." She passed her hand through my arm with a soft impulse that started me into a walk, but there was so much real unconsciousness in her way of doing this—a child-like intimation of her wish to talk without proposing it, and so breaking the flow of our speech at the moment—that for some little while I was scarce sensible I held her arm and that I was pacing with her. "But I think there is more the matter with you, Mr. Monson," she continued, with her face glimmering like pearl in the dusk, as she looked up at me, "than meets the ear—I will not say the eye."

"The fact is, Miss Jennings," said I, abruptly, "I am bothered."

"By what?"

"Well, what think you of the suspicion which grows in me that this yacht carries along with her, in the atmosphere that enfolds her, some sort of Ariel, whose mission is to bewilder, out of its invisibility, the sober senses of men of plain practical judgment, like your humble servant?"

"You want to frighten me by pretending that you are falling a little crazy."

"No!"

"Or you are creating an excuse to return home."

"No again. How can I return home?"

"Why, by the first convenient ship we happen to sight and speak. Is this some stratagem to prepare Wilfrid's mind for your bidding us farewell when the chance happens?"

She spoke with a subdued note and a tremble of fretfulness in it.

"Suffer me to justify myself," said I, and with that I led her to the captain, who stood, with folded arms, leaning against the rail near the main-rigging. "Finn!" He dropped his hands and stood bolt-upright. "Be so good as to tell Miss Jennings what the men are talking about forward."

"You mean the woice, sir?"

"What the men are talking about," said I.

"Well, miss," said Finn, "as the boat that Mr. Monson had charge of this afternoon was a-leaving the wreck, the men heard themselves hailed by a woice that begged 'em in God's name not to leave the party as called behind. Mr. Monson, sir, you heard it likewise."

"I did," I answered.

"Another mystery," exclaimed Miss Laura, "quite as dismal and astonishing as Muffin's phosphoric warning."

"Thanks, Finn; that's all I wanted to ask you," said I, and we left him to resume our walk.

"Tell me about this voice," said the girl.

I did so, putting plenty of color into the picture, too, for I wanted her to sympathize with my superstitious mood, while up to now there was nothing but incredulity and a kind of coquettish pique in her voice and manner.

"And you are afraid of this voice, Mr. Monson? I wonder at you!"

"You should have my full consent to wonder," said I, "if it were the first time; but there was the other night, you know, with solid, sour, uncompromising old Crimp to bear me witness, and now again to-day, with a boatful of men for evidence."

"Really, Mr. Monson, what do you want to make yourself believe?" she asked, with a tone like a half laugh in her speech; "the dead cannot speak."

"So 'tis said," I grumbled, sucking hard at my cigar to kindle it afresh.

"Human syllables cannot be delivered save by human lips. What, then, could have spoken out of the darkness of the sea the other night?"

"Does not Milton tell of airy tongues that syllable men's names?" said I, gloomily.

"Mr. Monson, I repeat that I wonder at you. How can you suffer your imagination to be cheated by some trick of the senses?" she laughed. "Pray, be careful. You may influence me. Then what a morbid company shall we make! I am sure you would like me to believe in this mysterious voice of yours; but, happily, we Colonials are too young as a people to be superstitious. We must wait for our ruined castles, and our moated granges, and our long, echoing, tapestry-lined corridors. Then, like you English, we may tremble when we hear a mysterious voice."

She started violently as she said this, giving my arm so smart a pull that it instantly brought me to a halt, while in a voice of genuine alarm she exclaimed, "Good gracious! what is that?"

Her face was turned up towards the weather yard-arm of the square top-sail, where, apparently floating a little above the studding-sail boom iron, like to a flame in the act of running down the smoke of an extinguished candle ere firing the wick, shone a pendulous bubble of greenish fire, but of a luminosity sufficiently powerful to distinctly reveal the extremity of the black spar pointing finger-like into the darkness ahead, while a large space of the curve of the top-gallant sail above showed in the lustre with something of the glassy, delicate greenness you observe in a midsummer leaf in moonshine. The darkness, with its burden of stars, seemed to press to the yacht the deeper for that mystic light, and much that had been distinguishable outlines before melted out upon the sight.

"What is it?" exclaimed Miss Jennings, in a voice of consternation, and I felt her hand tighten upon my arm, with her fears thrilling through the involuntary pressure.

"Figure an echoing corridor hung with aged tapestry stirring to cold draughts, which seem to come like blasts from a graveyard, a noise as of the distant clanking of chains, and then the apparition of a man in armor holding up such a lantern as that yonder, approach-

ing you who are spellbound and cannot move for horror." I burst out laughing.

"What is that light, Mr. Monson?" she cried, petulantly.

"Why, Miss Jennings," I answered, "'tis a saint, not a light; a reverend old chap called St. Elmo, who transforms himself at pleasure into a species of snap-dragon for the encouragement of poor Jack."

"See that corposant, sir?" rumbled Finn, out of the darkness.

"Very well indeed," I answered. "Finn has explained," I continued; "that light is what sailors call a corpusant—sometimes compr*ee*sant. If we were Catholics of the Columbian period we should tumble down upon our knees and favor it with a litany or oblige it with a hymn; but being bleak-minded Protestants, all that we can do is to wonder how the deuce it happens to be burning on such a night as this, for I have seen scores of these corposants in my time, but always either in dead calms or in gales of wind. But there it is, Miss Jennings—an atmospheric exhalation as commonplace as lightning, harmless as the glowworm, though in its way one of the most poetic of old Ocean's hundred suggestions; for how easy to imagine some giant figure holding that mystic lamp, whose irradiation blends the vast spirit shape with the gloom and blinds the sight to it, though by watching with a little loving coaxing of fancy one should be able after a bit to catch a glimpse of a pair of large, sorrowful eyes, or the outline of some wan, giant face."

"It is gone," she exclaimed, with a shudder.

"Hush!" I exclaimed; "we may hear the rustling of pinions by listening."

"Mr. Monson, you are ungenerous," she cried, with a hysterical laugh.

Suddenly the light glanced and then flamed at the foretop-mast head, where it threw out, though very palely, the form of the look-out man on the top-gallant yard, whose posture showed him to be crouching with his arm over his eyes.

"I dare say that poor devil up there," I exclaimed, "fully believes the fire-bubble to be a man's ghost."

"It is a startling thing to see," exclaimed Miss Jennings.

"But Colonials are too young as a people to be superstitious," said I. "It is only we of the old country, you know, with our moated granges—"

"What is the hour, Mr. Monson?"

"I say, Charles, are you on deck?" shouted Wilfrid, from the companion-hatch.

"Ay; here I am with Miss Jennings. What's the time, Wilfrid, d'ye know?"

As I spoke two silver chimes, and then a third, came floating from the forecastle—three bells—half-past nine.

"See that corposant?" bawled Wilfrid. And he came groping up to us. "An omen, by George!" he cried, with an odd hilarious note in his voice. "Laura, mark me, that flame isn't shining for nothing. 'Tis a signal-light fired by Fortune to advise us of some great event at hand."

"Quarter-deck there!" came down the voice of the lookout man, falling from sail to sail, as it seemed, in an echo that made the mysterious flame a wild thing to the imagination for a moment by its coming direct from it.

"Holloa!" roared Finn.

"Can I lay down till this here blasted light's burned out? 'Tain't right to be all alone with it up here."

"It *is* burned out," cried Finn, in a way which showed he sympathized with the fellow. In fact, as the sailor called the light vanished, and though we stood looking a while, waiting for its reappearance, we saw no more of it.

The ocean corpse-candle had shone at the right moment. Likely enough I should have made myself a bit merry over my tender and beautiful companion's fears in revenge for her pouting, pettish wonderment at the uneasiness which the mysterious voices had raised in me. But Wilfrid remained with us for the rest of the evening, and as I was anxious that he should know nothing about this strange sound, I forebore all raillery. It was midnight when we went to bed. Our talk had been very sober, indeed somewhat philosophical in its way, with its references to electrical phenomena. Wilfrid chatted with excitement, which he increased by two or three fuming glasses of seltzer and spirits. He told us a wild story of a ship that he was on board of somewhere down off the New Zealand coast, ploughing through an ocean of fire on a pitch-black night, with a gale of wind blowing and a school of whales keeping pace with the rushing fabric, spouting vast feather-like fountains of burning water as they stormed through it. He talked like a man reciting a dream or delivering an imagination, and there was a passion in his speech due to excitement and old cognac, along with a glow in his large peering eyes, and a play of flushed features that persuaded me of a very defined mood of craziness passing over his mind. His fancy seemed to riot in the roaring, fiery scene he fig-

ured; the ship plunging into hollows, which flashed about her bows like volcanic vomitings of flame, the heavens above black as soot, the ocean waving like sheet-lightning to its confines, and the huge body of whales crushing the towering surges as they rolled headlong through them into a moon-like brilliance, flinging on high their delicate emerald-green sparkling spouts of water, which floated comet-like over them against the midnight of the heavens.

On eight bells striking we went to bed. All was quiet on deck; a pleasant breeze blowing under the hovering prisms and crystals of the firmament, the yacht leaning over in a pale shadow in the dusk and seething pleasantly along, with a noise rising up from round about her like the rippling of a flag in a summer breeze. I fell asleep and slept soundly, and when I awoke it was to the beating of somebody's knuckle upon my cabin door. The day had broken, and my first glance going to the scuttle, I spied through the thick glass of it a windy sunrise with smoky crimson flakes, and a tint of tarnished pink upon the atmosphere.

"Holloa! holloa there! Who's that knocking?"

"'Tis me, sir, Capt'n Finn. Can I have a word with your honor?" exclaimed the skipper, who had subdued his voice to a note that was alarming with its suggestion of physical effort.

"Come in, Finn. What is it now?"

The handle was turned, and the captain entered cap in hand. He closed the door carefully, and instantly said, "Sorry to disturb you, sir, but baste me for an old duckling, Mr. Monson, if I don't believe the *Shark* to be in sight."

"*What!*" I shouted, sitting bolt-upright, and flinging my legs over the edge of the bunk.

He glanced at the door, looking an intimation to me to make no noise. "I thought I'd consult with 'ee first, sir, before reporting to Sir Wilfrid."

"Is she in sight from the deck?"

"No, sir."

"Have you seen her?"

"Ay, Mr. Monson, I'm just off the t'gallant yard, where I've been inspecting her ever since she was first reported, and that'll be drawing on for five and twenty minutes."

"But she is hull down."

"Yes, sir, and still a schooner-yacht at that," said he, emphatically. "Mind, I don't say she *is* the *Shark*. All I want to report is a schooner, with a yacht's canvas—not American cotton. No,

sir, canvas like ourn—nothin' square forrards, and sailing well she looks."

"How heading?"

"Why to the south'ard and west'ard, as we are. I'm in your hands, sir. It'll be a fearful excitement for Sir Wilfrid and a terrible blow if it's another vessel."

"Oh, but you'll have to give him the news, happen what will! Wait, however, till I have had a look, will you? I shall be with you in a minute or two."

He left the berth, and in red-hot haste, and with a heart beating with excitement, I plunged into my clothes and ran on deck, passing softly, however, through the cabin; for though I know not why it should be, yet I have observed that at sea there is something almost electrical in a time full of startling significance like this, an influence that, act as softly and be as hushed as you may, will yet arouse sleeping people and bring them about you in a dreaming way, wondering what on earth has happened. Pale and windy as the sunrise was, there was dazzle enough in the soaring luminary to stagger my sight on my first emergence. I stepped clear of the companion, and stood while I fetched a few breaths, gazing round me. The sea was a dull freckled blue, with a struggling swell underrunning it athwart the course of the wind, as though the coming breeze was to be sought northward. The horizon astern was gloomy and vague in the shadow of a long bank of clouds, a heap of sullen terraces of vapor rising from flint to saffron and then to a faint wet rose where the ragged sky-line of the compacted body caught the eastern color. All was clear water, turn where the gaze would. On the top-gallant yard the fellow on the lookout lay over the spar with a telescope at his eye; his figure, as it swung through the misty radiance against the pale blue of the morning sky, that south-east looked to be kindling into whiteness, was motionless with the intentness of his stare. If what the tubes were revealing to him was the *Shark*, then, as he had been the first to sight her, that glittering heavy five-guinea piece nailed to the main-mast was his. It was as much the thought of this reward going from them as curiosity that had sent the watch on deck aloft, too, to have a look. The last of them was coming down hand over hand as I went forward. Discipline was forgotten in the excitement of such a moment as this, and swabs and squillgees had been flung down without a word of rebuke from Cutbill, whose business it was to superintend the washing of the decks.

I sprang into the foreshrouds and was presently alongside the

lookout fellow. "Give me hold of that glass," said I. To the naked eye up here the sail hung transparently visible upon the edge of the sea, a point of lustrous white, like the head of a marble obelisk, lustrous with the silver of sunrise. But the telescope made a deal more of that dash of light than this. I threw a leg over the yard, steadied the glass against the mast, and instantly saw the white canvas of what seemed a large schooner-yacht risen to her rail upon the horizon, where the thin black length of her swam like an eel with the fluctuations of the refractive atmosphere; but all above was the brilliant whiteness of the cloths of the pleasure ship mounting from boom to gaff; a wide and handsome spread, with a flight of triangular canvas hovering between jib-boom and top-mast as though a flock of sea-fowl were winging past just there.

"Do you know the *Shark?*" said I to the man.

"I've seen her once or twice at Southampton, sir."

"Is that she, think you?"

"Ay, sartin as that there water's salt."

"Well, there'll be good pickings for you on the main-mast," said I, handing him back the glass.

His face seemed to wither up between his whiskers to the incredible wrinkles of the smile which shrunk it to the aspect of an old dried apple. I got into the rigging and descended to the deck. The sailors stared hard at me as I went aft. I suppose they imagined that I was well acquainted with the *Shark*, and they eyed my countenance with a solicitude that was almost humorous. Finn stood near the main-rigging perspiring with impatience and anxiety, fanning his long face with his cap, and sending glances in the direction of the sea, where presently those two alabaster-like spires now hidden would be visible.

"Is it the *Shark*, think 'ee, sir?" he cried in a breathless way.

"My good Finn, how the dickens should I know? I know no more about the *Shark* than of Noah's ark. But, seeing that the vessel we want is a schooner of some two hundred tons, of a fore-and-aft rig, bound our way, and a yacht to boot, then, if yonder little ship be not the chap we are in search of, this meeting with her will be an atrociously strange coincidence."

"Just what I think, sir," he cried, still breathless.

"Do you mean to shift your helm for her?"

"She was abeam when first sighted, sir. I have brought her on the bow since then, as ye can see. But I'll head straight if ye should think proper," he exclaimed, with a look aloft and around.

"Oh, by all means go slap for her, captain!" said I. "That, you know, will be my cousin's first order."

The helm was put over and the yacht's head fell off till you saw by the line of the flashing glass through which the fellow aloft continued to peer that the hidden sail had been brought about two points on the lee bow. All was now bustle on deck with trimming canvas, setting studding-sails, and the like. The dawn had found us close-hauled, with the top-gallant sail lifting and every sheet flat aft, and now we were carrying the wind abaft the beam with a subdued stormy heave of the yacht over the sulky swell. Indeed, Finn should have made sail to the first shift of helm; but the poor fellow seemed to have lost his head till he had talked with me, scarce knowing how to settle his mind as to the right course to be instantly adopted in the face of that unexpected apparition which was showing like a snow-flake from aloft. For my part, I thought, I could not better employ the leisure that yet remained than by preparing for what was to come by a cold brine bath. So down I went, telling Finn that I would rout out Sir Wilfrid as I passed through the cabin and give him the news.

CHAPTER XVII.

WE RAISE THE SCHOONER.

I DESCENDED into the cabin, walked straight to the door of Wilfrid's berth and knocked.

"Who's there?"

"I, Charles. I have news for you."

"Come in, come in!"

I entered, and found Wilfrid in his bunk propped up on his elbow, his eyes looking twice their natural size with the intensity of his stare, and one long uncouth leg already flung over the edge so that his posture was as if he had been suddenly paralyzed while in the act of springing onto the deck.

"What news, in the name of Heaven? Quick, now, like a dear boy!"

"There's a schooner-yacht uncommonly like your *Shark* away down on the lee bow visible from aloft."

He whipped his other leg out of bed, and sat bolt-upright. I had expected some extravagance of behavior in him on his hearing this, but, greatly to my surprise, he sat silent in his bunk eying me, his brow dark, and his lips moving for several seconds, which might have been minutes for the time they seemed to run into.

"What is to-day, Charles?"

"Thursday."

"Ha! It should be Monday. That light last night was an omen, as I told you. I knew some great event could not be far off." His eyes kindled under their quivering lids, and an odd smile twisted his mouth into the expression of a sarcastic grin. It was as ugly a look in him as I had ever seen, and it gained heavily in the effect it produced by his comparatively quiet manner.

"We are heading directly for her, of course?"

"Finn has her about two points on the lee bow," said I.

"Will that do?" he exclaimed.

"Why, yes; hold a weather-gage of the chase, it is said; though I think we shall be having a northerly blast upon us before the sun touches his meridian."

"Is she the *Shark*, Charles?"

"You know I never saw the vessel, Wilf. But Finn and the chap on the yard seem to have no doubt of her, and the skipper ought to know, anyway."

On this he leaped to the deck with a *cry* of laughter, and coming up to me, let fall his hand heavily upon my shoulder with such a grip of it that, spite of my having my coat on, it ached after he had let go like an attack of rheumatism. "Now what say you?" said he, stooping, for he was a taller man than I, and peering and grinning close into my face. "You looked upon this chase as a crazy undertaking, didn't you? The sea was such a mighty circle, Charles! the biggest ship in the world but an insignificant speck upon it, hey?"

He let go of me and brought his hands together, extending and slowly beating the air with them, with his body rocking. I awaited some passionate outfly, but whether his thoughts were too deep for words, or that he was satisfied to think what at another time he might have stormed out with, he held his peace. Presently and very suddenly he abandoned his singular attitude, and fell to collecting articles of his clothing, which he pulled on as though he would tear them to pieces.

"I'll be with you on deck immediately," said I, going to the door. But he did not seem to know that I was present; all the time he strained and dragged at his clothes he talked to himself rapidly, fiercely; pausing once to smite his thigh with his open hand; following this on with a low, deep laugh, like that of a sleeper dreaming.

Well, thought I, as I stepped out and went to my berth, whether it prove the *Shark* or not we shall have to "stand by," as Finn hinted, for some queer displays to-day. I met Miss Jennings's maid in the cabin, and asked if she was going to her mistress. She replied yes. "Then," said I, "give her my compliments, and tell her that we have raised a large schooner-yacht during the night, and that Finn seems to think she is the *Shark*."

As I entered my berth I caught myself smiling over my fancy of the look that would come into the sweet girl's face when her maid gave her the message; the brilliant gleam of mingled alarm, temper, astonishment in her eyes, the sudden flush of her cheek and its paleness afterwards, the consternation in the set of her lips and the agitation of her little hands like the fluttering of falling snow-flakes as she dressed. But in good sooth, I, too, was feeling mightily ex-

cited once more; I had cooled down somewhat since going on deck and viewing the distant sail from the mast-head; now that I was alone and could muse, my pulse rose with my imaginations till it almost came to my thinking of myself as on the eve of some desperate and bloody business—boarding a pirate, say, with the chance of a live slow-match in his magazine, or cutting out something heavily armed and full of men under a castle bristling with artillery. Supposing the craft to be the *Shark*, what was to be the issue? The *Bride* would be recognized, and Hope-Kennedy was not likely, as I might take it, to let us float alongside of him if he could help it. Suppose we maimed her, and compelled her to bring to; what then? I had asked Finn this question long before, and he had said it would not come to a hand-to-hand struggle. But how could he tell? If we offered to board, they might threaten to fire into us, and a single shot, let alone a wounded or a killed man, might raise blood enough to end in as grim an affray as ever British colors floated over. Small wonder that my excitement rose with all these fancies and speculations. And then again, supposing the stranger to be the *Shark*, there was (to me) the astonishing coincidence of falling in with her—picking her up, indeed, as though we had been steered dead into her wake by some spirit hand instead of blundering on her through a stroke of luck, which had no more reference to Finn's calculations and suppositions and hopings than to the indications of the nose of our chaste and gilded figure-head.

When I went on deck I spied Wilfrid coming down the fore-rigging. He held on very tightly, and felt about with his sprawling feet with uncommon cautiousness for the ratlines ere relaxing his grip of the shrouds. Finn was immediately under him, standing by, perhaps, to shoulder him up if he should turn dizzy. They reached the deck and came aft.

"She's not yet in sight from the cross-trees," exclaimed Wilfrid, puffing and irritable from nervousness and exertion and disappointment, "and I can't climb higher."

"If she's the *Shark*," said I, "you're not going to raise her upon the horizon as if she were a beacon. But there's a spread of wings here that *she* can't show anyhow, and it will be strange if her white plumes are not nodding above that blue edge by noon."

"Ay, sir," rumbled Finn, "specially with that coming along," pointing to the north, where the weather looked heavy and smoky and thunderous, with a purple rounding of shadow upon the sea-line,

and a hot-looking copperish light flowing off the jagged summits into the dusty blue as though it were sundown that was reflected there, while the troubled roll of the swell out of the shadow on the ocean put a finishing touch to the countenance of storm you found spreading astern from north-east to north-west. "There'll be wind enough there, sir," said Finn, keeping his square-ended stumpy forefinger levelled, "to give us white water to above our bow ports anon, or I'm a codfish."

Wilfrid turned about and fell to pacing the deck; he struck out as though walking for a wager, tossing his legs and swinging his arms and measuring the planks from the wheel to very nearly abreast of the galley. Such of the sailors as were to windward slided to the other side, where you saw them exchanging looks, though there was no want of respect in their manner, but on the contrary, an air of active sympathy, as if they were getting to master the full meaning of the existence of that sail below the horizon by observing how the report of it worked in the baronet.

"We must try and raise her," muttered Finn to my ear, "if only to pacify his honor by the sight of her. He can't climb, and he'll go out of himself if he don't see her soon."

"But do you gain on her?"

"Why, yes; she is visible from the cross-trees already. But Sir Wilfrid can't get so high."

Well, thought I, this should surely signify slower heels than the *Shark* is allowed to have.

I went to the taffrail and overhung it, watching the sky astern, with an occasional mechanical glance at the wool-white spin of the wake gushing over the surface of the jumble of the swell like steam from the funnel of a locomotive. It was blowing a fresh wind, though I guessed it would slacken away soon to pipe up in a fresh slant presently. The yacht was a great fabric of cloths, every stitch abroad that would hold air, and she drove through it humming, troubled as she was by the irregular heave of the sea. In fact her movements were so awkward as to render walking inconvenient, and nothing, I believe, but the not knowing what he was about could have furnished Wilfrid with his steady shanks that morning. It was like a bit of sleep-walking, indeed, where a man who, awake, could not look down forty feet without desiring to cast himself out of a window, safely and exquisitely treads a narrow ledge of roof as high as the top of London Monument.

I was startled from my reverie by an exclamation, and turning, saw

him hastily approaching Miss Jennings, who had just arrived on deck. He came to her with his arms extended, as though he would embrace her.

"Laura, have you heard?"

"*Is* it the *Shark*, Wilfrid?"

"Finn says yes. She exactly answers to the *Shark's* description. Hereabouts she should be; this is her track. Yes, yes, it is the *Shark*. Would God it were Monday!" Then, seeing me looking, he bawled: "Eh, Charles, what other ship should she prove? Fore and aft—fore and aft, of the *Shark's* burden, as you and Finn say, a schooner, a pleasure craft by the color of her canvas"—his face suddenly darkened, and he said something to Miss Jennings, but what, I could not gather. She half turned away as if overcome by a sudden sense of sickness or faintness; the effect of some expression of fierce joy, I dare say, on his part, some savage whisper of assurance that his opportunity was not far distant now, which acted upon her nervous system, that trembled yet to the surprise of the news I had sent her through her maid. There was something so sad and appealing in her beauty just then that but for the feelings it possessed me with I might scarcely have suspected what a lover's heart I already carried in my breast for her. The troubled sweetness of her glances, her pale cheeks and lips, the swift rise and fall of her bosom, betokened consternation and the conflict of many emotions, and, as I could not but think, a subduing sense of loneliness. Well, I must say I loved her the better for this weakness of spirit, for this recoil from the confrontment that she had been endeavoring to persuade herself she was looking forward to with a longing for it only a little less venomous than Wilfrid's. Nothing, I had thought again and again, but the soul of a fond, tender, chaste woman, gentle in mind, and of a nature lovable, with the best weaknesses of her sex, could go clad in such graces as she walked in withal from her topmost curl of gold to the full, firm, elegant little foot on which she seemed to float to the buoyant measures of the yacht's deck.

Wilfrid addressed her again, hurriedly and eagerly, with the gesticulations of a Jew in a passion. She answered softly, continuously sending scared looks over the yacht's bow. I heard him name his wife, but it was not for me to join them nor to listen, so I overhung the taffrail afresh, observing that even now there was a noticeable weakening in the weight of the wind, while the swing of the swell from a little to the westward of north was growing more regular, a longer and fuller heave with an opalescent glance in the vapor im-

mediately over the sea-line, as though the weather was clearing past the rim of the ocean.

"Mr. Monson."

I turned. Miss Laura stood by my side. Wilfrid had left the deck. "Is that vessel, that is said to be ahead of us, the *Shark*, do you think?"

"I wish I knew positively for your sake, that I might relieve your anxiety."

"If she should prove to be the vessel that my sister is in"—she drew a long, tremulous breath—"it will be a marvellous meeting, for I feel *now* as you have felt all through—now that that yacht is in sight from the mast up there—that this ocean is a vast wilderness." She slowly ran her eyes, which were still charged with their scared look, along the sea-line.

"Well, Miss Jennings, hanging and marriage go by destiny, they say, and so does chasing a wife at sea apparently. I give you my word I am so excited I can scarcely talk."

"But it may not be the *Shark*."

"Why, no."

"I hope it is not," she cried, starting to the rise in her voice, with a glance at the helmsman, who stood near us.

"I can see that in your face," said I.

"Oh, I hope it is not, and yet I want it to be the *Shark* too. Wilfrid must recover Henrietta. But it makes my heart stand still to think of our meeting. Oh, her shame! her shame! and then to find *me* here. And what is to happen?"

"Best let that craft turn out to be the *Shark*, though," said I. "Here we are with a programme of rambles that threatens the world's end if we don't fall in with the colonel. Keep your heart up," said I, gently. "What have you to fear? It is for the galled jade to wince. Why, t'other night you would have shot Hope-Kennedy had he stood up before you."

She tried to smile, but the movement of her lips swiftly faded out into their expression of grief and consternation.

"I will play my part," she exclaimed, twisting her ring upon her finger. "If my sister refuses to leave Colonel Hope-Kennedy, I have made up my mind not to leave *her*. Where she goes I'll go."

"I hope not," I interrupted, "for it might come, Miss Jennings, to my saying that where you go *I'll* go, and the colonel may have rather curious views on the subject of guests."

"You said you were too excited to talk," she exclaimed, with a

little color mounting. "It may be that I am stupidly influenced by old memories. I was always afraid of Henrietta. She had an imperious manner, and an old lord whom I met at your cousin's—I forget his name—told Wilfrid that her eyes made him think of Mrs. Siddons in her finest scenes. I fear her influence upon me when I begin to entreat her. I know how she will look."

"All this is mere nervousness," said I. "You thought of these things before, yet you are here. Besides, the sense of wrong-doing will mightily weaken the genius of wizandry in her—her power at least of exercising it and subduing by it—subduing even you, the tenderest and gentlest of girls; or depend on't she's no true member of your sex, but one of those demon women whom Coleridge describes as wailing for their, or rather in her case for *new*, lovers."

She made no reply. Shortly afterwards the breakfast bell summoned us below.

At table Wilfrid spoke little, but his manner was collected; whether it was that excitement was languishing in him or that he had managed to master himself, what he said was rational, his words and manner unclouded by that hectic which was wont to give the countenance of a high fever to all he said and did when anything happened to stir him up. He was stern and thoughtful, and it was easy to see that he accepted the vessel ahead as the *Shark*, and that he was settling his plans. I was heartily grateful for this posture in him. I never knew any one so fatiguing with his restlessness as my cousin. Half an hour of his company when he was much excited left one as tired, dry, and hollow as a four hours' argument with an illogical man. He was too much preoccupied to notice how pale and subdued and scared Miss Laura was, struggle as she might in his presence to seem otherwise. I talked very cautiously for fear of provoking a discussion that might heat him. Once he asked me, in an angry, twitting way, as though to the heave-up within him of a sudden mood of wrath with a parcel of words atop which were bound to find the road out, whether I felt disposed *now* to challenge his judgment, whether I was still of opinion that the ocean was too wide a field for such a chase as this, and so on, proceeding steadily, but with rising warmth, through the catalogue of my early objections to the voyage; but instead of answering him, I praised the bit of virgin corned beef off which I was breakfasting, wondered why it was that poultry was always insipid at sea, and so forced him back into his dark and collected silence, or obliged him to quit his subject.

However, his inability to keep his attention long fixed helped me

here, for he never attempted to pick up the end of the thread I had cut; though, little as he spoke, two-thirds of what he delivered himself of might have been worked into hot arguments but for my cautious answers.

I was not surprised on going on deck to find the wind no more than a light draught, with the main-boom swinging to the long roll of the yacht, and the canvas flapping with vicious snaps at sheet and yard-arm. The water seemed to wash thick as oil from the yacht's sides, a dirty blue that went into an oozy sort of green northward. There was a deadness in the lift of the swell that made you think of an idiot shouldering his way through a crowd, and the eye sought in vain for a streak of foam for the relief of the crisp vitality of it.

"Is that wind or thunder, think you, Mr. Crimp?" said I to the mate, whom I found in charge, while I pointed to the heaped-up folds of cloud astern, the brows of which were not far off the central sky, that, spite of the sunshine, was blurred to the very luminary himself with the shadow in the north and with tatters and curls and streaks of rusty brassish vapor risen off the line of the main body and sulkily floating southward.

"Wind or thunder?" asked Crimp, with a dull, indifferent look; "well, 'tain't tufted enough for thunder, but there'll be a breeze, I allow, behind this here swell."

"Are we raising the chap ahead?"

"Not noticeably. She'll have to shift her hellum for us for that to happen at this pace," sending an askew glance over the side. I was leaving him. "Heard any more woices?" he asked.

"No; have you?"

"No, and don't want to. It's been a-puzzling me, though," he exclaimed, mumbling over a quid, the juice of which had stained the corners of his mouth into so sour a sneer that no artist could have painted it better. "Tell 'ee what it is, I'm a-going to believe in ghosts."

"You can't do better," said I; "get hold of a ghost and it will explain everything for you."

"Well, 'tain't a childish notion, anyhow. There's first-class folks as believes in sperrits. What's a ghost like? Ne'er a man as I've asked for'ards knows saving the mute, who describes it as a houtline."

"What's inside his outline?" I asked.

"Why, that there Muffin can't get farther than that. I says to him, 'How can a houtline speak?' 'Look here,' says he, 'answer me

this: suppose ye takes a bottle and sucks out all the air from inside of it, what's left?' 'A wacuum,' says I. 'And what's a wacuum?' says he. 'Why,' I says, says I, 'space, ain't it?' I says. 'And what's space?' says he. 'Why, nothin', I suppose,' I says, says I. 'Then,' says he, 'how can nothin' exist? And yet,' says he, 'it do exist, because ye can point to the bottle and say there it is. So with a ghost,' says he; 'it's a houtline with nothin' inside it if you like, but it's as real in its emptiness as the inside of a bottle with nothin' in it.'"

At any other time I should have hugely enjoyed an argument with this acrid old sailor on such a subject as ghosts. There is no company, to my taste, to equal that of a sour, prejudiced, ignorant salt of matured years, whose knowledge of life has been gained by looking at the world through a ship's hawse-pipe, and who is full to the throat with the sayings and the superstitions of the forecastle. Jacob Crimp was such a man. Indeed, he was the best example of the kind that I can recollect, thanks, perhaps, to the help he got from his queer sea eyes, glutinous in appearance as a jelly-fish, one peering athwart the other with a look of quarrelling about them that most happily corresponded with the sulky expression of his face and the growl of his voice that was like a sea blessing. But it was impossible to think of the schooner ahead and talk with this man about ghosts. I left him, and got into the foreshrouds and ascended to the cross-trees, where, receiving the glass from the fellow on the yard above, I took a view of the sea over the bow, and caught plainly the canvas of the vessel we were heading for—her main-sail visible to the boom of it, with a glimpse of her bowsprit end wriggling off into the dusky blue air at every rise of her bow to the lift of the swell. I noticed, however, that she had taken in her main-gaff top-sail, possibly with an eye to the weather astern; but it was a thing to set me problemizing. Supposing her to be the *Shark*, either she had not yet sighted us or she had no suspicion of us. Fidler, her captain, would, when we showed fair, be pretty sure to twig us by our rig; but was it likely that the colonel and Lady Monson would gravely suppose that Wilfrid had started in chase of them? That, indeed, might depend upon whether her ladyship had missed the colonel's letter to her, which my cousin had asked me to read. Well, we should have to wait a little. My heart beat briskly as I descended to deck. Put yourself in my place, and think of the sort of excitement that was threatened before that morning sun shining up there had set!

Half an hour later the weak draught had died out; the rolling of

the *Bride* was putting a voice of thunder into her canvas, and the strain on hemp and spar presently obliged old Crimp to take in his studding-sails, which he followed on by ordering the top-gallant sail to be rolled up, and the gaff-topsail hauled down. Wilfrid, who had arrived on deck, stood haggardly eying these manœuvres, but he said nothing, contenting himself with an occasional look, as dark as the shadow astern of us, at the weather there, and a fretful stride to the rail, and a stormy stare at the sallow oil-smooth water that came swelling to the counter and washing the length of the little ship in a manner that made her stagger at times most abominably.

"Let that vessel prove what she may," said I, sitting down on a grating abaft the wheel, close to which he was standing, "we appear to have the heels of her in light airs, however it may be with her in a breeze of wind."

"How do you know?" he inquired, in a church-yard note.

"Why," said I, "I was just now in the cross-trees, and found her showing fair from them, whereas before breakfast she was only visible from the top-gallant yard."

He looked at me with a heavy, leaden eye, and said, "A plague on the wind! It has all gone; just when we want it, too."

"We shall have a capful anon," I exclaimed; "no need to whistle for it. Mark how it brightens down upon the sea-line yonder as that shadow floats upward. That means wind enough to whiten this tumbling oiliness for us."

He directed his gaze in a mechanical way towards the quarter in which I was looking, but said nothing. Miss Jennings came out of the companion. I took her hand and brought her to the grating.

"A strange, oppressive calm," she cried; "how sickly the sunshine is! Nature looks to be in as dull a mood as we are."

"Wilf," said I, "if that schooner is the *Shark*, what will you do?"

"What would *you* do?" he answered, sternly, as though he imagined I quizzed him, when, God knows, I was in a more sober and anxious humor than I can express.

"Well," said I, very quietly and gravely, "when I got my yacht within reach of her glasses, if I could manage it, I should signal that I wanted to speak her."

"Quite right; that's what I shall do," said he.

"But after?" I exclaimed.

"After what?" he cried.

"Why, confound it, Wilf, suppose she makes no response, holds

on all, as we say at sea, and bowls along without taking the slightest notice of us?"

He approached me close, laid his great hand upon my shoulder, and thrust his long arm forth, straight as a handspike, pointing to the forecastle gun. "*There's* my answer to that," he cried in my ear, in a voice as disagreeable as the sound of a saw, with irritability. "You wished me to strike it down into the hold, d'ye remember? You were for ridiculing it from the moment of your catching sight of it; yet, without that messenger to deliver my mind, what answer would there be to the question you have just now put? Oh, my God," he suddenly cried, smiting his forehead, "I feel as if I shall go mad."

He crossed to the other side of the deck and paced it alone. Miss Jennings was too much dejected by all this, by the excitement of the time, by nervousness, grief, anxiety to converse; nor, indeed, was my mood a very sociable one. I procured a chair for her, and presently found myself alone, as Wilfrid was, wishing from the very bottom of my heart that Colonel Hope-Kennedy was hanged, her ladyship in a lunatic asylum, and myself in my old West End haunts again, though somehow a misgiving as to the accuracy of this last desire visited me on a sudden with the glance I just then happened to cast at Miss Laura, who sat with her hands folded upon her lap, her head bowed in a posture of meditation that took an indescribable character of pathos from the expression on her sweet face.

It was now a little after ten o'clock. Crimp, who was pacing near me that Wilfrid might have the whole range of the weather quarter-deck to himself, suddenly rumpled out, "Here comes the wind at last!" The stern of the yacht was still upon the north, where, at the very verge of the waters, which sluggishly heaved like molten lead under the dark canopy of vapor that overhung them, the sea was roughening and whitening to the whipping of wind, which looked at that distance to be coming along in a straight line, though as it approached us I witnessed a strange effect of long fibrine feelers sweeping out of the hoarse and rushing ridges of foam which were seething towards us—like darting livid tongues of creatures hidden in the yeast behind tipped with froth that made one think of the slender stem of a vessel ripping through the surface. In a few minutes the boiling popple was all about us, hissing to our counter, with a shriek of wind which flashed with such spite into the great space of main-sail and the whole spread of square topsail that the yacht for a moment was bowed down to her ways, fair

as it took her on her quarter. An instant she lay so, then came surging back to an almost level deck, with her rigging alive as with the ringing of bells, took a sudden plunge forward, throwing from either bow a mass of creaming sea, the summit of which went spinning like a snow-storm ahead of her; then gathering impulse in a long, floating, launching plunge, as it were, she went sliding through it, faster and faster yet, till she had a wake like a mill-race in chase of her.

It was a scene full of the life and spirit and reality of the ocean, after the spell of sulky calm, with its dingy northern heaving of water and its haze of weak, moist sunlight in the south and east. Finn to the first of the blast came on deck and fell a-bawling, the sailors sprang from rope to rope with lively heartiness, the slack running-gear blew out in semicircles, which with the curve of the canvas and the lean of the masts as the yacht swept forward, with the brine boiling high along her, gave a wild, expectant, headlong look to the whole rushing fabric, something indeed to make one fancy that the spirit of her owner, the expression of whose face had her own strained, eager, rushing air, so to speak, had passed into and vitalized her—mere structure of timber as she was—into passionate human yearnings.

CHAPTER XVIII.

IS SHE THE "SHARK?"

It was not to prove a gale, though it would have been hard to guess what lay behind that dirty jumble of white and livid terraces which had been stealthily creeping all the morning zenithward. The clouds scattered to the rush of the wind; the sun, with a brightened disk, leaped from one flying vaporous edge to another, dazzling out the snows of the dissolving seas till the eye reeled from the glare of the brilliant foam and the sharp and lovely sparkle of the pure dark blue between. Indeed, before long the wind steadied down into a noble sailing breeze, with a piebald sky of warm and cheerful weather steadily swinging into the south-east, as though the whole heaven revolved from one quarter to another like a panorama on a cylinder. Wilfrid looked his wishes, but said nothing. He hung apart in a fashion that was the same as telling me to keep off, nor had he anything to say to Miss Jennings. Finn, easily interpreting his master's face, piled cloths on the yacht till it seemed as though another rag would blow the whole lofty white fabric of canvas, tapering spar, and rigging clean over the bows. We fled along in thunder, and to every courtesy of the vessel's head the water recoiled in a roar of spume as far as the jib-boom end, to speed aft as fast, you would have thought, as the eye could follow it, the swell washing to the counter as if to help her.

We held on in this way for some time, when suddenly Wilfrid, who had come to a stand at the weather-rail, and was looking ahead, bawled, with the note of a shriek in his voice, "Look!" and out sprang his long arm, pointing directly on a line with our bowsprit.

"Ay, there she is, sure enough!" cried I, as I caught sight, to a floating lift of the deck at that moment, of the pearlish gleam of canvas of a milky brilliance slanting past the soft whiteness of a head of sea against the marble look of the sky there, where the sun-touched clouds were going down to the ocean edge in a crowd with a vein of violet here and there among them. I glanced at Wilfrid, not knowing what sort of mood this first glimpse of the yacht would put into him; but there was no alteration of face. His countenance

had set into an iron-hard expression; methought resolution could never show more grimly stubborn. Miss Jennings came to the side to look.

"There is little to be seen as yet," said I to her, "but we shall be heaving her hull up very soon. She is taking it quietly."

Finn stood near; I took his glass from him and levelled it. "Why, 'tis merely *ambling* with her, captain," said I; "gaff-topsails down and no hint of square-sail that I can make out. The cloud we are making astern should puzzle her. D'ye think Captain Fidler will recognize this vessel?"

"Why, yes, sir; bound to it," he answered. "We aren't like the *Shark*, you know; our figure-head alone is as good as naming us. Then our sheer of bow ud sarve like a sign-post to Fidler. Back this by our square rig, and he'd have to ha' fallen dark to mistake"—meaning by dark, blind.

"Is the *Shark* to be as easily recognized?" asked Miss Jennings, who stood close by me, occasionally laying her hand upon my arm to steady herself, and putting the other to her lips to speak, for the breeze ran with a scream in it at times over the rail in a manner to sweep the words out of her mouth as though her syllables were the smoke of a cigarette. Finn shook his long head.

"Lay me close aboard, miss," said he, "and I'll tell you the *Shark* from another craft; but there's nothin' distinct about her as there is with us. She's black, without gilt, like a great many others, of a slaving pattern, long, low, without spring forrards or aft, with apple sides like others again. But," said he, after a pause, during which he had taken a look through his telescope at the glistening fragment hovering like a butterfly over the bow, "though I don't want to say too much, sir, I'd be willing to lay down a good bit o' money on the chance of yonder chap proving the *Shark*. Time, place, all sarcumstances point her out."

"True," said I; "but there are many schooners afloat."

"Ay, sir; but such a coincidence as that, your honor," said he, pointing, "sits too far on the werge of what's likely to fit it to sarve as part of a man's reckonings."

"I agree with Captain Finn," said Miss Laura; "besides, I feel here that it is the vessel we are pursuing." She laid her hand upon her bosom, and turned to cross the deck where her chair was.

I assisted her to her seat, with a peep out of the corner of my eye at Wilfrid, but there was no encouragement in his face; so, posting myself forward of the companion for the shelter of it, I lighted a

cigar and puffed away in silence till the luncheon-bell rang. Wilfrid did not come to table. When I returned on deck, after lingering nearly an hour below, partly with the wish to put some heart into Miss Jennings, who was pitifully dejected and nervous, and partly because I had had a long spell in the open air, and guessed that for some time yet there would be little enough of the schooner showing to be worth looking at—I say when I returned I found my cousin at the rail, with his arms tightly clasped on his breast, staring fixedly ahead, with a face grim, indeed, with the scowling contraction of the brows, but as collected in the determined severity of it as can be imagined. In fact, the sight of the schooner ahead had gathered all his faculties and wandering fancies and imaginations into a bunch, so to speak, and his mind as you saw it in his eyes, in the set of his lips, in the resolved and contained posture of his body, was as steady as that of the sanest man aboard us. It was without wonder, however, that I perceived we had risen the yacht to the line of her rail, when I noticed that she still kept under short canvas while the *Bride* was bursting through the surges to the impulse now even of the lower studding-sail. I took Finn's glass from him and made out a very handsome schooner, loftily sparred, with an immense head to her main-sail, the boom of which hung far over her quarter, while she swung in graceful floating leapings from hollow to ridge, with the round of her stern lifting black and flashing off each melting brow that underran her. We had, indeed, come up with her hand over hand, but then it would be almost the worst point of sailing for a fore-and-aft vessel, while we were carrying in our square rig alone pretty nearly the same surface of canvas that she had aboard. She was too far off as yet, even with the aid of the glass, to distinguish her people.

"What do you think, Finn, *now?*" said I, turning to him. He stood close beside me, with his long face working with anxiety, and straining his sight till I thought he would shoot his eyes out of their sockets.

"If she ain't the *Shark*," said he, "she's the Flying Dutchman. I had but one doubt. Yonder craft's boats are white, and my notion, but I couldn't swear to him, was that the *Shark's* boats were blue. I've been forrards among the men, a few of whom are acquainted with Lord Winterton's yacht, and one of 'em says her boats was blue, while th' others are willing to bet their lives that they are white."

"But the cut of her as she shows yonder proves her the *Shark*, you think?"

"I do, sir," he answered, emphatically.

"Well," said I, fetching a deep breath, "after *this*, hang me if I don't burn my book and agree with your mate, old Jacob Crimp, to believe in ghosts."

I levelled the glass again, and uttered an exclamation as I got the lenses to bear upon her.

"By thunder, Finn! yes, they look to have the scent of us now. See! there goes her gaff-topsail!"

Wilfrid caught my words.

"What are they doing?" he roared, bursting out in a mad way from his wrapt, iron-like silence; "making sail, d'ye say?" and he came running up to us with an odd thrusting forward of his head, as though straining to determine what was scarce more than a blur to his short sight. He snatched the glass from my hand. "Yes," he shouted, "and there goes her square-sail. By every saint, Finn, there's an end of *my* doubts;" and he closed the glass with a ringing of the tubes as he telescoped them that would have made you think the thing was in pieces in his hands.

"Shall I signal her to heave to, your honor?" exclaimed Finn, speaking with a doubtful eye as if measuring the distance.

"Ay, at once," cried Wilfrid, "but"—he cast a look at the gaff end—"she'll not see your colors there," pointing vehemently.

"I'll run 'em up at the fore, Sir Wilfrid; they blow out plain there, with the t'gallant halyards let go."

"Do as you will, only you must make her know my meaning," cried my cousin, and he went with an impetuous stride right aft, and resumed his former sentinel posture. Miss Jennings came timidly up to me.

"She is the *Shark*, then?" she said, in a low voice.

"All who know her are agreed, Finn says, saving here and there a doubt about the color of her boats," I answered.

She had a sailor's eye for sea effects, and instantly noticed that the schooner ahead had broadened her show of canvas.

"Do they suspect who we are?" she exclaimed, talking as though she were musing.

"No doubt the *Bride* is recognized, and they will run away if they can."

She looked at Wilfrid. "I do not like to speak to him," she exclaimed.

"He's killing Hope-Kennedy over and over again," said I; "his wife is before him, too, and he is haranguing her. Bless us, what a wonderful thing human imagination is!"

Up went the signal-flags forward in a string of balls, a man tugged, the bunting broke and streamed out in its variety of lustrous colors, every flag stiff as a sheet of horn hand painted, with the light of the sky past it showing through. I caught myself breathing short and hard while waiting for what was to follow this summons to the running craft. We had been crushing through it after her with the speed of a steamer, and, supposing her indeed to be the *Shark*, had literally verified Wilfrid's boast that the *Bride* could sail two feet to her one. But now that she had broadened her wings there was a threat of considerable tediousness in the chase.

"Do you suppose they have made out what yacht we are?" I asked Finn.

"Likely as not, sir. I shall think so for sartin if they don't shorten sail on reading that bunting up there. A stranger ud be willing enough to speak us. Why not? 'Tis understandable that Fidler should have kept his rags small in the face of the muck that was crawling in the nor'rad this morning. *He's* got nothin' to chase, and was always a careful man, so I've heard; and I tell ye, sir," said he, in a subdued way, speaking with his eyes fixed on Miss Jennings, who stood close with a white face, "that the sight of his easy canvas is almost the same to me as seeing of her ladyship a-sitting there," levelling his hairy finger at the yacht, "for, fond as she was of the water, let anything of a breeze come and she was always for having Sir Wilfrid reduce sail." He put the glass to his eye as he spoke. "Holloa!" he exclaimed, in an instant, "they're hoisting a color. There it goes—there it blows. Oh, my precious eyes! What is it? what is it?" he rumbled, talking to himself and working into the glass as though he would drive an eye clean through it. "Why, Mr. Monson," he bawled, "I'm Field-marshal the Duke o' Wellington, sir, if she ha'n't hoisted Dutch colors."

I snatched the glass from his hand, and sure enough made out the Batavian horizontal tricolor streaming from the peak signal-halyards like a fragment of rainbow against the lustrous curve of the main-sail.

"Wilfrid," I shouted, addressing him as he stood right aft, Miss Laura and I and the skipper being grouped a little forward of the main-rigging, "they've hoisted Dutch colors. She's a Hollander, not the *Shark!*" and I fetched something like a breath of relief, for it was a condition of suspense that you wanted to see an end to one fashion or another as quickly as possible.

He approached us slowly, took the glass from my hand in silence, and after a steady inspection turned to Finn.

"She's the *Shark*," he said, with a fierce snap in his manner that was like letting fly a pistol at the skipper.

"Your honor thinks so?"

"Don't you?"

"Them Dutch colors, Sir Wilfrid—"

"A device, a trick! What could confirm one's suspicions more than yonder display of a foreign ensign? She's the *Shark*, I tell you, and that color's a stratagem. What do you say, Charles?"

"I'm blest if I know what to think," said I; "if she's the *Shark*, why has she taken it so leisurely, only just now setting her square-sail and gaff-topsail, though we have been in sight for a long time, crowding down upon her under a press that should a while since have excited their suspicions? No need for them to hoist Dutch colors. If Fidler thinks he is chased, why don't he haul his wind, instead of keeping that fore-and-aft concern almost dead before it, as if he didn't know on which side to carry his main-boom?"

"She's the *Shark!*" thundered Wilfrid; "the flag she is flying is a lie. Finn," he cried, in a voice so savagely imperious, so confoundedly menacing, that I saw Miss Laura shrink, while the poor skipper gave a hop as though he had touched something red-hot, "are we overhauling that vessel?"

"Yes, Sir Wilfrid."

"How long will it take us to come within gunshot of her?"

Finn scratched the back of his head. "Mr. Monson, sir," said he, addressing me, "that gun 'll throw about three-quarters of a mile, I allow."

"Call it a mile," said I.

My cousin, with his nostrils distended to the widest, his respiration hysteric, his whole body on the move, and with that *raised* look in his face I have formerly described, stared at Finn as though he would slay him with his gaze. The skipper scratched the back of his head again.

"Well, your honor, if yon schooner holds as she is, and this here breeze don't take off, we ought to be within gunshot"—here he produced a silver watch of the size and shape of an apple—"in three hours' time, making it about half-past five."

"How far is she distant now?"

"Between three and four mile, Sir Wilfrid."

"Get your gun ready."

"A blank shot, your honor?"

"A blank devil, and be d——d to you. Load with ball. Who's your gunner?"

"We shall have to manage among us, Sir Wilfrid," turning a face of alarm upon me.

I was about to remonstrate, but there was an expression in the eye that my cousin bent on me at that instant that caused me to take Miss Jennings's hand as an invitation to her to cross the deck and walk.

"Charles," said he, "you told me that you knew something about gunnery. Will you handle that weapon yonder for me?"

"Wilf, it is madness," said I. "What! plump a shot into a craft that may not be the vessel you want! or, which in my opinion is just as bad, fire at with a chance of sinking a yacht with a lady aboard—that lady your wife—the woman whom you have embarked on this extraordinary adventure to rescue?"

My blood rose with my words. I dared not trust myself to reason with him. I crossed the deck with Miss Laura, and when we faced round I spied Wilfrid marching forward with Finn, and presently he was by the side of the gun gesticulating vehemently to a body of seamen who had collected round the piece.

Our signals were kept flying at the fore, while with the naked eye one could behold the minute spot of color steadfast at the schooner's peak. Onward she held her course, swarming steadily forward in long gliding courtesyings over each frothing surge that chased her, a most shapely and beautiful figure with a long flash of her low black wet side coming off the line of foam like a lift of dull sunshine, while on high soared the stretches of her sails with something of the airiness of a dragon-fly's wing in the milk-white softness of their spaces against the cloudy distance beyond. The time passed. Wilfrid remained forward. He stood upon one of the anchors swaying with folded arms to the movement of the yacht, stiff as a handspike, his face fixedly directed at the schooner ahead. The sailors hung about, chewing hard, spitting much, saying things to one another past the hairy backs of their hands, here and there a whiskered face looking stupid with a sort of dull wonder that was like an inane smile; but the fact is, from Cutbill down to the youngest hand all the seamen were puzzled, excited, and uneasy. The state of my cousin's mind showed plainly to the least penetrating of those nautical eyes. No man among them could imagine what wild directions would be delivered, and though I made no doubt the gun would be let fly when

the order to fire was given, I was pretty sure that should it come to a command to board the schooner by force the men would decline. Sometimes Finn was forward, fluttering near Wilfrid, sometimes aft, restlessly inspecting the compass or going feverishly to the side and looking over, when again and again I would hear him say in a voice as harsh as the sound of a carpenter's plane: "Glory, glory! blow, my sweet breeze, blow!" manifestly unconscious that he spoke aloud, but evidently obtaining some ease of mind from the ejaculation.

The sun went floating down westward, the breeze shifted a point or two towards him and then slackened, though it continued to blow a fine sailing wind, with a regular sea that had long before lost the early snappish and worrying hurl put into it by the first of the dark blast. Slowly we had been gaining upon the chase; minute after minute I had been expecting to see her put her helm down, flatten her sheets, and go staggering away into the reddening waters weltering and washing to the sky under the descending sun, on what she might know to be some best point of sailing. She kept her square-sail spread and the Dutch flag hoisted, and swung stubbornly ahead of us, making nothing of our signals, which still continued to fly. Through Finn's glass I could distinguish the figures of a few seamen forward and a couple of men pacing the weather side of the quarter-deck. Now and again a head would show at the rail as though watching us, but the suggestion I seemed to find in the general posture and air aboard the vessel was that of indifference, as though, in fact, we had long ago exhausted curiosity, and had been quitted as a spectacle for inboard jobs and the routine of such life as was led there.

"*Is* she the *Shark?*" I said to Finn.

"If she isn't," said he, "my eyes ain't mates, sir. It is but a question of the color of the quarter-boats."

"I see no name on the counter."

"No, sir; the *Shark* has no name painted on her."

"She's steered by a wheel," said I.

"So is the *Shark*, sir."

"What do the men forward who know the *Shark* think now?" I asked.

"Two of 'em say that it ain't her; the rest that it is. But ne'er a man aboard has that knowledge of her that ud give him conscience enough to take an oath upon it. Glory, glory, there she walks! By the piper that played afore Moses in the woods, your honor, 'twill be the fairest sunrise that ever I see that lights up the

end of this d——d mess, begging your pardon, Mr. Monson, and yours, miss, I'm sure. Fact is, I feel all of a-work inside me, like a brig's boom in a calm."

"I am unable to hold the glass steady," said Miss Laura. "Mr. Monson, I see no signs of a lady on board. Do you, Captain Finn?"

"Not so much as the twinkle of a hinch of petticoat, miss; but if her ladyship's there, of course she'd keep below."

"You know Captain Fidler?" said I.

"Very well, sir."

"There are two figures walking that quarter-deck. Is one of them he?"

"It's too fur off, sir. I've been looking and looking, but it's too fur off, I say, sir. Mind!" he suddenly roared, "they're a-going to fire," and he rolled hurriedly forward.

A moment or two after crash! went the gun. The blast broke in a dead shock upon the ear, and the smoke blew away over the lee bow as red with the tincturing of the sun as a veil of vapor at the edge of the crimson moon.

Miss Jennings shrieked. A long yearning gush of sea catching the *Bride* fair on the quarter swung her for a breath or two so as to hide the schooner, then to her next yaw, with Wilfrid still on the anchor, bending forward in impetuous headlong pose, and two or three sailors handling the gun, and a crowd of men in the head staring their hardest, the chase swept into view afresh.

"Ha!" I shouted, "she's heaving to."

"Oh, Mr. Monson!" cried Miss Jennings, clasping her hands.

Instantly Finn fell to thundering out orders.

"In stun'-sails! clew up the t'-garn sail! down square-s'l; down gaff-top-s'l!" Twenty such directions volleyed from him; in a thrice the decks of the *Bride* were as busy as an ant-hill; canvas rattled like musketry as it was hauled down; the strains of Cutbill's whistle shrilled high above the voices of the men, and a true ocean meaning came rolling into the commotion and clamor from the yeasty seething over the side, the singing of the wind past the ear, and the frisky motions of the yacht as she brought the sea on her bow heading, to Finn's yell to the man at the helm to range to windward of the schooner, that was now fast coming round, with her square-sail descending, her main-tack hoisting, and her top-sail withering, with her head to the west.

Distance is mightily deceptive at sea. How far off the schooner

was when they let drive at her from our forecastle I could not say. She was probably out of range; at all events she showed no damage as she came rounding to, away down upon the blue throbbing which had softened much within the hour, with a bronze gleam of sheathing, as she heeled over ere her canvas broke shivering in the eye of the wind, that wonderfully heightened the beauty of the long, low, black, most shapely hull, and the bland and elegant fabric of bright spar and radiant cloths shining white yet through the faint claret tinge in the atmosphere. Wilfrid came slowly aft, constantly looking at her as he walked. Under reduced canvas we swept down leisurely, sliding lightly upon the run of the surge, that was now on the beam. I examined her carefully through the glass, while Miss Laura stood by my side asking questions.

"Is she the *Shark?*"

"She may be. But such of her crew as I make out don't look to me to be English."

"Can you distinguish any woman on board?"

"Nothing approaching a woman. They mean to board us. They have a fine boat of a whaling pattern hanging to leeward, and there are sailors preparing to lower her. They are not Englishmen, I swear. I see a large fat man delivering orders apparently with sluggish gesticulations, which strike me as distinctly Dutch. How about her figure-head?" I continued, and I brought the glass to bear on the bows of the schooner. "Ha!" I cried, and looked around.

Wilfrid was watching the schooner right aft, where he had stood during the greater part of the chase, his arms folded as before, the same iron-hard expression on his countenance. I called to him:

"What is the figure-head of the *Shark?*"

He started, and answered: "I don't know. Ask Finn;" and so saying, walked towards us.

The skipper was giving some instructions to Crimp on the other side of the deck.

"Captain Finn!" I called.

"Sir?"

"What's the *Shark's* figure-head?"

"A gold ball in a cup shaped like a lily, your honor."

"Then, Wilfrid," I cried, shoving the glass into his hands, "your pursuit must carry you farther afield yet, for that craft's figure-head is a white effigy, apparently a woman's head."

His manner to the sudden, desperate surging of the disappointment in him fell in a breath into the old form of the craziness of his

moods of excitement. He looked through the glass, and then roared out:

"Finn!"

The skipper came bundling over to us.

"That vessel is not the *Shark*."

"I've been afeared not, sir, I've been afeared not," said Finn. "Like as two eggs, ends on; but now she's drawed out—'tain't only the figure-head. She ha'n't got the *Shark's* length of bowsprit."

Wilfrid dashed the telescope down onto the deck. "A fool's chase!" he exclaimed, scarcely intelligible for the way he spoke with his teeth set. "Heavenly God, what a disappointment! But it should have been Monday, it should have been Monday," and his gaze went in a scowling, wandering way from us to the schooner.

"I suppose you know," said I to Finn, "that they're standing by to lower a boat when we shall have come to a stand?"

"Ay, sir, I know it," exclaimed Finn, who had picked up his telescope and was feeling over it in a nervous, broken-down manner as though he feared it was injured, but durst not look to make sure while Wilfrid stood nigh. "I shall heave to to looard for their convenience;" and with that he walked aft to the wheel.

Wilfrid looked crushed, with something absolutely lifeless in the dull leaden blank of his eyes. It was perhaps fortunate for us, if not for him, that this sudden prodigious blow of disappointment should have completed the sense of physical and mental exhaustion which had inevitably attended the war of emotions that had been going on all day in his weak mind, otherwise Heaven alone knows what miserable and painful display might have followed this failure of his expectations. I was much affected by his manner, and endeavored to console him, but he motioned me to silence with a gesture of the hand, and seated himself on the skylight, where he remained with his arms folded and his eyes fixed on the deck, apparently heeding nothing that passed around him.

"He'll rally after a little," said I to Miss Laura, who furtively watched him with eyes sad with the shadow of tears.

"It ought to have been the *Shark*, Mr. Monson," she exclaimed, in a low voice. "My cowardly heart all day has been praying otherwise; and now I would give ten years of my life that my sister were there—for his sake, for mine, and for yours, too, that this wretched voyage of expectation and mistakes and superstitions, oh, and I do not know what else," she added, with a little toss of her arms, like a wringing of her hands, "might come to an end."

The sailors forward were eying the vessel steadily as we approached her. By this time all hands were aware of the blunder that had been made, and one seemed to see a kind of suspense in the posture of the fellows, with a half-grin in it, too, as though 'twas an incident to be as much laughed at as wondered at. The breeze continued to slacken, the seas were momentarily losing weight as they rolled, the gushing of the western crimson floated in the air like a delicate red smoke, with a heap of flame-colored clouds resting broodingly upon the southern confines and the new moon over the sun, a wonder for the bright sharpness of its curve in such a hectic as she stood in. We ran down and hove to within easy hailing distance to leeward of the schooner, but it was plain that Mynheer had no notion of talking to us from over his rail. His fine large boat hung manned at the davits as we rounded to, with a gang of fellows at either fall, and no sooner was our way arrested than down slowly sank the six-oared fabric. The oars sparkled in the red light, and away she came for us.

"Charles!" called my cousin from the skylight. I went to him. "I'm too ill to be worried," said he; "represent me, dear boy, will you? Get us out of this mess as best you can, and as quickly."

He spoke faintly, and slightly staggered after he had risen. Miss Jennings, seeing this, took his arm, and together they went below.

I stood at the gangway along with friend Finn. 'Twas a ludicrous position to be in, and what excuses to make I knew not, unless it was to come to my explaining the full motive and meaning of our expedition—a sort of candor I did not like the idea of. In the stern-sheets of the approaching boat was the large fat man I had previously taken notice of on the schooner's quarter-deck. His face was as round as the moon, with a smudge of bristly yellow mustache under a bottle-shaped nose; his person was the completest pudding of a figure that can be imagined, as though forsooth a huge suit of clothes had been filled out with suet. He wore a blue cap with a shovel-shaped peak and a piece of gold lace on it going from one brass button to the other.

"That's not Fidler," said I to Finn.

"Fidler!" he ejaculated, staring with all his might at the boat; "there's twenty Fidlers in that man, your honor. Why, Fidler's a mere rib, lean enough to shelter himself under the lee of a rope-yarn."

The boat came fizzing alongside handsomely, and the fat man, watching his opportunity, planted himself upon the steps and rose like a whale to our deck, upon which he stepped. In a very phlegmatic, leisurely way he stood staring around him for a little out of a pair

of small, greenish, expressionless eyes, and with a countenance that discovered no signs of any sort of emotion; then in the deepest voice I ever heard in a man, a tone that literally vibrated upon the ear like the low note of a church organ, he said in Dutch, "Who speaks my language?"

I knew a few sentences in German, enough to enable me to understand his question, but by no means enough to converse with, even if the man spoke that tongue, so I said bluntly in English, "No one, sir."

He wheezed a bit, looking stolidly at me, and exclaimed, "You are captain?"

I motioned to Finn.

"Vy you vire ot me?" he demanded, turning his fat, emotionless face upon the skipper.

Finn touched his cap. "Heartily sorry, sir; 'twas all a blunder, happening through our mistaking you for another craft. I'm very willing to 'pologize and do whatever's right."

The Dutchman listened apathetically, then slowly bringing his fist of the shape, if not the hue, of a leg of beef to his vast spread of breast, he exclaimed in a voice even deeper than his former utterance, "Vot I ask is vy you vire ot me?"

Finn substantially repeated his former apology. The Dutchman gazed at him dully, with an expression of glassiness in his eyes.

"Vot schip dis?"

Finn answered with alacrity, "The schooner-yacht *Bride*, sir."

"Zhe vight vor herr nation?" sending a lethargic glance at our mast-head as if in search of a pennant.

"No, sir," cried Finn; "we're a pleasure vessel."

"Dere is no var," exclaimed the Dutchman, shaking his head, "between mine coundry und yours."

"Ho no, sir," exclaimed Finn.

"Den I ask," said the Dutchman, in a voice like a trombone, "vy you vire ot me?"

This promised no end. I hastily whispered to Finn, "Leave him to me. Turn to quietly and trim sail and get way upon the vessel. He'll take no other hint, I fear." Finn sneaked off. "Pardon me, sir," said I, "you'll have heard from the captain that our firing at you was a blunder into which we were led by mistaking your ship. We desire to tender you our humble apology, which I trust you will see your way to accept without delay, as we are very desirous of proceeding on our voyage."

He looked at me with a motionless head and a face as vacant of

human intelligence as a cloud, with its fat, its paleness, its Alp upon Alp of chin, then ponderously and slowly putting his hand into his breast, he pulled out a great pocket-book, and said, "Vot dis schip's name?"

"The *Bridesmaid*," said I.

He wrote down the word, wheezing laboriously.

"Your captain name?"

"Fidler," I answered.

This he entered.

"Owner?"

"Colonel Hope-Kennedy."

"Ow you shpell?"

I dictated, and he put down the letters as I delivered them.

"Vhere you vrom?"

"Limerick," I answered.

"Ow you shpell?" He got the word, and then said, "Vere you boun'?"

"To the Solomon Group," I answered.

This I had to spell for him, too. He wrote with such imperturbability, with such a ponderosity of phlegmatic manner in his posture, with such whale-like asthmatic wheezings, broken only by the trembling notes of his deep, deep voice, that again and again I was nearly exploding with laughter; and, indeed, had I caught anybody's eye but his, I must certainly have whipped out with the merriment that was almost suffocating me. He slowly returned the note-book to his pocket, and exclaimed, "Goot; you hear more of dis," and with that walked to the gangway.

"Pray forgive me," said I, following him and speaking very courteously; "will you kindly tell me the name of your ship?"

He regarded me with a kind of scowl as he hung an instant in the gangway—the only expression approaching intelligence that entered his face—and said, "*Malvina.*"

"And, pray, where are you bound to, sir?"

"Curaçoa."

"Are you the owner, sir?"

"Captain," he responded, with an emphatic nod; and so saying, he put his foot on the ladder and entered his boat.

Five minutes later we were breaking the seas afresh, making a more southerly course than was needful by two points, that we might give as wide a berth as soon as possible to the Dutch schooner, that, at the time I went below to dinner, was sliding away west-south-west a league distant under every cloth that she had to hoist.

CHAPTER XIX.

A MYSTERIOUS VOICE.

This was an incident to give one a deal to think and talk about. Certainly little imaginable could be stranger than that we, being in chase of a fore-and-aft schooner-yacht, should fall in with a vessel so resembling the object of our pursuit as to deceive the sight of the men who professed to know the *Shark* well. I should have been glad to ask the Dutchman about his craft, yet it was a matter of no moment whatever. The thing had happened; it was passing strange, and there was an end. Likely enough she was an English vessel purchased for some opulent trader in the island of Curaçoa, and on her way to that possession in charge of the porpoise who had honored us with a visit. The incident signified only as a disappointment. All dinner-time I had been fretting over it, for since sunrise I had been thinking of the vessel ahead as the *Shark;* counted, in a sort of unreasoning, mechanical, silent way, upon capturing Lady Monson out of her, which, of course, would mean a shift of helm for us and home again.

Wilfrid bore the blow better than I had dared to expect. He made a good dinner, for which he had the excuse of having fasted since breakfast, and broke into a noisy roar of laughter out of the air of gloomy resentment with which he had arrived from his cabin on my describing the Dutchman, and repeating his questions and my answers. In short, his weak mind came to his rescue. With the schooner had vanished an inspiration of thought that had served his intellect as an anchor to ride by. His imagination was now fluent again, loose, draining here and there like water on the decks of a rolling ship; and though he spoke with vehement bitterness of his disappointment, and with indignation and rage even of Finn's ignorance in pursuing a stranger throughout the day, he dwelt very briefly at a time on the subject. Indeed, his talk was just an aimless stride from one thing to another. If he recurred to the Dutch schooner, it was as if by mere chance; and, though the subject would blacken his mood, in a very short while he had passed on to other matters with a cleared face. Miss Laura afterwards said to me that the strain

of the day had been too great for him, and that when the tension was relaxed the strings of the instrument of his mind dropped into slack fibres, out of which his reason could fiddle but very little music. Well, I could have wished it thus for everybody's sake. Better as it was than that he should have shrunk away scowling and hugging a dark mantle of madness to him, and exaggerated the abominably uncomfortable behavior I had witnessed all day.

He arrived on deck after dinner to smoke a cigar, and while I sat with Miss Jennings—for it was a quiet night after the stormy blowing of the day, with a tropic tenderness of temperature in the sweet gushing of the southerly wind, the curl of moon gone, and the large stars trembling through the film of their own radiance like dew-drops in gossamer—I could hear my cousin chatting briskly near the wheel with Finn with intonations of voice that curiously proclaimed the variableness of his moods to the ear, sometimes speaking with heat, sometimes in a note of sullen expostulation, sometimes surprising the attention with a loud ha, ha, that came floating back again to the deck in echoes out of the silent canvas, while Finn's deep sea-note rumbled a running commentary as the baronet talked.

"What do you think of this chase now?" said I to Miss Laura.

"I wish it were over," she answered. "I want to see my sister rescued from the wretch she has run away with, Mr. Monson, but this sort of approaching her recovery is dreadful."

"It is worse than dreadful," said I; "it is tedious with the threat of a neat little tragical complication by-and-by—any day, indeed—if Wilfrid doesn't stow that gun in his hold or heave it overboard. The Dutchman might very well have answered our shot had he mounted a piece or two or driven alongside and plied us, as they used to say, with small-arms. Now, one isn't here for *that* sort of thing, Miss Jennings."

"No. Is there no way of losing the cannon?"

I laughed. "If Wilfrid will reserve his fire until he is sure of the *Shark*, instead of blazing away at the first craft that resembles her, the weapon might yet prove something to usefully serve his turn; for I doubt if anything will hinder the colonel from cracking on when he catches sight of us short of iron messages from the forecastle there. But we shall not meet with the *Shark* this side of the Cape, if *there*."

"I fear it will prove a long voyage," said she, with the sparkle of the starlight in her eyes.

"You will be glad to return?"

"Not without my sister."

"But shall you be willing, Miss Jennings, supposing us to arrive at Cape Town without falling in with the *Shark*, to persevere in this very singular and unpromising sea quest?"

"I will remain with Wilfrid, certainly," she answered, quietly. "My duty is to help him in this search, and where he goes I shall go."

"But he will be acting cruelly to carry you on from the Cape unless able to certainly tell where to find the fugitives, fixing the date, too, for that matter."

"I see you will leave us at the Cape, Mr. Monson," she exclaimed, with an accent that could only come from the movement of the lips in a smile.

"Not unless I prevail upon you to accompany me home," said I.

She shook her head lightly, but made no answer. Perhaps it was her silence that rendered me sensible of the unpremeditated significance of my speech. "Well," said I, lighting a second cigar, "while you feel it your duty to stick to my cousin I shall feel it mine to stick to you. Not likely I should leave you alone with him."

At that instant the harsh, surly voice of old Jacob Crimp hailed the skipper, who still stood aft talking with Wilfrid. All was in darkness forward; it was hard upon two bells; the canvas rose as elusive to the eye in its wanness as a dim light in windy gloom far out at sea, and the shadow of it plunged a dye as opaque as blindness into the obscurity from the main-mast to the forecastle-rail, where the stars were sliding up and down like a dance of fire-flies to the quiet lift and fall of the close-hauled yacht upon the invisible folds brimming to her port bow.

"Capt'n!" sung out Crimp's melodious voice—plaintive as the notes of a knife upon a revolving grindstone—from the heart of the murkiness somewhere near the galley.

"Holloa!" answered Finn.

"Can I speak a word with ye?"

"Who is it wants me?"

"The mate."

"Tell him to come aft," Wilfrid bawled out. "If there is anything wrong I must know it. Step aft, Crimp, step aft, d'ye hear?" he cried.

Old Jacob's stunted figure came out of the darkness, and walked along to where Finn stood.

"What is the matter, I wonder?" said Miss Laura.

I cocked my ear, for there is something in a hail of this sort at sea on a dark night to put an alertness into one's instincts and nerves. Besides, there was no sounder snorer on board than old Jacob, and his merely coming up on deck during his watch below, though he should have stood mute as a ghost, was something to raise a little uneasy sense of expectation. His voice rumbled, but I could not hear what he said. Wilfrid shouted, "*What* d'ye say?" with an expression of astonishment and incredulity. Finn laughed in a sneering way, while old Jacob again rumbled out with some sentence. Then my cousin bawled out, "Charles, Charles, come here, will you?"

"What the deuce is the matter *now?*" said I, and Miss Laura followed me as I went over to the group.

"Here's a nice pickle we're in, Charles," cried Wilfrid. "What think you? Crimp swears the yacht's haunted."

"So she be," said Crimp.

"Pity your mother didn't sell vinegar, Jacob, that you might have stayed at home to bottle it off," exclaimed Finn. "Haunted! That may do for the marines, but you won't get the sailors to believe it."

"That's just what they do, then," remarked Crimp. "All the watch below have heard it, and can't sleep in consequence."

"Heard what?" I asked.

"The woice," answered Jacob; "the same as you and me heard t'other night."

"Have *you* heard a voice, Charles?" exclaimed Wilfrid, suddenly fetching a deep breath.

"A mere fancy," said I.

"Ye didn't like it, anyhow," said Crimp, gruffly, as though speaking aside.

"For God's sake tell me about this voice, Charles," cried Wilfrid, agitated all on a sudden, and restless as a dog-vane, with the twitching of his figure and the shifting of his weight from one leg to another.

I related the incident, making light of it, and tried to persuade him that the mere circumstance of my having said nothing about it proved that I regarded it as a deceit of the hearing.

"Did you know of this, Laura?" said Wilfrid.

"As a joke only," she answered.

"A joke," cried he, breathing deep again. "The voice sounded off the sea, hey? and two of you heard it? What did it say?" and I could see him by the starlight looking towards the starboard

quarter in the direction whence the syllables had floated to us. "What did it say?" he repeated.

"Why, that this here yacht was cussed," rattled out Jacob, defiantly; "and dum me if I don't think she be, now that the blooming corpse belonging to the wreck is a-jawing and a-threatening of all hands down in the forepeak."

"What is this man talking about?" I exclaimed, believing that he must either be drunk or cracked.

"He's come aft to tell us, Mr. Monson," answered Finn, "that he and the others of the watch below have been disturbed by a woice in the hold saying that there's a ghost aboard, and that the only way to get rid of him is to sail straight away home and end this woyage, which, saving the lady's presence, it calls blarsted nonsense."

I observed old Jacob's head vigorously nodding.

"*You've* heard the voice, too, Charles?" said Wilfrid, flitting in short, agitated strides to and fro beside us.

"Mr. Monson heard it twice," growled Jacob; "off the wreck as well as off the quarter."

"Speak when you're spoken to," cried Finn. "Why, spit me, Mr. Monson, if it ain't old Jacob's grandmother as has signed on instead of Crimp himself."

"Look here," said Crimp, "let them what disbelieves step forrards and listen themselves."

"Charles, inquire into this matter with Finn, will you?" exclaimed Wilfrid. "I—I—" he stopped and passed his hand through Miss Jennings's arm, then said, with a short, nervous laugh, "The sound of a supernatural voice would cost me a night's rest."

"Come along, Finn," said I. "Come along, Crimp. If there be a ghost, as our friend here says, he must promptly be laid by the heels and despatched to the Red Sea."

"What did 'ee want to go and tell Sir Wilfrid about that woice you and Mr. Monson heard t'other night?" grumbled Finn, as we moved forward into the darkness towards the forehatch.

"'Cause it's true," answered Crimp, in his sullenest manner. "'Sides, it's time to end this here galliwanting ramble, seems to me, if we're going to be talked to and cursed by sperrits."

Finn made no answer. We arrived at the forehatch and descended. The *Bride's* forecastle was a large one for a vessel of her size. On either hand abaft was a small cabin partially bulkheaded off from the sailors' sleeping-room, respectively occupied by Jacob Crimp and Cutbill. Whether the mate ate with the captain, whose berth was

just forward of the one that had been occupied by Muffin, with access by means of a sliding-door to a small living-room through which he could pass into the forecastle, I cannot say. It was a rough scene to light upon after the elegance, glitter, and rich dyes of the fittings of our quarters aft, but the more picturesque for that quality as I found it now, at least on viewing the homely and coarse interior by the light of a small oil lamp of the shape of a block-tin coffee-pot, with a greasy sort of flame coming out of the spout, and burning darkly into a corkscrew of smoke that wound hot and ill-flavored to the upper-deck. There were bunks for the seamen, and two or three hammocks slung right forward; suits of oil-skins hung by nails against the stanchions, and swung to the motion of the vessel, like the bodies of suicides swayed by the wind. The deck was encumbered by sea-chests cleated or otherwise secured. Here and there glimmering through the twilight, in a bunk, I took notice of a little framed picture, a pipe-rack, with other odds and ends, trifling home memorials, and the artless conveniences with which poor Jack equips himself. There were seamen lying in their beds, a vision of leathery noses forking up out of a hedge of whisker, with bright wide-awake eyes that made one think of glowworms in a bird's-nest; other equally hairy-faced figures in drawers and with naked feet, huge bare arms dark with moss and prickings in ink, sat with their legs over the edge of their bunks. It was with difficulty that I controlled my gravity when on casting a hurried glance round the forecastle on entering it my gaze lighted on the visage of Muffin, whose yellowness in the dull lamplight showed with the spectral hue of ashes. His bunk was well forward; his bare legs hung from the edge like a couple of broomsticks; his hands were clasped; his head slightly on one side; his posture one of alarm, amid which, however, there still lurked a native quality of valet-like sleekness, with a suggestion of a respectful apology for feeling nervous. Sweet as the *Bride* was, no doubt, as a pleasure vessel, compared with other craft of those times, the odor of this interior, improved as it was by the flaring snuff of the lamp, not to mention a decidedly warm night, was by no means of the most delicious. Added to this was the lift and fall of the yacht's bows, which one felt here so strongly that, coming fresh from the tender heavings of the after-deck, you would have imagined a lively head-sea had sprung up on a sudden. That Muffin should have stood it astonished me. Sleeping as he did, right in the "eyes," he got the very full of the motion. Besides, such an atmosphere as this must needs prove the severer as a hard-

ship after the luminous and flower-sweetened air of the cabin. Finn took a leisurely survey of the occupants of the bunks.

"Well, lads," said he, "what's the meaning of this here talk about a woice? Mr. Crimp's just come aft to tell me there's somewhat a-speaking underfoot here."

"That's right, sir," remarked Cutbill, who stood bolt-upright, like a sentry, in the entrance to his little berth. "I beg your pardon, Mr. Monson, sir, but it's nigh hand the same sort o' speech as hailed us from the wreck."

"'Tis the *same*," said a deep voice from one of the bunks.

"Rats!" quoth Finn, contemptuously.

"Never yet met with the rat as could damn a man's eyes in English," grunted Crimp.

"Nor in any other lingo, Mr. Crimp," said a singular-looking seaman, whose face I had before taken notice of as resembling the skin of an over-ripe lemon. He lay on the small of his back blinking at us, and his countenance in that light, that was rendered confusing by the sliding of shadows to the swing of the yacht, made one think of a melon half buried in a blanket.

"Well, but see here, my lads," exclaimed Finn, in a voice of expostulation, "what did this here woice say? *That's* what I want to know. What did it *say*, men?"

"I told 'ee," growled Crimp.

But old Jacob's interpretation did not tally with that of the others. The sailors were generally agreed that the voice had exclaimed in effect that the yacht was cursed, and that their business was to make haste and sail her home; but some had apparently heard more than others, while a few again manifestly embellished, with a notion, perhaps, of making the most of it; but there could be no question whatever that human syllables, very plainly articulated, had sounded from out of the hold; all hands were agreed as to *that*, and proof conclusive as to the sincerity of the men might have been found in the looks of them, one and all.

"Silence now!" cried Finn; "let's listen."

We all strained our ears. Nothing broke the silence but the sulky wash of the sea outside, seething dully, the half-stifled respirations of the sailors, who found it difficult to control their hurricane lungs, and the familiar creaking noises breaking out in various parts of the fabric to her swayings. Impressed as I was by the agreement among the men—and I had come besides to this forecastle with the memory very fresh in me of the mysterious voices I had before

heard—I could scarcely hold my face as I stood listening, with my eye glancing from one hairy countenance to another. The variety of the Jacks' postures, the knowing cock of a head here and there, the unwinking stare, the strained hearkening attitude, the illustration of superstitious emotions by expressions which were rendered grotesque by the swing of the lamp, the half-suffocated looks of some of the fellows who were trying to draw their breaths softly, formed a picture to appeal irresistibly to one's sense of the ridiculous.

Three minutes passed; it might have been hours, so long the time seemed.

"Seems it's done jawing, whatever it is," said Finn.

We listened again.

"Tell 'ee it's rats, lads," said Finn.

"As the cuss was meant for this 'ere craft," exclaimed the deep voice that had before spoken, "perhaps if her owner was to come below, the sperrit, if so be it's *that*, ud tarn to and talk out again."

"Tell 'ee it's rats!" cried Finn, scornfully.

"Rats!" exclaimed Crimp, with great irritation, "if that's all, why don't Sir Wilfrid lay forrard and listen for hisself?"

"Won't he come?" said one of the men.

"Come! no," rattled out Crimp, "and why? 'Cause he knows it's the truth."

"Well," exclaimed Cutbill, "speaking with all proper respect, seems to me that what's meat for the dawg ought to be meat for the man in the likes of such a humble-come-tumble out of the main-top into the main-hold sort o' job as this."

There was now some grumbling. Crimp had enabled the men to guess that Wilfrid was afraid to enter the forecastle, and sundry sarcasms, with a mutinous touch in them, passed from bunk to bunk.

"Avast!" roared Finn: "listen if he'll speak now."

But no sound resembling a human syllable entered the stillness.

"It's rats, I tell 'ee," shouted the skipper, making to go on deck. "Come along, Mr. Monson. Blamed now if I believe that Jacob *is* the only grandmother as has signed articles for this here woyage."

But as I followed him the exclamations I caught determined me on advising Wilfrid to come forward. He had left Miss Jennings standing alone at the rail and was walking swiftly here and there, with an irritability of gesture that was a sure symptom in him of a troubled and active imagination. On catching sight of me as I emerged out of the blind shadow on the forward part of the yacht, he cried out, eagerly;

"Well, what have you heard? Is it a voice, Charles?"

"There is nothing to hear," I answered; "Finn disrespectfully calls it rats."

"What else, your honor?" exclaimed Finn; "the squeaking of rats ain't unlike a sort o' language. Put the noise they make along with the straining of bulkheads and the like of such sounds, and let the boiling be listened to by a parcel of ignorant sailors, and I allow ye'll get what might be tarmed a supernatural woice."

Wilfrid burst into one of his great laughs, but immediately after said, in a grave and hollow tone, "But you, Charles, have before heard something preternatural in the shape of a hail off yonder quarter, and from the dead man you found on the wreck."

"Fancy, mere fancy," I said. "Gracious mercy! am I making this voyage to carry home with me a belief in ghosts? But I wish you'd go into the forecastle with Finn, Wilfrid, and listen for yourself. Make your mind easy; there's nothing to be heard. A visit from you will pacify the men. They hold that you admit the truth of what they allege by declining to satisfy yourself by listening. Their temper is not of the sweetest. They should be soothed, I think, when it is to be so easily done."

He hung in the wind, and said, in a hesitating way, "What do you think, Finn?"

"Well, Sir Wilfrid, since, as Mr. Monson says, there's nothin' to hear, and nothin', therefore, to cause ye any agitation, I dorn't doubt that a wisit from you would please the sailors and calm down their minds. I'm bound to say they're oneasy—yes, I'm bound to say that."

"Come, then," cried my cousin; and he strode impetuously into the darkness, followed by the skipper.

I gave Miss Laura my arm, and we started on a little walk. The awning was furled, and the dew everywhere sparkled like hoar-frost. The quiet night wind sighed in the rigging, and the yacht, a point or two off her course, and every sheet flat aft, softly broke through the black, quiet waters with dull puffs of phosphor at times sneaking by like the eyes of secret shapes risen close to the surface to survey us. The sheen of the binnacle light touched a portion of the figure of the fellow at the wheel, and threw him and a segment of the circle whose spokes he held out upon the clear, fine, spangled dusk in phantasmal yellow outlines, dim as the impression left on the retina by an object when the eyelid is closed upon it. My fair companion and I talked of the incidents of the day. One thing was

following another rapidly, I said. 'Twas like a magic-lantern show; scarcely had one picture faded out when something fresh was brightening in its room.

"What manner of sound could it be," she asked, "that the sailors have interpreted into cursings and dreadful warnings?"

"It was no fancy on *my* part, anyway," said I, "let me put what face I will on it to Wilfrid. If what the men profess to hear be half as distinct as what *I* heard, there must be some kind of sorcery at work, I'll swear."

I led her to the starboard quarter, where I had stood with Crimp, and repeated the story. The darkness gave my recital of the incident the complexion it wanted; a tremor passed through her hand into my arm. It was enough to make a very nightmare of the gloom, warm as it was with the dew-laden, southerly breathing, and delicate too with the small, fine light trembled into it by the stars, to think of a hail sounding out of it from a phantasm as shapeless as any dye of gloom upon the canvas of the night. Ten minutes passed; I then discerned the figures of Wilfrid and Finn coming aft. My cousin's deep breathing was audible when he was still at a distance.

"Well, what news?" I called, cheerily.

Wilfrid drew close and exclaimed, "It is true, I have heard it."

"Ha!" said I, turning upon Finn.

"By all that is blue, then, Mr. Monson, sir," exclaimed the worthy fellow, "there *is* somewhat a-talking below."

"What does it say?" asked Miss Jennings, showing herself all on a sudden thoroughly frightened.

"What I heard," said Wilfrid, in his most raven note, "was this: '*The yacht is cursed. Sail her home! Sail her home!*'"

"'Twas as plain, Mr. Monson, as his honor's own voice," said Finn, in a profoundly despondent way.

"D'ye think, Finn," said I, "that it is a trick played off upon the crew by some skylarking son of a gun forward?"

His head wagged against the stars. "I wish I could believe it, sir. The woice was underfoot. There's nobody belonging to the ship there. There's no man a-missing. 'Sides, 'tain't a human woice. Never could ha' believed it." He pulled out his pocket-handkerchief and polished his brow.

"Well," I exclaimed, "so long as the thing, whatever it be, keeps forward—the deuce of it is, I've heard such sounds myself twice. It can't be fancy, then. Yet, confound it all, Wilf, there can be nothing supernatural about it either. What is it? Shall I explore

the yacht forward? Give me a lantern, and I'll overhaul her to my own satisfaction anyway."

"You may set us on fire," said Wilfrid; "let the matter rest for to-night. To-morrow, Finn, you can rummage the yacht." He started violently. "*What* can it be, though? Are we veritably haunted by the ghost of the Portuguese?" He tried to laugh, but the dryness of the utterance seemed to half choke him.

"Well, let us wait for daylight, as you say," cried I.

"I am going below for some seltzer and brandy," said Wilfrid. "Finn, you may tell the steward to give the men a glass of grog apiece. What can it be?" he muttered, and his long figure then flitted to the companion, through which he vanished.

It was evident the thing had not yet had time to work in him. He was more astonished than terrified, but I guessed that superstition would soon be active in him, and that there was a bad night before him of feverish imaginings and restless wandering. I could not have guessed how frightened Miss Jennings was until I conducted her below, shortly after Wilfrid had left the deck, where I was able to observe her scared white face, the bewildered expression in her eyes, and a dryness of her cherry underlip that kept her biting upon it. Her maid shared her berth, and I was mighty thankful to feel that the sweet creature had a companion. Indeed, had she been alone, one might have wagered that she would not have gone to bed that night. My cousin drank freely, but, for all that, a gloom of spirits settled upon him as slowly and surely as a fog thickens out the atmosphere and darkens down upon the view. He talked with heat and excitement of the strange voice at the first going off, but after a little he grew morose, absent-minded, with symptoms of temper that made me extremely weary, and I fetched a breath with a positive sigh of relief when he abruptly rose, bade us brusquely good-night, and went in long, melodramatic strides to his cabin.

I did my best to inspirit Miss Jennings, but I was not very successful. It may be that I was more half-hearted in my manner of going to work than I was conscious of. It never could come to my telling her more than that we might be quite sure, if we could only solve the mystery of the sounds which had frightened all hands forward, and aft, too, for the matter of that, we should be heartily ashamed of our fears in the face of the abject commonplace of the disclosure. She shook her head.

"It might be as you say," she said; "but if this strange voice continues to be heard—indeed, should it not speak again, and yet

remain unriddled—what shall we think? I am frightened, I own it. I do not believe in spirits, Mr. Monson, in haunting shadows, and other inventions of old nurses; but I cannot forget that *you* have heard such a voice as this twice—you who are so—so—"

"Stupid," said I.

"Matter-of-fact, Mr. Monson."

But talking about the thing was not going to help her nerves. She went to bed at ten o'clock, and feeling too sleepy for a yarn with Finn, I withdrew to my cabin. I found myself a bit restless, however, when I came to put my head upon the pillow, and would catch myself listening, and sometimes I fancied I could hear a faint sound as of a person talking in a low voice. Then it was I would curse myself for a fool, and turn angrily in my bed. Yet for all that, I would fall a-listening again. It was quiet weather still, as it had been since sundown. In the blackness of my cabin, I could see a bright star sliding up and down the ebony of the glass of the scuttle, with a pause at intervals, when it would beam steadfastly and intelligently upon me as though it were a human eye. Now and again the water went away from the side in a stifled sob. I could have prayed for such another squall as I have described to burst upon us, for the life that would come to the spirit out of the lightning-flash, the roar of thunder, the shriek of wind, the fierce blow of the black surge, and the tempestuous hiss of its dissolving spume. I cudgelled my wits for a solution of the voice, but to no purpose. It was ridiculous to suppose that a man lay hidden below. For what sailor of the crew but would not be quickly missed? And then again I had but to consider to understand what I had not thought of on deck; I mean that even if a pair of hurricane lungs were secreted in the hold, it was scarce conceivable that their utmost volume of sound could penetrate through the thick, well-calked planking of the forecastle deck.

At last I fell asleep.

CHAPTER XX.

MUFFIN IS PUNISHED.

It was seven o'clock when I awoke. I at once rose, bathed, and went on deck, thinking, as I passed through the cabin and observed the brilliant effect of the sunshine streaming through port-hole and skylight in rippling silver upon the shining bulkheads, the radiant lamps, the mirrors, rich carpet, and elegant draperies of the cabin, what a very insignificant figure a night fear cuts by daylight. The wind was north-east, a merry shining morning, with a wide blue heaven full of liquid lustre softened by many small white clouds blowing into the south-west, and rich as prisms with the rainbow lights that kindled in their skirts as they sailed past the sun. The firm line of the ocean went round the sky tenantless. The yacht was making good way, running smoothly over the crisping and crackling waters, and under an airy spread of studding-sail which trembled a light into the water far beyond her side. Finn was on deck, standing aft with his back upon the companion. I walked leisurely over to him, with vitality in the very last recesses of my being stirred by the exquisite sweetness and freshness of the long, pure sunlit gushing of the wind.

"Good-morning, Captain Finn." He turned and touched his cap. "How long is this delicious weather going to last, I wonder? Nothing in sight, eh? Bless us, captain, when are we going to run the *Shark* into view?"

He looked at me with a curious expression which his smile, that was always in the middle of his face, rendered exceedingly odd, and said, "Did ye hear anything like a mysterious woice, sir, last night after you'd turned in?"

"I was for fancying," I answered, "that the atmosphere crawled with indistinguishable whispers. But I suppose without imagination there would be no lunatic asylums."

He said, preserving his odd look, "The sperrit's discovered, sir."

"Gammon!" I exclaimed.

"Ay! we've got hold of the woice!" he cried, gleefully. "Did ye ever see a ghost, Mr. Monson, sir? Look! *There's* the corpse as

belonged to the wreck, and *there's* the happarition as was a-cursing this yacht last night in the forepeak, and your honor may take it that *there* is the invisible shape whose hail from off yon quarter has given old Jacob the blues;" and all the time that he spoke he was pointing to the fore-rigging just under the cross-trees.

I had before lightly glanced at a man up there, but had given him no heed whatever, as I supposed him to be a sailor at work. But now I looked again, shading my eyes.

"Muffin!" I cried, with a gasp of astonishment. "Do you mean to say—" and I veritably staggered as the full truth and absurdity of the thing rushed upon me.

He hung in the rigging facing seaward, and there was turn upon turn of rope round his arms and legs; indeed, he was as snugly secured to the shrouds as if he had been a sample of chafing-gear. The sailors had compassionately jammed his hat down on his head, and, in the shadow of the brim of it, his face looked of the sickly yellow hue of tallow. But he was too high to enable me to witness the expression he wore. He had nothing on but his shirt and a pair of grimy duck trousers rolled to above his knees.

"What do you think of him as a sperrit, sir?" cried Finn, with a loud, hoarse laugh, which caused the sailors at work forward to look up grinning at Muffin, who hung as motionless in the shrouds as if he lay in a faint there.

"How long has he been seized aloft?" said I, with something of a pang coming to me out of the sight of him, for there followed close on my first emotion of astonishment a sort of admiration for the outlandish genius of the creature that worked in me like a feeling of pity.

"Since dawn," answered Finn. "The men put him where he is. I let 'em have their way. I was afeared they might have used him in an uglier fashion, sir. Jack don't like to be made a fool of, your honor. Old Jacob, I am told, felt blood-thirsty. Ye see, ye can't take a view of them sailors, 'specially such a chap as Cutbill, and think of 'em as lambs."

"He must be an amazingly clever ventriloquist, though," said I. "Of course! All's as clear as daylight now. He was leaning over the rail when Crimp and I were talking on that night we heard the voice. I caught sight of him in the cabin a minute after the cry had sounded. The dexterous rogue! he must have sneaked with amazing swiftness below. A consummate actor, indeed! How was he discovered?"

"Why," answered Finn, with a slow shake of laughter, "there's a chap named Harry Blake as occupies the bunk just over him. Blake, like O'Connor, is an Irishman, with a skin as curdles to the thought of a ghost. He was more frightened than any other man forrards, and lay awake listening. Time passed: all the watch was snoring saving this here Blake. On a sudden he hears the woice. He sits up, all of a muck o' sweat. Why, thinks he, it's the mute as lies under me a-talking in his sleep! He drops onto the deck and looks at Muffin, who presently fell a-talking again in his sleep, using the hidentical words that Sir Wilfrid had heard, and the tone o' woice was the same, sort o' muffled and dim like; but it wasn't pitched fit to make a scare, seeing, of course, that the hartist was unconscious. On this Blake sings out, kicks up a reg'lar hullabaloo, tells the men that the woice was a trick of Muffin's. Muffin, being half dazed and terrified by the sailors crowding round his berth, threatening of him, confesses and says that he did it with the notion of terrifying Sir Wilfrid into returning home, as his life had growed a burden. The men then called a council to settle what should be done with him, and it ended, when daybreak come, in their seizing him up aloft, as ye see there, where they mean to keep him until I've consulted with Sir Wilfrid as to the sort of punishment the chap merits."

"What shall you propose, Captain Finn?" said I, with a glance at the bound figure, whose motionlessness made him seem lifeless, and whose posture, therefore, was not a little appealing.

"Sir," answered Finn, "I shall recommend his honor to leave it to the men."

"But they may hang him!"

"No; I'll see they stop short of that. But, Mr. Monson, sir, begging your pardon, I'm sure you'll allow with me that Muffin 'll desarve all he's likely to get. Speaking as master of this wessel, I say that if he hadn't been found out in good time it might have gone blazing hard with all of us. The men were saucy enough last night, growling indeed as if it was next door to a mutiny being under way; and yet it was the first time of the woice speaking in the hold. Imagine it going on for several nights! It was bound to end in all hands giving up unless we shifted our helm for home, which Sir Wilfrid would never have consented to; so there ye'd have had a quandary as bad as if the sailors had been laid low with p'ison, or as if the *Bride* had tarned to and leaked at every butt end. Then think of his anointing his honor's cabin with flaming letters; all to

sarve his own measly wish to git out of an ondertaking that he don't relish. . . . Mr. Monson, sir, he wants a lesson, something arter the whipping and pickling business o' my father's day, and sooner than that he should miss of his desarts by striving to get to windward of the soft side of his honor's nature, I'm d——d," said he, striking his open hand with his clinched fist, "if I wouldn't up and tell Sir Wilfrid myself that it was that there Muffin as wrote the shining words about his honor's baby."

"Best not do that," said I. "We want no tragedies aboard us, Finn. However, you may count upon my not interfering; but for God's sake let there be no brutality."

"That'll be all right, sir," answered the skipper, with such a look, however, at the helpless and stirless figure in the rigging as satisfied me that his inclination, at present, at all events, was not towards mercy.

It was not a sort of sight to make the deck a pleasant lounge till breakfast-time. I was moved by some compassion for the unfortunate creature, mainly due, I believe, to a secret admiration for his remarkable skill and dramatic cunning, and, understanding that the sooner Wilfrid was apprised of this business the sooner would Muffin be brought down out of the shrouds, I stepped below. The head-steward came out of my cousin's cabin as I approached the door.

"Is Sir Wilfrid getting up?" said I.

"I've just taken him his hot water, sir. He isn't out of bed yet. He's very heavy; had a bad night, I've been told, sir—"

I passed on and knocked.

"What is it?" cried Wilfrid, in a drowsy, irritable voice.

I entered, and said, "Sorry to disturb you, Wilf, but there's news that will interest you."

He started up. "The *Shark?*" he cried.

"No," I answered; "they've found out who talked like a ghost last night; who it was that whispered off the ocean to Crimp and me that this yacht was cursed, and who it was that made the corpse on the wreck hail us."

He sat bolt-upright, with eyes and nostrils large with excitement. "Who?"

"Muffin," said I.

"Muffin!" he shouted; "what d'ye mean, Charles?"

"Why, the fellow's a ventriloquist, an incomparable artist, I should say, to deceive us all so atrociously well."

He stared at me with a face of dumb astonishment. "What was his motive, think you?" he asked, presently.

"He's pining to get home," I replied; "he's capable of any tricks to achieve that end. The men mean to punish him, and Finn is waiting to confer with you on the subject. They've had him lashed to the rigging aloft since daybreak."

"The scoundrel!" he cried, springing onto the deck, with a dark look of rage, yet with an indescribable note of relief as of a mind suddenly eased, softening the first harshness and temper of his voice. "I have to thank him for a frightful night. What a fool I am," he cried, vehemently striking his forehead, "to suffer myself to be terrified by things which I ought to know—which I *ought* to know," he repeated, with passionate emphasis, "cannot be as they seem."

"Well, Wilf," said I, "you will find Finn on deck. He will tell you all about it, and you will leave the fellow's punishment to the men, or settle with Finn the sort of discipline the man deserves as you shall think proper. I wash my hands of the affair, satisfied with Finn's promise that there shall be no brutality," with which I left him and returned to my cabin, where I lay reading till the breakfast-bell rang.

Miss Jennings was alone in the cabin. She stood with head inclined over some flowers which still bloomed in the mould in which they had been brought from England. The sunshine of her hair blended with the pinks and whites of the petals, and the gems on her hands trembled like dew-drops on the leaves of the plants as she lightly touched them with fingers half caressing, half adjusting. Her look of astonishment when I told her that the voice we had heard was a trick of Muffin's was like a view of her beauty in a new light; amazement, with a sparkle as of laughter behind it to throw out the expression, rounded her eyes and deepened their hue. Then the little creature clasped her hands with gratitude that the thing should have been discovered.

"Muffin is quite a rascal," she said, "and so clever as to be a real danger." She could scarcely credit that he had skill enough to deceive the ear as he had.

Wilfrid was slow in coming; I could see him through the skylight walking with Finn, gesticulating much, with a frequent look in the direction where, as I might gather, Master Muffin still hung. He kept Miss Laura and me waiting for nearly a quarter of an hour, during which I explained how Muffin had been discovered, how Wilfrid had gone on deck to arrange a punishment for him,

and the like. Presently my cousin arrived, and on catching sight of Miss Jennings, cried out, in his most boyish manner: "Only think, my dear, that our superstitious alarms last night should be owing to a trick, but a deuced clever trick, of that illiterate, yellow-faced, tearful, half-cracked son of a green-grocer—Muffin. I never could have believed he had it in him. Eh, Charles? Mad, of course; I don't say dangerously so, but warped, you know, or is it likely that he would practise so cruel and dangerous a deceit merely because he wants to get home? Why, d'ye know, Charles, Finn gravely swears that had the rascal persisted successfully for two or three nights, the yacht would have been in an uproar of mutiny, perhaps seized, ay, actually seized, through the terror of the crew, and sailed home—ending all my hopes."

"How is he to be served?"

"Finn proposes," he answered, "that the men should form a court—a judge and jury. Their decision will be brought aft for our approval. If the sentence be a reasonable one, the fellows will be allowed to execute it."

Miss Jennings looked scared.

"They won't hurt him much," said I. "Finn has pledged his word to me. 'Tis the fright that will do him good. Is he out of the rigging, Wilf?"

"Probably by this time," he answered. "I told Finn to get him sent down and fed. The sun is hot up there, and the poor devil faced it."

While we breakfasted I had much to say about the fellow's singular accomplishment as a ventriloquist; suggested that by-and-by he should be brought aft to entertain us, and expressed wonder that a man so gifted, qualified by nature, moreover, to dress up his singular and special faculty with the airs of as theatrical a countenance as ever I had heard of, should be satisfied with the mean offices of a valet. But my flow of speech was presently checked by a change of mood in Wilfrid. His face darkened; he pushed his plate from him, and let fly at Muffin in language which would not have been wanting in profanity, probably, had Miss Jennings been absent.

"Do you remember those strange warnings that I received about my little one?" he cried, turning a wild eye upon me. "After the gross deception of last night, who's to tell me that I might not have been made a fool of in that, too?"

I shot a hurried glance of meaning and warning at Miss Jennings, and said, carelessly, "Depend upon it, we can never be the victims of more than our senses in this life."

"Why should the creature have left me to go forward?" he shouted.

I touched my forehead with a smile. "When you engaged this fellow," said I, "you supposed his brain healthy anyway. Now, my dear Wilf, the motive of this voyage supplies plenty of occupation to the mind, and there is excitement enough to be got out of it without the obligation of a lunatic to wait upon you."

He burst into a laugh, without, however, a hint of merriment in it, and then fell silent and most uncomfortably moody. Shortly afterwards he went on deck.

"What will they do to Muffin, Mr. Monson, do you think?" Miss Laura asked.

"I cannot imagine," said I; "they may duck him from the yard-arm, they may spread-eagle and refresh him with a few dozens; punish him they will. Finn is hot against him. He is quite right in suggesting that a few such experiences as that of last night might —indeed must—have ended in a perilous mutiny. Are you coming on deck?"

"No."

"But it is a beautiful morning. The breeze is as sweet as milk, and the clouds as radiant as though the angels were blowing soap-bubbles."

"I do not care; I shall remain in the cabin. Do you think I could witness a man being ducked or whipped? I should faint."

"Well, I will go and view the spectacle, so as to be able to give you the story of it."

She pouted, and cried: "Wretched Muffin! Why did Wilfrid bring him? Lend me one of Scott's novels, Mr. Monson. I cannot get on with that story about the nobility."

I was not a little surprised, on passing through the companion-hatch, to find that the first act of the drama was about to begin. The whole of the ship's company, with the exception of the man who was at the wheel, were assembled on the forecastle. Crimp and Finn stood together near the fore-rigging, looking on. One of the sailors, who I afterwards learned was Cutbill, had pinned a blanket over his shoulders to serve him as a robe, while on his head he wore a contrivance that might have been a pudding-bag, though what it really was I could not distinguish. He had covered his chin and cheeks with a quantity of oakum, and presented a very extraordinary appearance as he sat with a great air of dignity on the top of a small bread-cask. Six sailors stood wing-like on either hand of him, con-

stituting the jury, as I supposed. Confronting Cutbill was Muffin between two brawny salts, each of whom held him by the arm. The valet made a most melancholy figure, and even at the distance of the quarter-deck I could see his naked yellow shanks, his breeches being turned above the knees, quivering and yielding, till I began to think that the two sailors held him, not as a prisoner, but to prevent him from tumbling down.

Wilfrid was swinging to and fro the quarter-deck, with long, flighty strides, taking an eager, probing, short-sighted stare at the crowd forward when he faced them, and then rounding to step aft, with a grin on his face and his underlip working as though he talked.

"I'm glad to see Cutbill making a fool of himself," said I. "Jack's jinks are seldom dangerous when he introduces skylarking after the pattern of that fellow's make-up. Shall we step forward and hear the trial, Wilf?"

"No," said he; "it would be undignified. Every man to the end he belongs to aboard a ship. Finn is there to see all fair. Besides, Muffin might appeal to me or to you, and I mean that the sailors shall have their way with him, providing, of course, that they don't carry things too far."

"Let's sit, then," said I; "your seven-league boots are too much for me this hot morning."

He called to the steward to bring him his pipe, and we posted ourselves on the grating abaft the wheel. It was a very gem of a picture just then. The canvas rose spreading on high in clouds of soft whiteness so silver-like to the burning of the sun that, viewed from a little distance, I don't doubt they would have shone upon the eye with the sparkle of crystal or the richer gleam of a pearl-incrusted surface. The decks went forward pure as ivory, every shadow so sharp that it looked as though an artist had been at work upon the planks, counterfeiting the rigging and every curve of stirless cloth and all delicate interlacery of ratline and gear running crosswise. The sea sloped in dark blue summer undulations, light as the rise and fall of the breast of a sleeping girl, into the liquid azure upon the starboard bow, where the steam-white clouds were gathered in a huddle like a great flock of sheep waiting for the rest that were on their way there to join them. The crowd on the forecastle filled that part of the vessel with color. It was the fuller of life for the coming and going of the shadows of the far-reaching studding-sails, and the marble-like arch of the flowing square-sail on the many dyes

of the tough, knotted, bearded groups of faces, with heads of hair and wiry whiskers ranging from the blackness of the rook's plumes to a pale straw-color, most of the beards wagging to the excited gnawing upon chunks of tobacco standing high in the cheek-bones, with here a wrinkled grin, there a sour cast, all combining to a picture that I have but to close my eyes to witness bright and vivid again as though it were of yesterday.

The trial was very decorously conducted. There were no jeers, no cries, no noise of any kind. I could hear the rumble of Cutbill's deep sea notes, and once or twice Muffin's response, faint as the squeak of a rat deep down. Crimp was called as a witness and declaimed a bit, but nothing reached me save the sulky rasp of his voice. The fooling did not last long. Cutbill got on top of his cask to address the jury, and I saw the fellow at the wheel near us shaking his sides at the preposterous figure of the man as he hugged his blanket to his heart, gravely nodding with his pudding-bag first to the six men on his left, then to the six men on his right, while he delivered his charge. When this was ended Captain Finn, with a look aft, sang out at the top of his voice, so that we should hear him:

"Now, my lads, you who constitute the jury, what's your vardict? Is the prisoner at the bar guilty or not guilty?"

"Guilty!" all twelve men roared out at once; on which Cutbill, still erect on his cask, passed judgment.

I strained my ear, but to no purpose. It was a monotonous rigmarole of a speech, and so long that I turned with a face of dismay to Wilfrid.

"I say, what are they going to do with him? Why, Cutbill has said enough to include whipping, ducking, roasting, hanging, and quartering."

"They only mean to frighten him," he answered, looking anxious nevertheless.

The two men who grasped Muffin walked him into the head, faced him round, and stood on either hand of him, still preserving their hold. Finn came aft, the men meanwhile hanging about him in a body forward in a posture of waiting.

"Well, what is decided on?" cried Wilfrid, eagerly and nervously.

Finn touched his cap. He tried to look grave, but secret enjoyment was visible in the twinkle of his eye, spite of the portentous curve of his mouth and the long drop of his chops to his chin-end.

"Your honor, the men's vardict is that the prisoner's to be cobbed and ducked."

"Cobbed!" cried Wilfrid, while I exclaimed "Ducked!" with a look at the foreyard-arm that stood high above the sea.

"Every man'll give him a blow with a rope's-end as he walks forrard," explained Finn, "and arterwards cool him with a bucket o' water apiece."

Wilfrid's eyes came to mine.

"It will depend upon how hard every man hits," said I; "the ducking is innocent enough. Yet I see nothing of cruelty in the sentence; and really the fellow not only requires to be punished, but to be terrified as well."

"The hands are waiting for me to tell 'em to begin, your honor," said Finn, with a glance forward. "It'll make the punishment too severe to keep the poor devil a-waiting for it."

"One moment," exclaimed Wilfrid; "did he offer any excuses?"

"Why, sir, he said he was egged on with the desire to return to his mother and get off the sea, which disagrees with his insides and affects his hintellectuals. He says he meant no more harm than that. Don't believe he did, but it might have ended in some smothering trouble all the same. 'I came as a walet,' says he, 'and here now am I,' says he, 'broke—just a ship's dog, a filthy scullion,' says he, 'when my true calling,' says he, 'is that of gentleman's gentleman.'"

"But, confound him!" cried Wilfrid, "it was he who left me; I did not dismiss him. He went forward of his own will."

"My dear Wilfrid, he is cracked," said I.

"Get on, get on and make an end of this now, Finn," exclaimed Wilfrid, with a little color of temper in each cheek. "I'm weary of the business, and want these decks cleared and quiet to the eye."

The skipper promptly trudged forward, and sung out as he advanced. In a few moments most of the sailors had ranged themselves along the deck in a double line. Every man held a piece of rope in his hand—reef points they looked to me, though whether they had been cut for this special business, or had been hunted for amid raffle of the kind forward, I cannot say. Meanwhile a couple of seamen handed buckets full of water along from a little pump in the head until every man had one at his feet. When these preparations were completed the brace of salts who had charge of Muffin suddenly whipped off his shirt, and laid bare his back, so that he stood in nothing but a pair of breeches, a very radish of a figure—his yellow anatomy glancing dully in the sunshine, while the ghastly pallor of his face was heightened yet by his plaster of coal-black

hair just as his inward terror was accentuated by the corkscrew-like writhing of his lean legs, the convulsive twitching of his arms, and the dismal rolling of his dead, black, lustreless eyes. It was impossible not to feel sorry for the wretched creature. One felt that he was entitled, by virtue of the remarkable gift he had displayed, to a discipline of a more dignified sort than he was now to be subjected to. I laughed out, however, when Cutbill formed a procession. Absurdity could not have gone beyond the figure the great whiskered tarpaulin cut in his blanket and the canvas bag that served him as head-gear as, making a sign, he tragically entered the double line of men, beating with his hands that Muffin and his two supporters should keep time with his strides. When Muffin was brought to the aftermost end of the rank of seamen Cutbill seized him by the neck and forced him to give us a bow. The two sailors who had conducted him to this point then posted themselves with the others, each of them picking up a rope's-end, whereupon Cutbill, twisting Muffin so as to force him to face the vessel's forecastle, took a couple of strides backward, extending his arms under his blanket to hinder Muffin from running forward.

"Lay on now!" he hoarsely bawled; and then whack! whack! whack! sounded upon the unhappy Muffin's spine as rhythmically as the tapping of a land-crab's claws upon a polished floor. Every fellow administered his single blow with a will, one or two spitting on their hands before their turn came. The sufferer writhed pitifully to the very first stroke, and to the fourth howled out like a dog. The sight half-sickened me, and yet I found myself laughing—though, I dare say, there was something of hysteric nervousness in my merriment—at the preposterous spectacle of the staggering, twitching, dodging, almost nude figure of Muffin, throwing out into strong relief the huge blanketed form of Cutbill, who, with arms distended, his head with its adornment of oakum nodding gravely from side to side as if bestowing approbation on each man for the blow he dealt, strode backward on majestic legs, carefully turning out his toes as though he were giving Muffin a lesson in dancing, and sliding along the lines of knotted, hairy faces with the air of some court functionary marshalling the progress of royalty.

As the echo of the last whack rose hollowly off Muffin's back, the skin of which was unbroken, though it was barred with white lines that resembled flakes of peeled onion, Cutbill whirled him round again, choking the yell he was in the act of delivering into a moan, and ran him back to where he had first started. The ropes'-ends

were now dropped; every man seized his bucket, and as Muffin moved, slowly confronted as before by Cutbill, who barricaded the way with out-stretched arms, striding backward once again with Cape Horn graces, he received a deluge full in his face, one after another, till I thought the very breath would have been washed out of his body.

"Now cut down below and dry and clothe yourself," roared Finn, as the last bucket was emptied over the shivering creature, "and the next time, my lad, ye try any of your pranks upon e'er a man aboard this wessel, whether he lives forward or whether he lives aft, we'll send ye aloft to that yard-arm there with a rope round your neck."

Cutbill whipped off his blanket and tore the oakum and cap off his head. In a few brief moments the decks resounded with the slapping of sailors swabbing up the wet; buckets were stowed away in their places, the ropes'-ends collected, and in an incredibly short space of time all was as though no such incident as I have related had happened, the planks drying fast, some seamen aft spreading the awning, other fellows at their several jobs in the rigging or on deck, just a grin now and again passing among them, but no laughter and no talk, and the yacht softly pushing forward under the increasing glory of the sun fast approaching his meridian.

"We shall hear no more of Muffin, I think," said Wilfrid, showing nothing of the excitement I had expected to find in him.

"No," said I, with a yawn, and sickened somewhat by the business that had just ended, "but all this sort of business doesn't look like the errand that has brought us out onto the face of these broad waters."

"Ay," said he, "but that errand was in jeopardy until this morning."

He went to the rail and took a long, thirsty look ahead. I waited, thinking he meant to return. Instead, he folded his arms and continued gazing, motionless, with eyes so intently fixed that I took a look too, conceiving that he beheld something to fix his attention. A strange expression of surprise entered his face, his brow lightened, an air of eagerness sharpened his visage. 'Twas as likely as not that he saw with his mind's eye what he craved to behold in reality, and that the vision a sudden craze had raised up before him was as actual to his tainted imagination as if it lay bright to all hands upon the sea-line. But I felt wearied to the heart, sick as from a sort of ground-swell of emotion. The mere sight of Wilfrid's posture and face was enough to increase the fit of the blues upon me just then, and I quietly slipped below for such sunny influence as was to be got out of the presence of the sweet little woman in the cabin.

CHAPTER XXI.

HEAVY WEATHER.

After this, for a good many days nothing in any degree noteworthy happened. It seemed, indeed, as though whatever little there was to alarm or divert during this extraordinary voyage had been packed into the beginning of it. Muffin lay ill of his back for two days in his bunk; but for Wilfrid, Finn would have had the poor devil up and about within an hour of drying and dressing himself. The skipper could not forgive that menace of mutiny which had been involved in the yellow-faced joker's effort to procure the shifting of the yacht's helm for home, and he would always refer privately to me with violent indignation to the valet's trick upon his master. But on Wilfrid's hearing that the man was in pain, and that his nerves had been prostrated by the punishment, he ordered Finn to let him remain below until he was better or well. There was no more ventriloquism; the midnight silence of the forecastle was left unvexed by muffled imprecations. The sailors, when Muffin left his bunk, asked him to give them an entertainment, to which he replied by saying he would see them in a nameless place first. The request, indeed, maddened him. I gathered from sullen Crimp's sour version of the incident that Muffin shrieked at the men, shook his fist at them, his eyes started half out of his head, the foam gathered upon his lips, and he heaped curses and oaths of a nature so novel, so unimaginable, indeed, upon them, that the stoutest shrunk back from the screaming creature, believing him to be raving mad. However, he behaved himself very quietly on deck. I never caught him looking our way nor speaking, nor heard him again singing in a dog-watch in his woman's voice. Life grew so tedious that I should have been glad to see him aft again for the sake of his parts as a mimic and actor. I was certain the man would have contrived a very good entertainment for us night after night; but Wilfrid said no angrily and obstinately once and for all, and so the subject dropped.

The north-east trades blew a fresh breeze, and bowled us handsomely athwart the broad blue field of the Atlantic. The *Bride* was

a noble sailer when she had the chance, and some of our runs rose to three hundred miles in the twenty-four hours, with a hill of snow at either bow, and the frothing surge of the trades chasing us, and a sensible increase of heat day after day in the loud and shrilling sweep of air and the glitter of flying-fish sparkling on wings of gauze from the white and gold of our vessel's shearing passage. We had entered the tropics, but had met with no ship that we could speak. At times a sail shone, but always afar. The lookout aloft was as steadfast as the rising and sinking of the sun. Day after day the polished tube up there was sweeping the glass-like sapphire of the ocean boundary, steadily circling the firm line of it steeping from either quarter to ahead. But the cry of "Sail, ho!" delivered at long intervals never resulted in more than the disclosure of a rig of a very different pattern from what we were in pursuit of.

A settled gloom fell upon my cousin's spirits. He complained of sleeplessness; his appetite failed him; he talked but little, and his one subject was the *Shark*. I would sometimes long for a startling incident to shake him out of the melancholy that sat darkly as the shadow of madness upon him. Miss Jennings tried hard to keep up her heart, but already I could see that the monotony of the voyage, coupled with an incessant strain of expectation, was proving too much for her. She had come to this strange quest taking my cousin's word for what was to happen. She had given Wilfrid's programme of hopes no consideration. We were bound to fall in with the *Shark* at sea, or, at the very worst, to arrive at the Cape before her, and there lie in wait. She was finding out now that the ocean was the prodigious plain I had represented it for a pursuit of this kind, and that the journey had already grown infinitely tedious, though Table Bay lay some thousands of miles distant yet. Still, she stuck to her guns manfully. Her heart would show in her eyes when she thought herself unobserved; but if ever I approached the subject in conversing with her on the vagueness and vanity of this pursuit, she would tell me that it was idle to talk, that she had made up her mind, that she had cast in her lot with Wilfrid in this chase, and that while he continued to pursue his wife, no matter to what part of the world he might direct Finn to steer the vessel, she would remain at his side.

"Should I ever forgive myself, do you think, Mr. Monson," she would argue, "if after I had left him Wilfrid found Henrietta, and she refused to return with him for lack, perhaps, of the influence I should be able to exert?"

"Ay, but do not you suppose too much?" I would answer. "*Perhaps* Wilfrid might fall in with his wife; *perhaps* she might decline to have anything to do with him; *perhaps* if you were present she might yield to your entreaties. As my sympathies are not so deeply concerned as yours, I am able, possibly, to take more practical views. The one staggering consideration with me is this: we arrive at Table Bay and find the *Shark* has sailed and there is nobody to tell us where she has gone. Figure our outlook then!"

"But you are supposing, too. The *Shark may* arrive while we are lying in Table Bay. What then, Mr. Monson?"

It was idle talk, though to her "what then?" I might have replied by another question: "If Lady Monson, at Table Bay, should decline to allow her husband to carry her home in his yacht, *what then?*"

It must have fared hard with me, I think, but for this girl; for had I had during this journey no other companion than Wilfrid, likely as not it would have ended in my carrying "a bee in my bonnet" for the rest of my days. Between us we managed to kill many tedious hours with cards, chess, chats, reading aloud, while Wilfrid lay hid in God knows what mysterious occupation in his cabin, or paced the deck alone, austere, unapproachable, with an iron sneer on his lip, and on his brow the scowl of a dark mood out of which you might have looked to see him burst into some wild, unreasoning piece of behavior, some swearing fit, or insane soliloquy—one knew not what; only that the air of him held you restless with expectation of trouble in that way.

The night-time was the fairest part of this queer trip when we got under the tropic heights, with failing breezes, hot and moist, soft-running surges languidly gushing into a sheet-lightning of phosphoric froth, a full moon that at her meridian came near to the brilliance of sunrise, the planets large, trembling, and of heavenly beauty, a streak of dim fire in the dark water over the counter denoting the subtle, sneaking pursuit of some huge fish; and reflections of white stars like dim water-lilies riding the polished ebony heave when it ran foamless. Evening after evening on such nights as these would Miss Laura and I placidly step the deck together or sit watching the exquisite effects of moonlight on sail and cordage; or the rising of the luminary above the black rim of ocean, with the tremble of the water in its light as though the deep thrilled to the first kiss of the moonbeams; gliding from one romantic fancy to another as tenderly as our keel floated over the long-drawn respira-

tions of the deep. Indeed, it would come sometimes to my thinking that if the *Bride* were my yacht, and Laura and I alone in her —with a crew to navigate the craft, to be sure—I should be very well satisfied to go on sailing about in this fashion in these latitudes under those glorious stars and upon these warm and gentle seas until she tired. In its serene moonlit moods the ocean possesses an incomparable and amazing magic of spiritualizing. The veriest commonplace glows into poetic beauty under the mysterious, vitalizing, enriching influence. I have seen a girl whom no exaggerated courtesy could have pronounced comely by daylight, show like an angel on the deck of a yacht on a hushed and radiant night, when the air has been brimming to the stars with the soft haze of moonlight, and when the sea has resembled a carpet of black silk softly waving. The moon is a witch, and her pencils of light are charged with magic qualities. In the soft golden effulgence my companion's face would sometimes grow phantasmal, a dream of girlish loveliness, the radiance of her hair and skin blending with the rich illusive light till I would sometimes think if I should glance away from her and then look again, I should find her fairy countenance melted—a romantic confession that tells the story of my heart! Yes, I was far gone: no need to deny it. Our association was intimate to a degree that no companionship ashore could approach. Wilfrid left us alone together for hour after hour, and there was nobody to intrude upon us. Finn clearly understood what was happening, and sour old Crimp was always careful to leave us one side of the deck to ourselves.

But there was now to happen a violent change—a transformation of peaceful, amorous conditions of the right kind to affright romance and to drive the spirit of poetry cowering out of sight.

We were in latitude about eight degrees north; the longitude I do not remember. The night had been very quiet but thick; here and there a star that was a mere lustreless blur in the void, and the water black and sluggish as liquid pitch without a gleam in it. The atmosphere had been so sultry that I could get no rest. The yacht dipped drearily from side to side, shaking thunder out of her canvas and sending a sound, like a low sobbing wail, off her sides into the midnight gloom. This prevented me from opening the scuttle, and I lay half stifled, occasionally driven on deck by a sense of suffocation, though it was like passing from one hot room to another in a Turkish bath. There was a barometer in the cabin just under the clock in the skylight; every time I quitted my berth I peeped at it,

and every time I looked I observed that the mercury had settled somewhat, a very gradual, but a very steady fall. That foul weather was at hand I could not doubt, but it was hard to imagine the character it would take down among these equatorial parallels, where one hardly looks for gales of wind, or cyclonic outbursts, or the rushing tempest red with lightning of high latitudes; though every man who has crossed the line will know that the ocean is as full of the unexpected thereabouts as in all other parts of the globe.

I somehow have a clearer recollection of that night than of the time that followed, or indeed of any other passage of hours during this queer sea ramble I am writing about. It was first the intolerable heat, then the unendurably monotonous lifeless rolling of the yacht, with its regular accompaniment of the yearning wash of recoiling waters, the ceaseless and irritating clicking of cabin doors upon their hooks, the idle beating of canvas above, hollowly penetrating the deck with a muffled echo as of constant sullen explosions, the creaking and straining to right and to left and above and below, a hot smell of paint and varnish and upholstery mingled with some sort of indefinable marine odor; a kind of faint scent of rotting seaweed, such as will sometimes rise off the breast of the sluggish deep when stormy weather is at hand. I believe I drank not less than one dozen bottles of seltzer-water in the small hours. I was half dead of thirst, and routed out the steward and obliged him to supply me with a plentiful stock of this refreshment. But the more I drank the hotter I got, and no shipwrecked eye ever more gratefully saluted the gray of dawn than did mine, when, wakening from a half-hour of feverish sleep, I beheld the light of morning lying weak and lead-colored on the glass of the port-hole.

An uglier jumble of sky I never beheld when I sent my first look up to it from the companion-hatch. It was as though some hundreds and thousands of factory chimneys had been vomiting up their black fumes throughout the night, the bodies of vapor coming together over our mast-heads and compacting there lumpishly amid the stagnant air with the livid thickenings dimming into dusky browns; and here and there a sallow lump of gloom of the kind of yellowish tinge to make one think of fire and thunder. The confines of this ghastly storm-laden pall drooped to the sea within three miles of the yacht, so that the horizon seemed within cannon-shot —a merging and mingling of stationary shadows whose stirlessness was rendered the more portentous by the sulky pease-soup colored welter of the ocean washing into the shrouded distance and vanish-

ing there. All hands were on the alert. What was to come Finn told me he could not tell, but he was ready for it. His maintop-mast was struck—that is, sent down on deck; he had also sent down the top-gallant yard. Every stitch of canvas was furled, saving the close-reefed gaff-foresail and the reefed stay-foresail. Extra lashings secured everything that was movable. Much to my satisfaction, I observed that he had struck the long gun forward down below. There was not a breath of wind as yet, and the yacht looked most forlorn and naked, as though indeed she were fresh from a furious tussle as she rolled, burying her sides upon the southerly swell, that was growing heavier and heavier hour by hour.

We were at breakfast when the first of the wind took us. It came along moaning at first, with a small dying away, and then a longer wail as it poured, hot as the breath of a furnace blast, between our masts. This was followed by some five minutes of breathless calm, during which the yacht fell off into the trough again; then, having my eye upon a cabin window, I bawled out, "There it comes!" seeing the flying white line of it like a cloud of desert sand sweeping through the evening dusk; and before the words were well out of my mouth the yacht was down to it, bowed to her bulwark-rail, every blessed article on the breakfast-table fetching away with a hideous crash upon the deck, with the figures of the two stewards reeling to leeward, myself gripping the table, Wilfrid depending wholly for support upon his fixed chair, and Miss Jennings buoying herself off to windward upon her out-stretched arms, with her face white with consternation.

The uproar is not to be described. The voice of the gale bellowing through the gloom was a continuous note of thunder, and trembled upon the ear for all the world as though it was the cannonading of some fierce electric storm. The boiling and hissing of the seas made one think of a sky full of water falling into the ocean. The yacht at the first going on was beaten down to her broadside and lay motionless, the froth washing over the rail; and the horror of that posture of seemingly drowning prostration, together with the fears it put into one, was prodigiously increased by the heavy blows of seas smiting the round of the hull to windward and bursting over her in vast bodies of snow. But she was a noble sea-boat, and was soon gallantly breasting the surge, but with a dance that rapidly grew wilder and wilder as the tempestuous music on high rang out more fiercely yet, until it became absolutely impossible to use one's legs. The sea rose as if by magic, and the slide of the hull down

the liquid heights, which came roaring at her from a very smother of scud and vapor and flying spray, gave her such a heel that every recovery of her for the next buoyant upward flight was a miracle of resurrection in its way. The hatches were battened down, tarpaulins over the skylight, and as for some time the stewards were unable to light the lamp, we remained seated in the cabin in a gloom so deep that we could scarcely discern one another's faces. Off the cabin deck rose a miserable jangling and clatter of broken crockery and glass and the like, rolling to and fro with the violent movements of the yacht. For a long while the stewards were rendered helpless. They swung by stanchions or held on grimly to seats, and it was indeed as much as their lives were worth to let go, for there were moments when the decks sloped like the steep roof of a house, promising a headlong fall to any one who relaxed his grip of a sort to break his neck or beat his brains out. At regular intervals the cabin port-holes would turn blind to a thunderous rush of green sea, and those were moments, I vow, to drive a man onto his knees with full conviction that he would be giving up the ghost in a very little while; for to these darkening, glimmering, green delugings the cabin interior turned a dead black, as though it were midnight; down lay the yacht to the mighty sweeping curl of water; a shock as of the discharge of heavy artillery trembled with a stunning effect right through her to the blows of the tons upon tons of water which burst over the rail to the height of the cross-trees, falling upon the resounding deck from that elevation with a crash that made one think of the fabric having struck, followed by a distracting sound of seething as the deluge, flung from side to side, boiled between the bulwarks.

We had met with a few dustings before we fell in with this tempest, but nothing to season us for such an encounter as this. I made an effort after two hours of it to scramble on all fours up the cabin ladder and to put my head out through one of the companion doors. Such was the power of the wind that to the first protrusion of my nose I felt as if my face had been cut off as by a knife and swept overboard. The hurricane was as hot as though charged with fire; the clouds of foam blown off the sea and whirling hoarily under the black vapor low down above our mast-heads looked like steam boiling up off the hissing surface of the mighty ocean caldron. I caught sight of a couple of fellows lashed to the wheel, and the figure of Finn glittering in black oil-skins crouching aft under the lee of the bulwark, swinging to a rope's-end round his waist;

but all forward was haze, storms of foam, a glimpse of the yacht's bows soaring black and streaming, then striking down madly into a very hell of white waters which leaped upward to the smiting of the structure in marble-like columns, round, firm, brilliant, like the stem of a water-spout, but with heads which instantly vanished in a smoke of crystals before the shriek and thunder of the blast. The fragment of gaff-foresail held bravely, dark with brine from peak to clew, with a furious salival draining of wet from the foot of it out of the hollow into which there was a ceaseless mad hurling of water.

Heaven preserve me! never could I have imagined such a sight as that sea presented. It might well have scared the heart of a far bolder man than ever I professed to be to witness the height and arching of the great liquid acclivities with their rage of boiling summits; the dusk of the atmosphere darkened yet by the flying rain of spume torn by the fingers of the storm out of the maddened waters; the ghastliness of the dissolving mountains of whiteness glaring out into the wet and leaden shadow; the leaping of the near horizon against the thick gloom that looked to whirl like a teetotum, mingling scud and foam and hurtling billow into a sickening confusion of phantasmal shapes, a mad, chaotic blending of vanishing and reappearing forms timed by the yell and hum of the gale sounding high above the crash of the breaking surge, and the shattering of wave by wave as though in very truth it fetched an echo of its own deafening roaring out of the dark sky rushing low over this tremendous scene of commotion.

Whatever it might be that blew, whether a straight-lined hurricane or some wing of rotating storm, it lasted for three days; not, indeed, continuing the terrible severity with which it had set in, for we all afterwards agreed that a few hours of the weight of tempest that had first sprung upon us must have beaten the yacht down to her grave by mere blows of green seas, let alone the addition of the incalculable pressure of the wind. The stay-foresail in one blast that caught the yacht when topping a sea was blown into rags, and whirled up into the dusk like smoke. A fragment of head-sail was wanted, but while some men were clawing forward to effect what was necessary, the vessel shipped a sea that carried three of them overboard like chips of wood, leaving the fourth stranded in the scuppers as far aft as the gangway, with his neck and both legs broken! We were but a small ship, and luxurious fittings counted for nothing in such a hellish tumblefication as that. Wilfrid kept his berth nearly the whole time, having slightly sprained his ankle,

which, topped by the motion, prohibited him from extending his leg by so much as a single stride. On the other hand, Miss Laura would not leave the cabin. I endeavored to persuade her to take some rest in her bunk, but to no purpose. I did what I could to make her comfortable, crawled like a rat to her berth, where I found her maid half dead with fright and nausea, procured a pillow, rugs, and so forth, got her over to the lee side, where there was not much risk of her rolling off the sofa, and snugged her to the best of my ability. I sat with her constantly, said what I could to keep her spirits up, procured food for her, fell asleep at her side holding her hand, saw to her maid, and, in a word, acted the part of a devoted lover. But Heaven bless us, what a time it was! I would sometimes wonder whether, if the *Shark* met with this gale, she had seaworthiness enough to outlive it. Occasionally Finn would arrive, haggard, streaming, the completest figure imaginable of a tempest-beaten man, and report of matters above; but I remember wishing him at the devil when he told us of the loss of the four men, for a more depressing piece of news could not have reached us at such a time, and Miss Laura's spirits seemed to utterly break down under it. It was impossible to light the galley fire, and we had to subsist upon the remains of past cookery and on tinned food. However, Finn told us that on the evening of the first day of the gale the cook had fallen and broken two fingers of his right hand; so that could a fire have been kindled there was no one to prepare a hot meal for us.

But a little before eleven o'clock on the night of the third day the gale broke. I was sitting alongside of Miss Jennings in the cabin, with a plate of biscuit and ham on my knee off which she and I were making a lover's meal, I popping little pieces into her mouth as she lay pillowed close against my arm, then taking a snack myself, then applying a flask of sherry to her lips and finding the wine transformed into nectar by her kiss of the silver mouth of the flask. A steward sat crouching in the corner of the cabin; the lamp burned dimly, for there had been some difficulty in obtaining oil for it, and the mesh was therefore kept low. Suddenly I witnessed a flash of yellow moonshine upon the port-hole directly facing me, and with a shout of exultation I sprang to my feet, giving no heed to the plate that fell in a crash upon the deck, and crying out, "Thank God, here's fine weather coming at last!" I made a spring to the companion-steps and hauled myself up through the hatch.

It was a sight I would not have missed witnessing for much. The

moon at that instant had swept into a clear space of indigo-black heaven; her light flashed fair upon the vast desolation of swollen waters; every foaming head of sea glanced with an ivory whiteness that by contrast with the black welter upon which it broke showed with something of the glory of crystalline snow beheld in sunlight; the clouds had broken and were sailing across the sky in dense dark masses; it still blew violently, but there was a deep peculiar note in the roar of the wind aloft, which was assurance positive to a nautical ear that the strength of the gale was exhausted, just as in a humming-top the tone lowers and lowers yet as the thing slackens its revolutions. By one o'clock that morning it was no more than a moderate breeze with a high angry swell, of which, however, Finn made nothing; for after escorting Miss Jennings to her cabin I heard them making sail on deck; and when, having had a short chat with Wilfrid, who lay in his bunk earnestly thanking God that the weather had mended, I went on deck to take a last look round before turning in, I found the wind shifted to west-north-west, and the *Bride* swarming and plunging over the strong southerly swell under a whole main-sail, gaff-foresail, and jib, with hands sheeting home the square top-sail, Crimp singing out in the waist, and Finn making a sailor's supper off a ship's biscuit in one hand and a cube of salt junk in the other by the light of the moon.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE "'LIZA ROBBINS."

THE gale was followed by several days of true tropical weather: light airs, before which our stern slided so softly as to leave the water unwrinkled; then pauses of utter stagnation, with the horizon slowly waving in the roasting atmosphere, as if it were some huge snake winding round and round the sea, and our mast-heads wriggling up into the brassy blue like the points of rotating corkscrews.

I rose one morning early, loathing the narrow frizzling confinement of my cabin, where the heat of the upper deck dwelt in the atmosphere with a sort of tingling, and where the wall—thick as the scantling was, and cooled besides outside by the wash of the brine—felt to the hand warm as a glass newly rinsed in hot water. I went on deck and found myself in a cloudless day. The sun was a few degrees above the horizon, and his wake flowed in a river of dazzling glory to the inverted image of the yacht reflected with mirror-like perfection in the clear, pale-blue profound over which she was imperceptibly stealing, fanned by a draught so tender that it scarcely lifted the airy space of top-gallant sail whose foot arched like a curve of new moon from one top-sail yard-arm to the other.

I had noticed the dim gray outline of what was apparently a huge shark off our quarter on the previous night, and went to the rail to see if the beast was still in sight; and I was overhanging the bulwark, sniffing with delight the fresh salt smell that floated up from alongside, scarce warmed as yet by the early sun, and viewing with admiration the lovely representation of the yacht's form in the water, with my own face looking up at me too, as though I lay a drowned man down there, when Finn suddenly called out, "A humpish looking craft, your honor; and I'm a lobster if I don't think by the stink in the air that her cargo's phosphate manure."

I sprang erect, and on turning was greatly astonished to observe a bark of some four or five hundred tons approaching us just off the weather bow, and almost ready within hail. I instantly crossed the deck to get a better view of her. She was a round-bowed vessel, deep in the water, with a dirty white band broken by painted ports

going the length of her, and she rolled as clumsily upon the light swell as if she were full of water. She had apparently lost her fore-top-gallant mast, and the head of the top-mast showed heavy with its cross-trees over the tall hoist of single top-sail. A group of men stood on the forecastle viewing us, and now and again a head was thrust over the quarter-deck rail. But she was approaching us almost bow on, and her bulwarks being high, there was little to be seen of her decks.

"Very queer smell," said I, tasting a sort of faint acid in the atmosphere, mingled with an odor of an earthy, mouldering kind, as though a current of air that had crept through some church-yard vault had stolen down upon us.

"Bones or bird dung, sir; perhaps both. I recognize the smell; there's nicer perfumes a-going."

"Has she signalled you?"

"Ay, sir; that she wanted to speak, and then hauled her colors down when she saw my answering pennant. She's been in sight since hard upon midnight. Crimp made her out agin the stars, and how we've stole together, blessed if I know, for all the air that's blowed since the middle watch wouldn't have weight enough to slant a butterfly off its course."

"What do they want, I wonder?" said I; "rather a novelty for *us* to be spoken, Finn, seeing that it has always been the other way about. Bless me! how hot it is! Pleasant to be a passenger aboard yonder craft under that sun there, if the aroma she breathes is warrant of the character of her cargo."

A few minutes passed; the bark then shifting her helm slowly drew out, giving us a view of her length. As she did so she hauled up her main-course and braced aback her foreyards. This looked like business, for, had her intention been to hail us merely in passing, our joint rate of progress was so exceedingly slow as to render any manœuvring, such as heaving to, unnecessary. Finn and I were looking at her waiting for the yacht to be hailed, when Crimp, who had been in the waist superintending the washing down of the decks, for he was in charge, though the captain had come up at once on hearing that there was a vessel close to us; sour old Crimp, I say, whom I had observed staring with a peculiar earnestness at the bark, came aft and said, "Ain't this smell old bones?"

"Foul enough for un," answered Finn.

"Dummed," cried Crimp, gazing intently with his cross-eyes, while his mat of beard worked slowly to the action of his jaw upon a quid,

as though there was something behind it that wanted to get out, "if I don't believe that there craft's the '*Liza Robbins.*"

"Well, and what then?" demanded Finn.

"Why, if so, my brother's her skipper."

Finn levelled his glass. He took a long look at the figure of a man who was standing on the bark's quarter, and who was manifestly pausing until the vessel should have closed a little more yet to hail us.

"Is your brother like you, Jacob?" he asked, bringing his eye from the telescope.

"Ay, werry image, only that his wision's straight. We're twins."

"Then there ye are to the life!" cried Finn, bursting into a laugh and pointing to the bark's quarter-deck.

Crimp rested the glass on the rail and put his sour face to it. "Yes," he exclaimed, "that's 'Arry, sure enough," and without another word he returned to the waist and went on coolly directing the scrubbing and swabbing of the men.

"Mr. Monson," said Finn, who had taken the glass from Crimp, and extending it to me as he spoke, "just take a view of them figures on the fo'k'sle, sir, will 'ee? There's three of 'em standing alone close against the cathead. They ain't blue-jackets, are they?"

But at that instant we were hailed, and I forgot Finn's request in listening to what was said.

"Schooner, ahoy!"

"Holloa!" answered Finn.

"What schooner is that, and where are you bound?" cried the man on the bark's quarter-deck, in a voice whose sulky rasping note so exactly resembled Jacob Crimp's when he exerted his lungs that I observed some of our sailors staring with astonishment, as though they imagined Muffin had gone to work again.

"The *Bride*, of Southampton, on a cruise," responded Finn, adding in an aside to me, "no use in singing out about the Cape of Good Hope, sir."

There was a brief pause, then Finn bawled, "What ship are you?"

"The '*Liza Robbins*," was the answer, "of and for Liverpool from Hitchaboo with a cargo of gewhany."

"Thought so," exclaimed Finn to me, with a snuffle; "d'ye smell it now, sir? How they can get men to sign for a woyage with such a cargo beats my going a-fishing."

"Schooner, ahoy!" now came from the bark again.

"Holloa!"

"I've got a lady and gent here," roared the figure through his hands, which he held funnelwise to his mouth, "as want to get aboard summat smelling a bit sweeter nor this. They was wrecked in a yacht like yourn, and I came across 'em in a open boat five days ago. Will 'ee take 'em?"

"What was the name of the yacht, can you tell me?" cried Finn.

The man turned his head, evidently interrogating another, probably his mate, who stood a little behind him; then bringing his hands to his mouth afresh, he roared out, "The *Shark!*"

Finn slowly brought his long face to bear upon mine; his figure moving with it as though the whole of him were a piece of mechanism warranted to perform that motion, but no more. "Gracious thunder!" he exclaimed under his breath, and then his jaw fell. I heard the confused humming of the men's voices forward, a swift flow of excited talk subdued into a sort of buzzing by their habits of shipboard discipline. I felt that I was as pale in the face as if I had received some violent shock.

"The *Shark!*" I cried, in a breathless way; "the lady and gentleman, then, aboard that vessel must be the colonel and Lady Monson. The yacht probably met with the gale that swept over us and foundered in it;" then pulling myself together with an effort, for amazement seemed to have sent all my wits adrift for a moment, I exclaimed, "Hail the bark at once, Finn; say that you will be happy to receive the lady and gentleman. Ask the captain to come aboard, or stay—where is Crimp? Let old Jacob invite his brother. We must act with extreme wariness. My God, what an astounding confrontment!"

"Mr. Crimp!" roared Finn, on a sudden exploding, as it were, out of his state of petrifaction. Jacob came aft. "Jump on that there rail, Mr. Crimp, and tell your brother who ye are, and ask him aboard."

The sour little man climbed onto the bulwarks, and in a voice that was the completest imaginable echo of that in which the fellow aboard the bark had hailed us he shouted:

"'Arry, ahoy!"

The other stood a while staring, dropping his head first on one side, then on the other, in the manner of one who discredits his sight and seeks to obtain a clearer view by dodging about for a true focus.

"Why, Jacob," he presently sung out, "is that you, brother?"

"Ay; come aboard, will ye, 'Arry?" answered Crimp, with which he dropped off the rail, and trudged sourly to the gangway without the least visible expression of surprise or pleasure or emotion of any kind.

Meanwhile I had taken notice of strong manifestations of excitement among the little group on the forecastle of the bark—I mean the small knot of men to whom Finn had called my attention. The vessels lay so near together that postures and gestures were easily distinguishable. There could be no doubt now that the fellows had formed a portion of a yacht's crew. Their dress betokened it; they gazed with much probing and thrusting of their heads and elbowing of one another at our men, who lined the forward bulwarks—most of our sailors having turned up—as though seeking for familiar faces. I eagerly looked for signs of the colonel and his companion, but it was still very early; they were doubtless in their cabins, and the crying out of voices from vessel to vessel was so recent that even if the couple had been disturbed by the noise they would not yet have had time to dress themselves and make their appearance on deck.

"Will you go and report to Sir Wilfrid, sir?" said Finn.

"At once," I answered. "Let old Jacob's brother have the full story, the whole truth, should he arrive before I return. His sympathies must be enlisted on Sir Wilfrid's side or there may happen a most worrisome difficulty if the colonel refuses to leave that bark and should make some splendid offer to the skipper to retain him and her ladyship."

"I'll talk with Jacob while his brother's a-coming, sir," said Finn.

I stepped below with a beating heart. I was exceedingly agitated, could scarce bring my mind to accept the reality of what had happened, and I dreaded, moreover, the effect of the news upon my cousin. The *Shark* foundered!—the couple we were in chase of picked up out of an open boat!—this great, blank, lidless eye of ocean whose infinite distances I had pointed into over and over again to Miss Laura yielding up the pair that we were in chase of in an encounter bewildering as a surprise and miraculous for its unexpectedness!—why, I confess I breathed in gasps as I thought of it all, making my way, absolutely trembling in my shoes, to Wilfrid's berth. I knocked and was told to enter. He had nearly finished dressing, and looked up from a boot that he was buttoning with a cold, bitter, triumphant smile at me.

"I know," he exclaimed, in a voice infinitely more composed than I could have exerted; "this is Monday, Charles."

It *was* Monday, as he said! I stared stupidly at him for a minute, and then saw how it was that he knew. The window of his port was unscrewed and lay wide open; through it I could see the bark fluctuating in the silver and blue of the atmosphere as she swayed swinging her canvas in and out with every roll. The port made a very funnel for the ear as a vehicle of sound, for I could distinctly hear the orders given on board the vessel for lowering a boat; the voice of one of the *Shark's* men apparently hailing our fellows; the beat of her cloths against the mast; and the recoil of the water breaking from her broad channels as she buried her plates to the height almost of those platforms.

"I am breathless with astonishment," said I; "but, God be praised, Wilf, I see you mean to confront this business coldly."

"The captain of that vessel is coming on board," he said, speaking with extraordinary composure, while his face, from which the smile had faded, still preserved the light or expression of its mingled triumph and bitterness.

"He will be here in a minute or two," I answered.

"Is Laura up?"

"I do not know."

"See that she gets the news, Charles, at once. I shall want her on deck. Then return and we will concert a little programme."

I quitted his cabin, marvelling exceedingly at his collectedness. But then I had noticed that his mind steadied in proportion as his attention grew fixed. This is true of most weak intelligences, I suppose; if you want them to ride you must let go an anchor for them. I was hesitating at Miss Jennings's door, stretching my ear for the sound of her voice, that I might know she was dressing and had her maid with her, when the handle was turned and the maid came out. I inquired if her mistress was rising. She answered "Yes." "Tell her," said I, "that there is a vessel close to us, and that Colonel Hope-Kennedy and Lady Monson are on board of her. Sir Wilfrid begs that she will make haste, as he desires her presence on deck as soon as possible." I then returned to my cousin's berth, thinking that, though to be sure the news would immensely scare the little girl, it was best that she should have the whole truth at once, and so find time to tauten her nerves for what was to come.

As I entered my cousin's cabin I heard through the open port the sound of the grinding of oars between thole-pins, and immediately after there rang out a cry of "Look out for the end of the line!" by which I knew that Crimp's brother was alongside of us. Wilfrid,

having buttoned his boots, was now completely dressed. He stood with a hand upon the edge of his bunk, gazing at the bark, which still hung fair in the blue and gleaming disk of the port-hole, showing in that circular frame like a daguerrotype with the silvery flashing and fading of light, the shooting prismatic tints, the shot-silk-like alternations of hues that accompanied the floating heave of her by the swell to the sunshine. I picked up a small binocular glass that lay on the table, but could see nothing as yet of Lady Monson or her companion.

"My wife was always a late riser," said Wilfrid, turning to me, with a haggard smile, and a cold sarcastic note in his voice, that was steadied, as your ear instinctively detected, by the iron resolution of his mood, as the spine stiffens the form.

"Had we not better go on deck?" said I. "It might be useful to hear what the master of the bark has to say."

"Inch by inch, Charles. There is no hurry. I have my man safe," pointing at the vessel. "Let us briefly debate a course of action—or, rather, let me leave myself in your hands. We want no 'scene,' as women call it, or as little as possible. There are many grinning, merely curious spectators, and Lady Monson is still my wife. What do you advise?"

"First of all, my dear Wilfrid, what do you want?" I exclaimed, rather puzzled, and not at all relishing the responsibility of offering suggestions. "You intend, of course, that Lady Monson shall come on board the *Bride*. But the colonel?"

"Oh," cried he, sharply and fiercely, "I shall want him here too."

"Then you don't mean to separate them?"

"Yes, I do," he answered; "as effectually as a bullet can manage it for me."

"Ha!" said I, and I was silent a little, and then said: "If I were you, I should leave Crimp's brother to sail away with the rascal. The separation will be as complete as—"

He silenced me with a passionate gesture, but said, nevertheless, calmly, "I want them both on board my yacht."

"Will they come if they are fetched, think you?"

He walked impatiently to the door. "I must plan for myself. I see," he exclaimed. He grasped the handle and turned to me, with his hands still upon it. "I see how it is with you, Charles," he said, almost gently; "you object to my fighting Colonel Hope-Kennedy."

"I do," I answered. "I object to this scoundrel being furnished

with a chance of completing the injury he has done you by shooting you."

He came to me, put his hand on my shoulder, bent his face close to mine, and said, in a low voice: "Do not fear for me; I shall kill him. As you value my love"—his tone faltered—"do not come by so much as a hair's-breadth between me and my resolution to take his life. If he will not fight me on board my yacht, he shall fight me on yonder vessel. He is a soldier—a colonel; he will not refuse my challenge. Come, my programme is arranged; we are now wasting time." He stepped from his berth, and I followed him.

As I turned to ascend the companion-steps, Wilfrid being in advance of me, mounting with impetuosity, I saw Miss Jennings come out of her berth. I waited for her. Her face was bloodless, yet I was glad to see something like resolution expressed in it.

"Is it true, Mr. Monson, that my sister is close to us in a ship?" she asked.

"She and the colonel," I answered; "within eyeshot—that is to say, when they step on deck."

She put her hand to her breast, and drew several short breaths.

"Pray, take courage," I said; "it is for your sister to tremble—not you."

"How has Wilfrid received this piece of extraordinary news?" she asked, with a sort of panting in her way of speaking.

"He is as unmoved, I give you my word, as if he were of cast-iron. You shall judge; he has preceded us."

I took her hand and led her up the ladder. Crimp's brother had apparently just climbed over the yacht's side. As I made my appearance he was coming aft from the gangway in company with Finn and surly old Jacob. All three rumbled with talk at once as they made, with a deep-sea roll, for Wilfrid, who was standing so as to keep the main-mast of the yacht between him and the bark. Miss Jennings started and stopped on seeing the vessel, that had closed us somewhat since she had first hove to, so that it was almost possible now to distinguish the faces of her people. When my companion moved again she seemed to shrink—almost cower, indeed—and passed to the right of me, as though to hide herself. Then, peeping past me at the vessel, she said, "I see no lady on board."

"Your sister is still below, I expect," I answered.

She left me and clasped my cousin's arm, just saying, "Oh, Wil-

frid!" in a tearful, pitiful voice. He gazed down at her, and pressed his hand upon hers with a look of dreadful grief entering his face swiftly as a blush suffuses a woman's cheek; but the expression passed quickly. Something he said in a whisper, then lightly freed his arm from her clasp and turned to the master of the bark.

"Captain Crimp, your honor," said Finn, knuckling his forehead; "Jacob's brother, Sir Wilfrid."

Small need to mention *that*, I thought, for, saving that Jacob was the taller by an inch or two, while his brother's eyes looked straight at you, the twins were the most ludicrous incomparable match that any lover of the uncommon could have desired to see; both of the same sulky cast of countenance, both of the exact same build, each wearing a light kind of beard similarly colored.

"Yes, I'm Jacob's brother," answered Captain Crimp. "Heard he was out a-yachtin', but didn't know the name of the wessel."

"I'm very glad to have fallen in with you," said Wilfrid, addressing him with a coolness that I saw astonished Finn; while Miss Laura glanced at me with an arching of her eyebrows as eloquent of amazement as if she had spoken her thoughts. "I hear that you have a lady and gentleman on board your ship."

"Ay," answered Captain Crimp, bluntly, though, somehow, one found nothing offensive in his manner of speech; "they want to leave me, and," added he, with a surly grin, "I don't blame 'em. Gewhany ain't over-choice as a smell, 'ticularly down here."

"Their names are Colonel Hope-Kennedy and Lady Monson. Is that so?" demanded Wilfrid, speaking slowly and coldly.

Captain Crimp turned a stupid stare of wonder upon his brother, and then, addressing Wilfrid, exclaimed: "Who told 'ee? Ye've got the gent's name right; the lady's his missus—same name as t'other's." Wilfrid set his teeth.

I looked towards the bark, but there were no signs of the colonel or her ladyship yet.

"The lady is my wife, Captain Crimp," said Wilfrid.

"Ho, indeed!" responded the man, showing no surprise whatever.

"She has run away," continued my cousin, "with the gentleman you have on board your vessel, and we," looking round upon us, "are here in pursuit of them. We have met with them—very unexpectedly. It is likely when Colonel Hope-Kennedy discovers who we are that he may request you to trim your sails and proceed on your voyage home, and offer you a sum of money to convey Lady Monson and himself away from us. You will not do so!" he ex-

claimed, with sudden temper, which he instantly subdued, though it darkened his face.

"I don't want no trouble," answered Captain Crimp. "The parties have been a-wanting to get out of my wessel pretty nigh ever since we fell in with them, and here's their chance. Only," he added, with a wooden look at his brother, "if they don't choose to quit I can't chuck 'em overboard."

"Oh yes, 'ee can, 'Arry," said Jacob. "What ye've got to do is to tell 'em they must *go*. No sogerin' in this business, 'Arry; so stand by. The law ain't a-going to let ye keep a lawful wife away from her wedded spouse when he tarns to and demands her of ye. Better chuck 'em overboard than have the lawyers fall foul of ye, 'Arry."

This was a long speech for Jacob, who nodded several times at his brother with energy after delivering it.

"Well, and who wants to keep a wedded woman away from her lawful spouse, as ye calls it, Jacob?" exclaimed Captain Crimp. "What I says is, if the parties refuses to leave, I can't chuck 'em overboard."

"See here, captain," said Finn, "Jacob's right; and what you as a sensible man's got to do is to steer clear of quandaries. His honor 'll be sending for the lady and the gent, and you'll have to tell 'em to *go*, as Jacob says. If they refuse—but let 'em refuse first" —he continued, with a look at Wilfrid.

"I don't want no trouble," said Captain Crimp; "and I ain't going to get in a mess for no man. Do what you think's proper. What I ask is to be left out of the boiling."

As he spoke I touched Miss Jennings's arm. "*There they are!*" I whispered.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE COLONEL AND HER LADYSHIP.

WILFRID saw them, too, in a flash. He slightly reeled, making a fierce grasp at some gear against the main-mast to steady himself. Distant as they were, one could see, nevertheless, that they were an uncommonly fine couple. A man who was apparently the mate of the bark stood near them, and, though seemingly above rather than below the average stature, he looked a very poor little fellow alongside the towering and commanding figure of the colonel. I witnessed no gestures, no movements, nothing of any kind to denote astonishment or alarm in either of them. They stood stock-still, side by side, surveying us over an open rail that exposed their forms from their feet; he, so far as I could make out, attired in dark blue cloth or serge, and a cap with a naval peak, the top protected by a white cover; she in a dress of some sort of yellow material that fitted her figure as a glove fits the hand. But more than this one's sight could not distinguish, saving that her hat, that was very wide at the brim, was apparently of straw or chip with one side curled up to a large crimson flower there.

I saw Miss Laura gazing with the fascination of a bird at some gilded and glowing and emerald-eyed serpent. Captain Crimp, looking round at his vessel just then, said, "Them's the parties."

"Ay, there's her ladyship," whipped out Finn, biting his lip, however, as though ashamed of the exclamation, with a dodge of his head to right and left as he levelled a look at the couple under the sharp of his hand.

"Finn," cried Wilfrid, with a face as crimson as though he had exposed it to the sun all day, and with a note in his utterance as if his teeth were setting spite of him while he spoke, "get a boat lowered and brought to the gangway. You, myself, Miss Jennings, and my cousin will go aboard that bark at once. Captain Crimp will attend us in his own boat." He turned swiftly upon the master of the bark, and exclaimed imperiously, with wrath surging into his words till it rendered the key of them almost shrill, "I count upon your assistance. You must order those people off your vessel. Yonder

lady is my wife, and the man alongside of her I must have—here!" stamping his foot and pointing vehemently to the deck, "that I may punish him. Do you understand me?"

"Why, of course I do," answered Captain Crimp, manifestly awed by the wild look my cousin fastened upon him, by his manner, full of haughtiness and passion, and his tone of fierce command. "What I says is, do what ye like, only let me be out of the smother. My crew's troublesome enough. Don't want to get in no mess through castaway folks."

Finn was yelling orders along the deck for a boat's crew to lay aft.

On a sudden the yacht was hailed by the man whom I had noticed standing near Colonel Hope-Kennedy. "Schooner ahoy!"

Jacob Crimp went to the rail. "Holloa!" he bawled.

"Will yer tell my capt'n, please," shouted the fellow from the bark's quarter-deck, "that the lady and gent desire him to come aboard, as they don't want nothin' to do with your schooner? They prefer to keep where they are, and request that no more time may be lost."

"Ha!" cried Wilfrid, looking round at me with an iron grin; then he half screamed to the men who were running aft, "Bear a hand with the boat, my lads, bear a hand with the boat! We've found what we've been hunting in yonder craft, and by God, men, we'll have that couple out of it, or sink the vessel they stand on!"

Jack is almost certain to cheer to a speech of this kind; the sailors burst out into a loud hurrah as they sprang to the falls. Captain Crimp walked to his brother's side, and putting his hand to his mouth cried to the mate of his vessel, for such the fellow undoubtedly was, "Mr. Lobb."

"Holloa, sir!"

"My compliments to the lady and gent, and we're *all* a-coming aboard. I don't want no trouble, tell 'em, and I don't mean to have none."

Scarce was the sense of this remark gatherable when Lady Monson walked to the companion and vanished below, leaving the colonel standing erect as a sentry at the rail.

"She's gone to her cabin, and will lock herself in, probably. What'll be to do then?" said I to Miss Laura.

She wrung her hands, but made no answer.

Meanwhile in hot haste the sailors had cast adrift the gripes of the boat and lowered her. She was a roomy fabric, pulling six oars, and capable of comfortably stowing eighteen or twenty people.

"Mr. Crimp," said Wilfrid, "get tackles aloft ready for swaying out of the hold the eighteen-pounder that lies there. D'ye understand?"

"Ay, it shall be done," answered Crimp, coming away from his brother, with whom he had been exchanging some muttering sentences.

"An eighteen-pounder!" cried Captain Crimp, whipping round.

"Have everything in readiness," cried Wilfrid, making a move towards the gangway, "to get the gun mounted, with ball and cartridge for loading. See to it now, or look to yourself, Crimp. Come!" he cried.

He seized Miss Laura by the hand; Finn and I followed, Captain Crimp rolling astern of us. We descended the side and entered the boat, and then shoved off, waiting when we were within a length or two of the yacht's side for Captain Crimp to drop into his own boat.

"Skipper," sung out Finn to him, "hail your bark, will'ee, and tell 'em to get a ladder or steps over."

This was done; the sailors of the bark, along with the three or four yachtsmen who had been picked up out of the *Shark's* boat, scenting plenty of excitement in the air, tumbled about with alacrity. They saw more sport than they could have got out of an evening at a theatre, and I question if a man of them could have been got to handle a brace until this wild ocean drama had been played through. Meanwhile the colonel stood rigid at the rail looking on.

"What is to be done," Mr. Monson, whispered Miss Laura to me, "if Henrietta has locked herself up in her cabin and refuses to come out?"

"Let us hope that her door has no lock," said I. "There are easy ways, however, of coaxing a bolt."

"Give way, lads!" cried Finn. The six blades cut the water sharp as knives, and a few strokes carried us alongside the bark. We held a grim silence, saving that as the bow-oar picked up his boat-hook he expectorated violently to the evil smell that seemed to come floating off the vessel's side as she rolled towards us, driving the air our way. Evil it was, as you may suppose of a cargo of guano mixed up with the rotting carcasses of sea-fowl, under the blaze of the sun, whose roasting eye of fire was fast crawling to its meridian. The faint breeze was dying, and the heat alongside the bark was scarce sufferable with the tingling of the luminary's light like fiery needles darting into one's eyes and skin off the smooth surface that flashed with a dazzle of new tin. The colonel had left the rail and had

seated himself upon a little skylight, his arms folded. The first to climb the side was Wilfrid; Finn and I followed, supporting Miss Laura between us; then came Captain Crimp. The vessel was an old craft, her decks somewhat grimy, with a worm-eaten look; the smell of the cargo coupled with the heat was hardly supportable; the crew, half-naked, unwashed, and many of them wild with hair, stood sweltering in a cluster near the fore-hatch staring at us, grinning and nudging one another. But the men who had belonged to the *Shark* were already leaning over the side, calling to our men to hook their boat more forward that they might have a yarn.

Wilfrid, who was a little in advance of us, walked steadily up to Colonel Hope-Kennedy, who rose as my cousin approached him, letting fall his arms from their folded posture. Handsome he was not, at least to my taste, but he was what would be called a fine man—exceedingly so; six feet one or more in stature, with a body and limbs perfectly proportioned to his height; small dark eyes, heavily thatched, coal-black whiskers and mustache, ivory-white teeth, and an expression of intelligence in his face as his air was one of distinction. He had a very care-worn look, was pale, haggard almost; dark hollows under the eyes, brought about, as I might readily suppose, by exposure and privation in an open boat. I could witness no agitation in him whatever; his nerves seemed of steel, and he confronted Wilfrid's approach haughtily erect, merely swaying to the heel of the deck, passionless and as unmoved in his aspect as any figure of wax.

Wilfrid walked right up to him and said, composedly, while he pointed to the gangway, "You will be good enough to enter my boat that my crew may convey you at once to the yacht."

"I shall do nothing of the kind, sir," answered the colonel, quietly, but in a tone distinctly audible to us who had come to a halt some paces away. "Captain Crimp!"

"Sir," responded the master of the bark, with an uneasy shuffling step or two towards the couple.

"You are the commander of this vessel. It is in your power to order your deck to be cleared of these visitors. I am your passenger, and look to you for protection. I decline to exchange this vessel for that yacht, and request, therefore, that you will proceed on your voyage." He spoke with a fine air of dignity, the effect of which was improved, I thought, by his giving himself slightly the manner of an injured man.

"Sir, I want no trouble," answered Captain Crimp. "I onder-

stand that the lady you're with is this gentleman's wife. Every man's got a right to his own. The gentleman means to take the lady back with him to his yacht, and I don't think that there's any one aboard this wessel as'll stop him."

"I mean to take my wife," exclaimed Wilfrid, still preserving what in him was an amazing composure of voice and manner, "and I mean to take you too. Colonel Hope-Kennedy, you are a bloody rascal! You shall fight me—but not here. You shall fight me—yonder;" he pointed to the *Bride*. "*This* you *must* repay." He struck him hard upon the face with the back of his hand.

The cheek that had received the blow turned scarlet, the other was of a ghastly pallor. He looked at Wilfrid for a moment with such a fire in his eye, such a hellish expression of wrath in his face, that I involuntarily sprang forward to the help of my cousin, resolved that there should be no vulgar, degraded exhibition of fisticuffs and wrestling between the men.

But I was misled by the colonel's looks. He folded his arms, and said—exhibiting in his utterance a marvellous control over his temper—"That blow was needless. I will fight you here or on your own vessel, as you please. But if I fight you yonder the condition must be"—he was now looking at me and addressing me—"that I am afterwards at liberty to return to this vessel."

Wilfrid eyed him with a savage smile. I approached the man, raising my hat. He instantly returned the salute.

"Sir," I said, "I am Sir Wilfrid Monson's cousin, and agree to the condition you name. To save any further exhibition of temper before those men there, may I entreat you to at once step into the yacht's boat?"

His eye wandered about the deck for a moment or two; he then said, "I am without a second. That need not signify. But I must be satisfied that the duel in other respects will be in accordance with the practice of such things ashore."

"Oh, certainly!" I answered.

"What are to be the weapons?" he inquired.

"Pistols," I replied.

"I have no pistols. I have lost all by the foundering of my yacht."

"We have pistols," said I.

He bowed, then his eye roamed over the deck again, and he exclaimed, with the air of a man thinking aloud, "I am without a second," adding decisively, "I am perfectly willing to give Sir Wilfrid

Monson satisfaction, but I submit, sir, that it would be more convenient to wait until he and I have arrived home—"

"No!" thundered my cousin. "I do not mean that you shall arrive home."

The colonel glanced at him with a sneer.

"Will you be so good as to step into the boat, sir?" said I.

He hung in the wind with a look at the little companion-hatch. "The lady, I presume," he said, addressing me, "is to be left—"

"Do not mention her name!" said Wilfrid, in a trembling voice, approaching him by a stride with a countenance dark with the menace of mad blood.

The colonel fell away from him with a swiftly passing convulsion of countenance such as might have been wrought by a sudden spasm of the heart.

"This way, sir," said Finn, moving in a bustling fashion towards the gangway.

I confess I drew a breath of relief when the colonel, without a word, and with a mechanical step, followed him. There was, indeed, no other course that he could adopt. Captain Crimp had retreated doggedly to the gangway abreast of the one we had entered by, and lay over the rail in a wooden way, with resolution to give himself no concern in this business strong in his posture. The colonel saw, therefore, that it was useless to hope for his interference. In a few moments he had descended the side, and was being pulled aboard the *Bride*, with Finn standing up in the stern-sheets and singing out to us that he would return for the rest of the party shortly.

I now missed Miss Laura, and was looking around the deck for her when she suddenly came up out of the cabin. I was standing close to the hatch at the moment, which was the reason, perhaps, of her addressing me instead of Wilfrid, who was at the skylight gazing at the withdrawing boat with an absent face.

"Mr. Monson," she exclaimed, "my sister will not answer me. I do not know where she is."

"Have you tried all the berths?"

"I have knocked at every door and called to her. I did not like to turn the handles."

I thought to myself, suppose her ladyship has committed suicide!—lying dead below with a knife in her heart! Truly a pleasant ending of our chase, with a chance on top of it of the colonel driving a bullet through my cousin's brains! The girl's gaze was fastened on me; her pallor was grievous, her face full of shame,

grief, consternation; her very beauty had a sort of passing withered look, like a rose in the hot atmosphere of a room.

"Wilfrid!" I exclaimed.

He brought his eyes away from the boat with a start and approached us. "Miss Jennings has been overhauling the cabin below," said I, "and cannot get your wife to answer her."

"Have you seen her, Laura?" he cried, in a half-breathless way, stooping his face to hers, with his near-sighted eyes moistening till I looked to see a tear fall.

"No," she answered. "She has shut herself up in her cabin. I have knocked at every berth and called to her, but she will not answer me."

His face changed. He shouted to Captain Crimp, who was leaning with his back against the starboard rail near the gangway, watching us out of the corner of his eyes, and waiting for us to take the next step. He came to us.

"Kindly show us," said Wilfrid, "the cabin which the lady occupies."

"This way," he answered, and forthwith trundled down the companion-steps, we at his heels. We found ourselves in what Captain Crimp would doubtless have called a state cabin—a gloomy, dirty interior with a board-like rude table that travelled upon stanchions, so that it could be thrust up out of the road when room was wanted—while on either hand of it was a row of coarse lockers, the covers of which were liberally scored with the marks of knives that had been used for cutting up cake-tobacco. The upper deck was very low pitched, and, as if the heat and the disgusting smell of the cargo did not suffice, there swung from a blackened beam a lighted, globular lamp, the flame of which burned into a coil of thick black smoke, that filled the atmosphere with a flavor of hot fat. Yet apparently, to judge by the number of berths this rank and grimy old bark was fitted with, she had served as a passenger-vessel in her heyday. There were doors conducting to little cabins forward of the living-room, and there were four berths abaft contrived much as the *Bride's* were—that is to say, rendered accessible by a slender alleyway or corridor.

"The lady's cabin," said Captain Crimp, pointing, "is the starn one to port, the airiest of 'em all. It was chosen because it was furdest off from this here smell;" and he snuffled as he spoke.

Wilfrid, followed by Miss Laura, at once walked to the indicated cabin. I remained standing by the table with Crimp, watching my

cousin. He tried the handle of the door, found the key turned or a bolt shot, shook it a little, then, after a pause, knocked lightly.

"Henrietta," he exclaimed, "it is I—your husband! You know my voice. I want you."

There was no answer. He knocked again, then Miss Laura exclaimed, "Henrietta, open the door! Wilfrid is here—I am here—I, Laura, your sister. We have come to take you home to the little one that you left behind you. Oh, Henrietta, dear, for my sake—for your child's sake, for our father's sake—" her voice faltered, and she broke down, sobbing piteously.

"I hope to Heaven the woman has not killed herself!" I exclaimed to Captain Crimp. "But it is for you to act now. Step aft with me. You don't want to keep her on board, I suppose?"

"Not I," he answered.

"Threaten, then, to break open the door. If that don't avail, send at once for your carpenter, for you may then take it that her silence means she lies dead."

He walked aft and beat with a fist as hard as the stock of a musket, raising a small thunder. "Sorry to interfere, lady," he exclaimed, talking at the door with his nose within an inch of it; "this here's no job for the likes of me to be messing about with." A dead pause. "There's folks who are a-waiting for you to come out." Here he grasped the handle of the door and boisterously shook it. "And as there's no call now for you to remain, and as loitering in this here heat with the hatches flush with gewhany isn't to none of our liking, I must beg, mum," he shouted, "that you'll slip the bolt inside and open the door."

Another dead pause. Miss Jennings looked aghast, and indeed the stillness within the cabin now caused me to forebode the worst. It was clear, however, that no fear of the sort had visited Wilfrid. He gazed at the door with a kind of terrier-like expression in his fixed eyes.

Captain Crimp once more beat heavily, and again wrestled with the handle, trying the door at the same time with his shoulder. "Well, mum," he bawled, "you will do as you like, I suppose, and so must I. I'm not partial to knocking my ship about, but, by thunder, lady, if this here door ain't opened at once I'll send for the carpenter to force it!" Another pause. He added in his hoarsest voice, addressing us generally, "Do she know that the gent that's been keeping her company has gone aboard the yacht?"

"She'll know it now," I answered, "if she has ears to hear with."

I noticed Wilfrid violently start on my saying this.

"Gentlemen," said Captain Crimp, "I'll go and fetch the carpenter;" and he had taken a stride when the bolt within was shot, the handle turned, and the door opened.

Had we come fresh from the splendor of the morning on deck we must have had great difficulty in distinguishing objects in the gloom of the little, hot, evil-smelling interior that had been suddenly revealed to us; but the twilight of the narrow passage in which we stood had accustomed our sight to the dim atmosphere. Lady Monson stood before us in the middle of the cabin, reared to her fullest stature, her hands clasped in front of her in a posture of passionate resolution. I must confess that she had the noblest figure of any woman I had ever seen, and no queen of tragedy could have surpassed the unconsciously heroic attitude of scorn, indignation, hate, unsoftened by the least air of remorse or shame, that she had assumed.

"Captain Crimp," she cried, in a clear rich contralto voice that thrilled through and through one with what I must call the intensity of the emotions it conveyed, "how *dare* you threaten me with breaking open my door? I am your passenger—you will be paid for the services you have rendered. I demand your protection. Who are these people? Order them to leave your ship, sir."

She spoke with her eyes glowing, and riveted upon Captain Crimp's awkward, agitated countenance, never so much as glancing at her husband, at her sister, or at me.

"Well, mum," answered Captain Crimp, passing the back of his hand over his streaming forehead, "all that I know is this: here's a gentleman as says you're his wife; his yacht lies within heasy reach; he wants you aboard, and if so be that you *are* his wife, which nobody yet has denied, then you're bound to go along with him; and I may as well tell 'ee that my dooty as a man lies in seeing that ye *do* go." And here the old chap very spunkily bestowed several emphatic nods upon her.

"Henrietta," cried Miss Laura, "have you nothing to say to me, or to Wilfrid?"

"Go!" she shrieked, with a sharp stamp of her foot, and a wild, warding off gesture of her arms, "what right have you to follow me? I am my own mistress. Leave me. The mere sight of you will drive me as mad as *he* is!" pointing impetuously to Wilfrid but without looking at him.

The poor little darling shrunk like a wounded bird, literally cowering behind me, dismayed and terrified, not, indeed, by the woman's

words, but by the passion in them, the air with which she delivered them, the wrath in her face and the fire in her eyes that would have made you think they reflected a sunset. I looked at Wilfrid. Henrietta had not exhibited the least grief, the least shame, or the feeblest hint, in short, of womanly weakness. I believe he would have fallen upon his knees to her. I had observed an expression almost of adoration enter into and soften his lineaments to an aspect that I do not exaggerate in calling beautiful, through the exquisite pathos of the tenderness that had informed it on her throwing open the door and revealing herself to us, but that look was gone. Her scornful reference to his madness had replaced it by an ugly shadow, a scowl of malignant temper. He stepped over the coaming of the door-way, and extended his hand as if to grasp her.

"Come!" he exclaimed, breathing dangerously fast; "I want you. This is merely wasting time. Come you *must!* Do you understand? Come!" he repeated, still keeping his arm out-stretched.

She recoiled from him as though a cartridge had exploded at her feet, and pressed her back against the side of a bunk, the edge of which she gripped with her hands.

"Leave me!" she said, looking at him now. "I hate you! You cannot control me. I abhor the very memory of you. Madman and wretch, why have you followed me?"

Captain Crimp, who had been shuffling restlessly near me, now whipped in, hoarse, angry, and determined: "See here, mum, all this calling of names isn't going to sarve anybody's purpose. I see how the land lies now. The gentleman has a right to his own, and it's proper ye should know that 'tain't my intention to keep ye. Let there be no more noise aboard this wessel, I beg; otherwise you'll be having my crew shoving down into the cabin to know what's happening. Give her your arm, sir," he cried, addressing me, "and lead her to the gangway. Your boat'll be retarned by this time."

My arm! thought I. Egad, I'd liefer snug the paw of a tigress under my elbow!

"Wilfrid," I exclaimed, "let me exhort you to go on deck and take Miss Jennings with you. I am sure Lady Monson will listen to my representations. It is due to her to remember that we are four, and that she stands alone, and that the suddenness, the unexpectedness of this visit scarcely gives her a chance fully to realize what has come about and to form an intelligent decision."

She uttered a short hysterical laugh, without a smile, while her face glimmered white with rage in the gloom of the cabin. "My

decision is quite intelligent enough to satisfy me," she said, in a voice so irritatingly scornful that it is out of my power to furnish the least idea of it, while she looked at me as though she would strike me dead with her eyes; "I mean to remain here."

"No, mum, no," growled Captain Crimp.

"You know, I presume, Lady Monson," said I, "that Colonel Hope-Kennedy has gone on board the *Bride?*"

"I do not care," she answered. "Captain Crimp, I insist upon your requesting these people to leave me."

"Come!" cried Wilfrid, furiously, and he grasped her by the arm.

She released herself with a shriek and struck him hard on the face; a painful and disgusting scene was threatened; Miss Jennings was crying bitterly; I dreaded the madman in Wilfrid, and sprang between them as he grasped his wife's arm again.

"For God's sake, Wilfrid!" I began, but was silenced by her shrieks. She sent up scream after scream, wrestling with her husband, whose grip of steel I was powerless to relax, and who, with a purple face and a devilish grin of insanity upon his lips, was dragging her towards the door. On a sudden she seemed to suffocate; she beat the air wildly with her arm that was free, then clapped her hand to her heart, swayed a little, and fell to the deck. I was just in time to save her head from striking the hard plank, and there she lay in a dead faint.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE DUEL.

"THIS is our chance," exclaimed Captain Crimp; "she'll go quietly now. She might have done it afore, though. Let's bear a hand, or she'll be reviving."

"Wilfrid, see if our boat's alongside, will you?" I cried, anxious to get him out of the way, and to correct as far as possible the unmistakable mood of madness that had come upon him with Lady Monson's insults and blow, by finding him occupation, "and send Finn to help us, and let the men stand by, ready to receive the lady."

He cast a look of fury at his wife as she lay motionless on the deck, her head supported on my arm, and sped away in long strides, chattering to himself as he went.

"Is she dead?" cried Miss Jennings in a voice of terror, and her ashen face streaming.

"Bless us, no!" said I; "a downright faint, and thank goodness for it. Now, captain."

How between us we managed to carry her on deck I'm sure I do not know. Captain Crimp had her by the feet, I by the shoulders, and Miss Laura helped to keep the apparently lifeless woman's head to its bearings. She was as limber as though struck by lightning, and the harder to carry for that reason—a noble figure, as I have said, and deucedly heavy to boot. My part was the hardest, for I had to step backward and mount the companion-ladder, that was almost perpendicular, crab fashion. The captain and I swayed together, staggering and perspiring, bothered excessively by the ungainly rolling of the bark, both of us nearly dead with heat, and I half suffocated besides by the abominable acid stench from the hold. We were animated, however, into uncommon exertions by the desire to get her over the side before she recovered; and the fear of her awakening and resisting us, and shrieking out and the like, gave us, I reckon, for that particular job the strength of four men. We conveyed her to the gangway, helped by Finn, who received us at the companion-hatch, and with infinite pains handed her over the side, still motionless in her swoon, into the boat. A

hard task it was; we dare not call out, for fear of reviving her, and the melancholy business was carried through by signs and gestures, topped off with sundry hoarse whispered orders from Finn.

I paused, panting, my face burning like fire, while Captain Crimp looked to be slowly dissolving, the perspiration literally streaming from his fingers' ends onto the deck, as though he were a figure of snow gradually wasting.

"Why couldn't she have fainted away at first?" he muttered to me. "That's the worst of women; they're always so slow a-making up their minds."

Now that she was in the boat the trouble was at an end; though she recovered consciousness she could not regain the bark's deck, and there was no power in her screams to hinder the yachtsmen's oars from sweeping her to the *Bride*. Preserve me! what a picture it all made just then! The wild-haired, wild-eyed, semi-nude figures of the bark's crew overhanging the rail to view Lady Monson as she lay, white and corpse-like, in the bottom of the boat; the sober, concerned faces of our own men; Wilfrid's savage, crazy look as he waited, with his eyes fixed upon his yacht, for Miss Laura to be handed down before entering the boat himself; the prostrate form of his wife with her head pillowed on Finn's jacket, her eyes half opened, disclosing the whites only, and imparting the completest imaginable aspect of death to her countenance, with its pale lips and marble brow and cheek bleached into downright ghastliness by contrast of the luxuriant black hair that had fallen in tresses from under her hat. The men who had belonged to the *Shark* stood in a little group near the foremast looking on, but with a commiserating, respectful air. One of them stepped up to us as Miss Laura was in the act of descending the side, and addressing Finn while he touched his cap, exclaimed, "We should be glad, sir, if you'd take us aboard the *Bride*. We'll heartily tarn to with the rest; you'll find us all good men."

"No!" roared Wilfrid, whipping round upon him, "I want no man that has had anything to do with the *Shark* aboard my vessel."

The fellow fell back muttering. My cousin turned to Captain Crimp.

"Sir," he cried, "I thank you for your friendly offices." He produced a pocket-book. "You have acted the part of an honest man, sir. I am obliged to you. I trust that this may satisfy all charges for the maintenance of Lady Monson on board your ship." He

handed him a Bank of England note; Crimp turned the corner down to look at the figure—I believe it was for a hundred pounds—and then buried it in his breeches-pocket.

"I'm mighty obliged to you—mighty obliged," he exclaimed. "It's a deal more'n the job's worth. I'd like to see my way to wishing you happiness"—and he was proceeding, but Wilfrid stopped him by dropping over the side, calling to me to make haste.

"Captain Crimp," I said, hurriedly, "you will please keep your bark hove-to as she is now for the present. There's to be a duel; you of course know that." He nodded. "You also heard the promise made to Colonel Hope-Kennedy, that after the duel he is to be at liberty to return to your vessel."

"My God! then I don't think he will, for the guv'nor means to shoot him," said Captain Crimp, "and I'll wager what he guv me that he'll do it too, and sarve 'im right. Running away with another man's wife! Ain't there enough single gals in the world to suit the likes of that there colonel? But I'll keep hove-to as you ask."

All this he mumbled in my ear as I put my foot over the side, waiting for the wash of the swell to float the boat up before dropping. We then shoved off.

We had scarcely measured a boat's length, however, from the bark's side when Lady Monson stirred, opened and shut her eyes, drew a long, fluttering breath, then started up, leaning on her elbow staring about her. She gazed at the men, at me, at her husband and sister, with her wits abroad, but intelligence seemed to rush into her eyes like fire when her sight encountered the yacht. I thought to myself what will she do now?—Jump overboard? Go into hysterics? Swoon away again?—I watched her keenly, though furtively, prepared to arrest any passionate movement in her, for there had come a wilder look in her face than ever I had seen in Wilfrid's. My cousin sat like a figure of stone, his gaze riveted to his schooner, and Miss Laura glanced at her sister wistfully, but, as one saw, on the alert to avoid meeting her gaze.

I could very well understand now that this fair, gentle, golden-haired girl should have held her tall, dark, imperious, tragic-eyed sister in awe.

I know I felt heartily afraid of her myself as I sat pretending not to notice her, though in an askant way I was taking her in from head to foot, feeling mightily curious to see what sort of a person she was, and I was exceedingly thankful that the yacht lay within a

few minutes of us. But happily there was to be no "scene." She saw how things stood, and with an air of haughty dignity rose from the bottom of the boat and seated herself in the place I vacated for her, turning her face seaward to conceal it from the men. Nobody but a woman possessed of her excellent harmonious shape could have risen unaided with the grace, I may say the majesty, of motion she exhibited from the awkward, prostrate posture in which she had lain. The bitter, sarcastic sneer upon her lip paralyzed in me the immediate movement of my mind to offer her my hand. She seemed to float upward to her full height as a stage dancer of easy and exquisite skill rises to her feet from a recumbent attitude. I might well believe that many men would find her face fascinating, though it was not one that I could fall in love with. She was out and away handsomer than her picture represented her, spite of the traces which yet lingered of suffering, privation, and distress of mind such as shipwreck, and even a day's tossing about in an open boat, might produce.

Not a syllable was uttered by any one of us as the flashing oars of the rowers swept us to the *Bride*. The sailors, with instinctive good feeling, stared to right and left at their dripping and sparkling blades as though absorbed by contemplation of the rise and fall of the sand-white lengths of ash. Finn at the yoke-lines sat with a countenance of wood. We buzzed foaming to the accommodation-ladder. I was the first to spring out, and stood waiting to hand Lady Monson onto the steps; but without taking the least notice of me she exclaimed, addressing her sister in a low but distinctly audible voice, "Take me at once to your cabin," and so saying she stepped onto the ladder. I helped Miss Laura out of the boat, and then they both passed through the gangway, and I saw no more of them. Wilfrid mounted slowly at my heels, I passed my arm through his and walked him aft. He made as if he would resist, then came passively enough, sighing deeply as though his heart had broken.

"Wilfrid," I said, gently, "a hard and bitter part of the project of your voyage is ended. You have regained your wife—your one desire is fulfilled—why not, then, abandon the rest of your programme? Yonder bark will be kept hove-to until we hail her to say that she may proceed. Colonel Hope-Kennedy does not want to fight you. Let me go to him and arrange that he shall return to that vessel forthwith. I abhor the notion of a duel between you. Your end has been achieved bloodlessly; your baby has such a claim upon your life that if you will but give a moment's thought to the

significance of it, you would not, you dare not, turn a deaf ear to the infant's appeal. Consider again, we are without a surgeon; there is no medical help here for the sufferer, be he you or be he your enemy. This colonel, again, is without a second. Wilfrid, in the name of God, let him go! He may reach England, and will meet you ashore, if you desire it; but between then and now there will be abundance of time for you to consider whether there is any occasion for you to give the scoundrel a chance of completing the injury he has already dealt you by sending a bullet through your heart."

He listened to me with wonderful patience, his head bowed, his eyes rooted on the deck, his hands clasped in front of him. I was flattering myself that I had produced something of the impression I desired to make, when, lifting his face, he looked slowly round at me, and said quietly, almost softly, "Charles, I shall not love you less for your advice. You speak out of the fulness of your heart. I thank you, dear cousin, for your kindness. And now do me this favor." He pulled out his watch and let his eye rest on it for a brief pause, but I doubt if he took note of the hour. "Go to Colonel Hope-Kennedy and make all necessary arrangements for our meeting as soon as possible. See Captain Finn, and request him to send the sailors below when the appointed time arrives. Come to my cabin and let me know the result. Colonel Hope-Kennedy shall have choice of the pistols in my case, and, seeing that he has no second any more than I have, for your office will simply consist in chalking the distance and in giving the signal, he must load for himself."

He took my hand in both his, pressed it hard, and then, without a word, walked to the companion and disappeared. Captain Finn, who had been watching us from a distance, waiting till our conversation had ended, now walked up to me.

"Can you tell me his honor's wishes, sir?" he inquired. "I suppose, now that he has fallen in with her ladyship, he'll be heading home?"

"Let the yacht lie as she is for the present, Finn," said I; "no need to hoist in the boat either. She cannot hurt herself alongside in this smooth water. We may be wanting her shortly to convey Colonel Hope-Kennedy to the bark. Sir Wilfrid means to fight him, and at once. I would give half what I am worth to avert this meeting, but my cousin is resolved, and I must stand by him."

"Sir," said Finn, "he has been cruelly used."

"When the time comes," I continued, "he wishes the men to be sent below. You will see to that."

"Oh yes. But I dorn't think the helm should be desarted, sir."

"Certainly not," I exclaimed. "Arrange it thus: let Mr. Crimp hold the wheel. I must have help at hand, for one of the men may fall badly wounded. Therefore stay you on deck, Captain Finn, and keep by me within easy hail. Cutbill is also a strong, serviceable fellow in such an emergency as this. Post him at the forehatch to hinder any man from popping his head up to look. I shall thus have two—you and him—to assist me."

"Right, sir," he exclaimed, touching his cap.

"Better mark off the ground, or deck rather, at once," said I; "fetch me a piece of chalk, Finn."

He went forward, and in a few moments returned with what I required. A broad awning sheltered the whole of the quarter-deck that lay gleaming white as the flesh of the cocoanut in the soft, almost violet-hued shadow. There was just air enough stirring aloft to keep the lighter cloths quiet and to provide against the yacht being slued or revolved by the run of the long, delicate, tropic swell. I said to Finn, after considering a little, and anxiously observing the effects of the sunshine gushing through the blue air between the edge of the awning and the bulwark-rail, or rising off the sea in a trembling flashing that whitened the air above it, "I don't think it will matter which side of the quarter-deck we choose. The men must toss for position. But there's a dazzle on the water off the port bow that might bother the eye that faces forward. Better mark the starboard side therefore."

He gazed thoughtfully around, and said, "The yacht's position can be altered, if you like, sir."

I answered: "No; leave her as she is. She rolls regularly and quietly thus."

I had never before been concerned in a duel, and, in the matter of the strict etiquette of this sort of encounter, was entirely at a loss how to act. However, I had always understood that twelve paces were the prescribed distance; so, ruling a line athwart ships almost abreast of the main-mast, I made twelve steps, and then scored another line crosswise, measuring the interval a second time, and finding that it was very fairly twelve of my own paces. The men had come together in a crowd forward, and were staring aft with all their might. They knew perfectly well what was going to take place, and they were not yet sensible that they were not to be admitted to the spectacle. It was to be something of a far more wildly exciting sort than catching a shark—ay, or even, maybe, of

seeing a man hung at a ship's yard-arm. It put a sort of sickness into me, somehow, to witness that swarm of whiskered mahogany-cheeked faces, all looking thirstily, expectation shaping every posture, with a kind of swimming of the whole body of them, too, in the haze of heat into which the yacht's jib-boom went twisting in a manner to make the brain dizzy to watch it. One never gets to see how thoroughly animal human nature is at bottom until one has examined the expression of the countenances of a mob, big or little, assembled in expectation of witnessing human suffering.

I stepped below. Colonel Hope-Kennedy sat bareheaded at the cabin-table, supporting his head on his right elbow, and drumming softly with the fingers of his left hand. I approached him, and giving him a bow, which he returned with an air of great dignity —men are amazingly polite when arranging the terms of some cut-throat job—I said, "It is my painful duty, sir, to inform you that my cousin desires the meeting between you and him should take place at once."

"Not a moment need be lost so far as I am concerned," he answered, gazing at me steadfastly with eyes that looked like porcelain, with the singular glaze that seemed to have come suddenly upon them.

"My cousin requests me to state," I continued, "that you will consider him as acting without a second equally with yourself. My unhappy office will consist simply in giving the signal to fire. I would to God that my influence had been powerful enough with him to arrest his resolution at this point—"

"It could not have prevailed with me," he exclaimed. "The madman's blow was needless. On what part of the yacht do we fight?"

"On the quarter-deck," I answered.

"Measured by you?"

I bowed.

"As there are no seconds," he said, "I presume we load for ourselves?"

"That is Sir Wilfrid Monson's suggestion," I answered.

"Have you the pistols, sir?"

"I will fetch them."

I went at once to Wilfrid's berth and knocked, and walked in without waiting for him to tell me to enter. He was writing in his diary; he instantly threw down his pen and jumped from his chair.

"Is all ready, Charles?" he asked.

"Your pistols are identical, I believe?" said I.

"Exactly alike," he answered.

"Then Colonel Hope-Kennedy's choice," said I, "cannot furnish him with any advantage over you by his choosing, I mean with a soldier's experience, the preciser weapon?"

"There is not an atom of difference between them," he exclaimed. "Yonder's the case, Charles; take it, and let the scoundrel choose for himself."

He could not have spoken more coolly had he been giving me the most commonplace instructions. I remember wondering, while I looked at him and listened to him, whether he actually realized his own intention; yet I should have known better than this if only for the meaning his face conveyed, and for a note in his voice that made every accent hard and steady. He said, "When you are ready ring the hand-bell on the table; I will then join you."

"But you will charge your own pistol," said I; "so I must return with the weapon after the colonel has made his choice."

"No," he exclaimed; "carry the case on deck, and load for me."

"Very well," said I, wearily, and sick at heart, and devoutly wishing that some heavy black squall would come thundering down on the yacht as the precursor of a gale of wind and delay this wretched business, for the present anyway, I took the pistol-case and returned it to Colonel Hope-Kennedy. He slightly glanced at the fire-arms, and said, with a faint smile, "They are an elegant brace of weapons. Either will do for me."

"Will you load on deck or here, sir?" said I.

"Here, if you please."

He extracted one of the pistols, poised it in his hand, toying a moment or two with it, tried the trigger once or twice, then loaded it, fitting the cap to the nipple with fingers in which I could not discern the least tremor. He then returned the pistol to the case. Both of us would know which one he had handled very well, as it lay against the side upon which the lid locked.

"Have you a surgeon on board?" he inquired.

I answered no. He looked a little anxious, and exclaimed, "No one of any kind qualified to deal with a wound?" Again I answered no. He seemed to wince at this; the only expression of uneasiness I had witnessed in him. Finding he asked no more questions, I said, "If you are ready, sir, I will summon my cousin."

"I am ready," he replied.

On this I rang the little hand-bell that stood upon the table, and

in a minute Wilfrid came out. In grim silence we mounted the companion-steps, my cousin leading the way, the colonel next, and I at his heels, with the pistol-case under my arm and a very lively sense of murder in my heart. All was hushed where the ladies were. Whether Miss Laura guessed what was going forward I know not, but I was very thankful that she remained hidden, since, in the face of the colonel's coolness, it was most important that nothing should imperil Wilfrid's composure. The yacht's decks were deserted save by the figures of the men who it had been arranged were to remain. Forward at the hatch conducting to the forecastle stood the tall burly figure of Cutbill; close beside the cabin skylight was Finn, pale, agitated, his mouth working in the middle of his face as though he were rehearsing a long speech; Crimp grasped the wheel. Heaven knows how it was that I should have found eyesight for small outside features of such a scene as this at that moment, but I clearly recollect observing that sour old Jacob, with a view, mayhap, of supporting his spirits, had thrust an immense quid into his cheek, the angle whereof stood out like a boil or a formidable bruise against the clear gleam of sky past him up and down which the courtesying of the yacht slid his squab, homely figure, and I also observed that he gnawed upon this junk with an energy that suggested a mind in an advanced stage of distraction.

I said to the colonel, "It will be satisfactory to myself, sir, if you will kindly measure the distance I have chalked."

His eye swiftly ran from line to line, and then giving me a slight bow he said, nonchalantly, "I am quite satisfied."

"With regard to the light," I continued, looking from him to Wilfrid, "you will decide for yourselves, gentlemen, which end of the vessel you will face."

"It is immaterial," said the colonel, with a slight shrug.

"Then," said Wilfrid, "I will have my back to the wheel."

I could not be sure that he was well advised, for the blue dazzle of sunshine past the awning would throw out his figure into clear relief, as I noticed Crimp's was projected, clean lined as a shadow cast by the moonlight on a white deck.

"It may be as well to toss for position," I said.

"No," cried Wilfrid, "I am content."

I loaded his pistol and handed the weapons to the men. My heart thumped like a coward's in my breast, but I strove hard to conceal my agitation for Wilfrid's sake. Each took up his respect-

ive post, and both held their pistols at level. The colonel exclaimed, "Tell your mad relative to feather-edge himself. He is all front. 'Tis too irrational to take advantage of."

Wilfrid heard him and cried out, "Let him look to himself. Ready with the signal, Charles."

I pulled out my pocket-handkerchief, and as I did so old Crimp suddenly let go the wheel and came skimming up to Finn, rumbling out, in a voice half choked with tobacco-juice, that the gent's pistol (meaning the colonel's) was upon him full, and that he wasn't going to be made cold beef of for any man.

"Ready, gentlemen!" I cried, and desirous of emphasizing the signal, lest the colonel's keener sight should witness the fall of the handkerchief before the flutter of it caught Wilfrid's eye, I called out "*Now!*" and the handkerchief fell to the deck.

There was one report only; it was like the sharp crack of a whip. For the instant I did not know which man's pistol had exploded, but the little curl of smoke at Wilfrid's end told me that it was his. I saw the colonel fling his arms up, and his weapon flashed as he seemed to fire it straight into the air. "Good God, how generous!" was the thought that swept through me; "he will not fight!" He continued holding his pistol elevated while you could have counted ten, with a slight backward leaning posture and an indescribable look in his face, absolutely as though he were endeavoring to follow the flight of the bullet; his weapon then fell to the deck, he made a clutch with both hands at his heart, with a deep groan sank—his knees yielding—and, with his hands still at his heart, dropped, as a wooden figure might, on his side, and lay without motion.

Finn and I rushed up to him. While the skipper freed his neck I grasped his wrist, but found it pulseless. Yet it was difficult to credit that he was dead. His face was as reposeful as that of a sleeper. There was no look whatever of pain in it—nay, such faint distinguishable expression as I remember had the air of a light smile. I opened his coat, and found a small perforation in the shirt under the right arm; the orifice was as cleanly clipped as though made with a pair of scissors. There was no blood.

"Dead, sir!" exclaimed Finn. "A noble-looking gentleman, too. A pity, a pity! How gents of this kind stand upon their honor! yet they're the people to break up homes."

"Call Cutbill," said I, "and let the body be taken below."

I rose from my knees and walked aft to Wilfrid, who remained

standing at the chalked line, his arm that grasped the pistol hanging by his side. There was a kind of *lifting* look in his face, that with his swelled nostrils and large protruding eyes and a curve of the upper lip, that was made a sarcastic sneer of by the peculiar projection of the under one, indicated a mood of scornful triumph, of exultation subdued by contempt.

"You have killed your man, Wilfrid," said I.

"I have shot him through the heart," said he, talking like one newly aroused from his slumber and still in process of collecting his mind.

"Most probably. You hit him in some vital part, anyway. He dropped dead."

"He made sure of killing me; I saw it in his cold, deliberate way of covering me." He laughed harshly and mirthlessly. "He'll trouble no other man's peace. I've merely liberated the spirit of a devil that is now winging its way on black, bat-like wings back to that hell it came from. There will be disappointment among the fiends. That fellow there," nodding at the body over which Cutbill and Finn were bending, "was good at least for another twenty years of scoundrelism. What are they going to do with him?"

"Carry him below."

"Finn!" he called.

"Sir," answered the skipper, looking up from the body, whose arms he grasped.

"Hide it in some forward cabin, and if stone-dead, as Mr. Monson declares, get it stiched up. I'll tell you when to bury him."

"Ay, ay, sir," answered Finn, promptly, but looking shocked nevertheless.

My cousin handed me his pistol. As he did so his manner changed; a broken-hearted look—I do not know how else to describe the expression—entered his face. He drew a long, deep breath, like to the sigh of a sufferer from some exquisite throe, and said, in a low voice, trembling with the tears which pressed close behind, "his death does not return to me what he has taken from me. With him go my honor, my peace of mind, the love that was my wife's—all gone—all gone!" he muttered. "My God!" he almost shrieked, "how blank has the world become, now that he lies there."

"Be advised by me, Wilfrid," said I; "withdraw to your cabin and rest. This has been a terrible morning—enough to last out a lifetime has been crowded into it. You met him bravely, fairly,

honorably. He has paid the penalty of his infamy; and though Heaven knows I would have gone to any lengths to avert this meeting, yet, since it has happened, I thank God your life is preserved, and that you have come out of it unharmed."

His eyes moistened and he took my hand; but just then Cutbill and Finn came staggering towards the companion-hatch, bearing the body between them, on which he walked hastily to the rail and stood peering over into the water, supporting his temples in his hands.

Jacob Crimp had resumed his hold of the wheel. I went up to him. "I'll keep the helm steady," said I, "while you wipe out those chalk-marks on the deck. Meanwhile pick up that pistol yonder and bring me the case off the skylight."

While he did this we were hailed from the bark. She lay close to us, with her sailors in a crowd about the fore-rigging, where they had been standing, attentive spectators of the duel. "Beg pardon," bawled Captain Crimp, erect on the rail and steadying himself by a backstay, "but I should be glad to know if the gent's coming aboard?"

I shouted back, "No; you need not wait for him."

The man tossed his arm with a gesture very significant of a growling "Well, well!" and then, with a flourish of his hat, he cried, "A lucky run home to 'ee, gentlemen all!" dismounted, and fell to singing out orders. His wild-looking crew ran about, the main-topsail yard slowly swung round, and presently the deeply laden, malodorous craft, rolling clumsily upon a swell to whose light summer heavings our yacht was courtesying with fairy grace, was heading round to her course, blurring the water at her bows to the blowing of the mild breeze that had scarcely power enough to lift her foresail.

Finn and Cutbill arrived on deck, and Wilfrid on seeing them went below.

"Better turn the hands up, I suppose, now, sir?" said Finn to me. "There'll be nothin' more, your honor, that'll be onfit for them to see."

"By all means, Captain Finn; and then get the boat hoisted and a course shaped for home, for our quest is over, and we have made southing enough, Heaven knows!"

Cutbill went forward. There is a magic in the mere sound of *homeward bound* that would put a jocund nimbleness into the proportions of a marine Falstaff. Cutbill tried to walk and look as

though he were sensible that death lay under his feet, and that the shadow of a dreadful event hung dark upon the yacht, but scarce was he abreast of the galley when his spirits proved too much for him, and he measured the rest of the deck in several gleesome, floundering jumps, pounding the scuttle with a capstan bar that he snatched up, and roaring out, "All hands trim sail for home!" The men came tumbling up as though the yacht's forecastle were vomiting sailors, and in a breath the lustrous decks of the *Bride* were full of life, color, and movement.

A man came to the wheel. I lingered a minute or two to exchange a few words with Finn.

"You are sure the colonel is dead?"

"Ay, sir; he'll be no deader a thousand years hence."

"A bloody morning's work, Finn! I feel heart-sick, as though I had shared in the assassination of a man. But since it was bound to end in one or the other's death, 'tis best as it is. Have you any particulars of the foundering of the *Shark?*"

"The yarn her people—I mean the surwivors aboard the bark—spun our men while they lay alongside was that they met with a gale of wind that, after blowing with hurricane fury for two days and two nights, ended in dismasting 'em. The fall of the mainmast ripped the plank out of the deck as clean as though shipwrights had been at work there. Then the pounding of the wreckage alongside started a butt, and she took in water faster than they could pump it out. There were boats enough for all hands and to spare, and they had just time to get away when the *Shark* foundered. 'Twas blowing hard then and a high sea running, and before it came on dark the boats had lost sight of one another. The colonel and her ladyship were together, along with five sailors, one of whom fell overboard on the second day and was drownded. They was three days and four nights washing about afore the *'Liza Robbins* fell in with them. That's all I got to hear, sir; but I suppose it's the true yarn right enough."

"I dare say they encountered much such weather as we met with," said I; "the same straight-lined storm thundering up from the south, for all one knows. Well, now, Finn, drive us home as fast as ever you can. Bowl her along—we've all had enough of it. In what berth have you placed the body?"

"In the one that was occupied by his honor's walet, sir."

I gave him a nod, and, with the pistol-case under my arm, descended the steps and went to my cabin.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE COLONEL'S FUNERAL.

On entering my berth I threw myself into my bunk and sat in it in such a despondent condition of mind as I had never before been sensible of. This, to be sure, signified no more than reaction following the wild excitement I had been under all the morning. But, let the cause be what it might, while the fit was on me I felt abjectly miserable and a complete wretch. It then occurred to me that hunger might have something to do with my mood, seeing that no food had crossed my lips since dinner-time on the preceding day.

It was about two o'clock in the afternoon. I entered the cabin and found a cold lunch upon the table, not a dish of which had been touched, proving that there were others besides myself who were fasting. I was without appetite, but I sat down resolutely, and calling to the steward—who seemed thankful to have an order to attend to—to bring me a bottle of Burgundy, I fell to, and presently found myself tolerably hearty; the fountain of my spirits unsealed afresh, and beginning leisurely to bubble into the channel that had run dry. There is no better specific in the world for a fit of the blues than a bottle of Burgundy. No other wine has its art of tender blandishments. It does not swiftly exhilarate, but courts the brain into a pleasing serenity by a process of coaxing at once elegant and convincing.

While I sat fondling my glass, leaning back in my chair with my eyes fixed upon the delicate, graceful paintings on the cabin ceiling, and my mind revolving, but no longer blackly and weepingly, the grim incidents which had crowded the morning, I heard my name pronounced close at my ear, and, whipping round, found Miss Laura at my elbow.

"I have been most anxious to see you," she exclaimed. "What is the news?"

"Have not you heard?" I inquired.

"I have heard nothing but two pistol-shots. I have seen nobody of whom I could ask a question."

"Wilfrid has shot Colonel Hope-Kennedy through the heart," said I, "as he declared he would, and the body lies yonder;" and I pointed to the recess that Muffin had formerly occupied.

"Colonel Hope-Kennedy killed!" she exclaimed, in a low, breathless, terrified voice; and she sank into a chair beside me, and leaned her face on her hand, speechless, and her eyes fixed upon the table.

"Better that he should have been shot than Wilfrid," said I. "But he is dead; of him then let us speak nothing since we cannot speak good. I have just succeeded in fighting myself out of a hideous mood of melancholy with the help of yonder bottle. Now you must let me prescribe for you. You have eaten nothing since dinner yesterday. I therefore advise a glass of champagne and a slice of the breast of cold fowl;" and that she might not say no, I put on an air of bustle, called to the steward to immediately open a pint bottle of champagne, helped her to a little piece of the fowl, and finding her still reluctant, gently insinuated a knife and fork into her hands. "We are homeward bound," said I: "see! the sun has slipped t'other side of the yacht. Our bowsprit points directly for dear old Southampton Water. So," said I, filling a glass of champagne and handing it to her, "you must absolutely drink to our prosperous voyage, not only to the ship that goes, but to the wind that blows, while," said I, helping myself to another small dose of Burgundy, "I'll drink the lass that loves a sailor."

She could not forbear a slight smile, drank, and then ate a little, and presently I saw how much good it did her by the manner in which she plucked up her heart. I asked her where Lady Monson was.

"In my cabin," she answered; "she will not speak to me; she asks my maid for what she requires; she will not even look at me."

"It is all too fresh yet," said I. "A little patience, Miss Jennings. The woman in her will break through anon: there will be tears, kisses, contrition. Who knows?"

She shook her head. Just then I caught sight of the maid and beckoned to her, exclaiming to Miss Laura, "Your sister must not be allowed to starve. I fear she will have known what hunger is aboard Captain Crimp's odious old bark, where the choicest table delicacy probably was rancid salt pork. Here," said I, to the maid, "get me a tray. Steward, open another bottle of champagne. You will smile at the cook-like view I take of human misery, Miss Jennings," said I; "but let me tell you that a good deal of the complexion the mind wears is shed upon it by the body."

I filled the tray the maid brought, and bade her carry it to her ladyship, and to let her suppose it was prepared by the steward. I then thought of Wilfrid, and told Miss Laura that I would visit him. "But you will stop here till I return," said I. "I want you to cheer me up."

I went to my cousin's cabin and knocked very softly. The berth occupied by Lady Monson was immediately opposite, and the mere notion of her being so near made me move with a certain stealth, though I could not have explained why I did so. There was no response, so, after knocking a second time very lightly and obtaining no reply, I entered. Wilfrid lay in his bunk. The port-hole was wide open, and a pleasant draught of air breezed into the cabin. He lay in his shirt, the collar of which was wide open, and a pair of silk drawers—flat on his back—his arms crossed upon his breast, like the figure of a knight on a tomb, and his eyes closed. I was startled at first sight of him, but quickly perceived that his breast rose and fell regularly, and that, in short, he was in a sound sleep. Quite restful his slumber was not, for while I stood regarding him he made one or two wry faces, frowned, smiled, muttered, but without any nervous starts or discomposure of his placid posture. I was seized with a fit of wonder, and looked about me for some signs of an opiate or for any hint of liquor that should account for this swift and easy repose, but there was nothing of the sort to be seen. He had fallen asleep as a tired child might, or as one who, having accomplished some great object through stress of bitter toil and distracting vigil, lightly pillows his head with a thanksgiving that he has seen the end. I returned to Miss Jennings marvelling much, and she was equally astonished.

"Conceive, Mr. Monson," she exclaimed, "that the whole may have passed out of his memory!"

"I wish I could believe it," said I. "No, he has just lain down as a boy might who is tired out and dropped asleep. A man is to be envied for being wrong-headed sometimes. If *I* had shot the colonel— but we agreed not to speak of him. Miss Jennings, you are better already. When you arrived just now you were white, your eyes were full of worry and care, you looked as if you would never smile again. Now the old sparkle is in your gaze, and *now* you smile once more, and your complexion has gathered afresh that golden delicacy which I must take the liberty of vowing as a friend I admire as a most surprising perfection in you."

"Oh, Mr. Monson!" she exclaimed, softly, with one of those little

pouts I was now used to, and glad to observe in her again, while something of color came into her cheeks, "this is no time for compliments."

Nevertheless she did not seem ill-pleased, spite of her looking downward with a gravity that was above demureness. At that moment Cutbill and Crimp came down the companion-ladder, pulling off their caps as they entered. The big sailor had a roll of what resembled sail-cloth under his arm. They passed forward and disappeared in the cabin that had been occupied by Muffin. Miss Laura noticed them, but made no remark. It was impossible that she should suspect their mission. But the sight of them darkened the brighter mood that had come to me out of the companionship of the girl, and I fell grave on a sudden.

"Will you share your cabin with your sister?" I asked.

"No; she cannot bear my presence. My maid will prepare for me the berth adjoining my old one. She must be humored. Who can express the agonies her pride is costing her?"

"I fear Wilfrid sleeps rather too close to her ladyship," said I. "There's a cabin next mine. I should like to see him in it. Figure his taking it into his head, in an ungovernable fit of temper, to walk in upon his wife—"

"If such an impulse as that visited him," she answered, "it would be all the same even if he should sleep among the crew forward. Do not anticipate trouble, Mr. Monson. The realities are fearful enough."

I smiled at her beseeching look. "Lucky for your sister," said I, "that you are on board. She arrives without a stitch saving what she stands up in, and here she finds your wardrobe, the twoscore conveniences of the lady's toilet-table, and a maid on top of it all, with pins and needles and scissors, bodkins and tape—bless me! what a paradise after the '*Liza Robbins*." And then I told her how the *Shark* was lost, giving her the yarn as I had it from Finn. "Anyway," said I, "Lady Monson is rescued. Your desire is fulfilled."

"But I did not wish her—I did not want Colonel Hope-Kennedy killed," she exclaimed, with a shudder.

"Yet you could have shot him," said I; "do you remember our chat that night off the Isle of Wight?"

"Yes, perfectly well," she answered. "But now that he is dead—oh, it is too terrible to think of," she added, with a sob in her voice.

"It must always be so with generous natures," I exclaimed. "What is abhorrent to them in life death converts into a pathetic appeal. Best perhaps to leave old Time to revenge one's wrongs. And now that her ladyship is on board, what is Wilfrid going to do with her?"

"She is never likely to leave her cabin," she replied.

"When the *Bride* arrives home, then?"

"I cannot tell."

"Had Wilfrid's misfortune been mine this is the consideration that would have stared me in the face from the very start, and hindered me from taking any step that did not conduct me straight to the Divorce Court."

Here her maid arrived and whispered to her, on which, giving me a pretty little sad smile, she rose and went to her cabin. I mounted to the deck and found the wide ocean shivering and flashing under a pleasant breeze of wind, whose hot buzzing as it hummed like the vast insect life of a tropic island through the rigging and into the canvas was cooled to the ear by the pleasant noise of running waters on either hand. My first look was for the *'Liza Robbins*, and I was not a little surprised to find her far away down upon our lee quarter, a mere dash of light of a moonlike hue. Finn was pacing the quarter-deck solemnly with a Sunday air upon him. On seeing me he approached with a ship-shape salute and exclaimed:

"I suppose there is no doubt, sir, his honor designs that we should be now steering for home?"

"For what other part of the world, captain?"

"Well, sir, at sea one wants instructions. Maybe Sir Wilfrid *knows* that we're going home?"

"He lies sleeping as soundly and peacefully, Finn, as a little boy in his cabin and knows nothing."

"Lor' bless me!" cried Finn.

"But you may take me as representing him," said I, "and I'll be accountable for all misdirections. About the funeral, now. I observed Cutbill and Crimp pass through the cabin. They've gone to stitch the body up?"

"Yes, sir. His honor told me to get it done at once. 'Sides, 'tain't a part of the ocean in which ye can keep the like of them things long."

"When do you mean to bury him?"

"Well, I thought to-night, sir, in the first watch. Better make a quiet job of it, I allow, for fear of—" and screwing up his face into

a peculiar look, he pointed significantly to the deck with clear reference to Lady Monson.

"You are right, Finn. We have had 'scenes' enough, as scrimmages are called by women."

"Will your honor read the orfice?"

"D'ye mean the burial service? It will be hard to see print by lantern-light."

"I've got it, sir, in a book with the letters as big as my forefinger."

I considered a little, and then said, "On reflection, no. You are captain of this ship, and it is for you, therefore, to read the service. I will be present, of course."

He looked a trifle dismayed, but said nothing more about it, and, after walking the deck with him for about half an hour, during which our talk was all about the *Shark* and the incidents of the morning, what the crew thought of the duel and the like, I went below to my berth, and lay down feeling tired, hot, and again depressed. I was awakened out of a light sleep by the ringing of the first dinner-bell. Having made ready for dinner I entered the cabin as the second bell sounded, and found the table prepared, but no one present. I was standing at the foot of the companion-ladder, trying to cool myself with the wind that breezed down of a fiery hue with the steadfast crimsoning of the westering sun, when Wilfrid came from his cabin. He was dressed as if for a ball—swallow-tailed coat, patent-leather boots, plenty of white shirt sparkling with diamond studs, and so forth. Indeed, it was easily seen that he had attired himself with a most fastidious hand, as though on a sudden there had broken out in him a craze of dandyism. I was much astonished, and stared at him. There had never been any ceremony among us; in point of meals we had made a sort of picnic of this marine ramble and dined regardless of attire. Indeed, in this direction Wilfrid had always shown a singular negligence, often in cold weather sitting down in an old pilot-coat, or taking his place during the hot days in white linen coat and small clothes or an airy camlet jacket.

"Why, Wilf," said I, running my eye over him, "you must give me ten minutes to keep you in countenance."

"No, no," he cried, "you are very well. This is a festal day with me, a time to be dignified with as much ceremony as the modern tailor will permit. Heavens! how on great occasions one misses the magnificence of one's forefathers. I should like to dine to-day in the costume of a Raleigh—a doublet bestudded with precious gems, a

short cloak of cloth of gold. Ha, ha! a plague on the French Revolution. 'Tis all broadcloth now—where's Laura?" He asked the question with a sudden breaking away from the substance of his speech that startlingly accentuated the wild look his eyes had, and the expression of countenance that was a sort of baffling smile in its way.

"I do not know," I answered.

"Oh, she must dine with us," he cried; "I want company. I should like to crowd this table. Steward, call Miss Jennings's maid."

The man stole aft, and tapped on the cabin next to the room occupied by Lady Monson. Miss Jennings opened the door and looked out, Wilfrid saw her, and instantly ran to her with his finger upon his lip. He took her by the hand and whispered. She was clearly as much amazed as I had been to behold him attired as though for a rout. There was a little whispered talk between them; she apparently did not wish to join us; then on a sudden consented, and he led her to the table, holding her hand with an air of Old World ceremony that must have provoked a smile but for the concern and anxiety his looks caused me. We took our places, and he fell to acting the part of host, pressing us to eat, calling for champagne, talking as if to entertain us. He laughed often, but softly, in a low-pitched key, and one saw that there was a perpetual reference in his mind to the existence of his wife close at hand, but he never once mentioned her, nor referred to the dead man whose proximity put an indescribable quality of ghastliness into his hectic manner, the crazy air of conviviality that flushed, as with a glow of fever, his speech and carriage and behavior of high breeding. Not a syllable concerning the events of the morning, the object of our excursion, its achievement, the change of the yacht's course, escaped him. He drank freely, but without any other result than throwing a little color upon his high cheek-bones, and rendering yet more puzzling the conflicting expressions which filled with wildness his large, protruding, near-sighted gaze at one or the other of us. I saw too clearly how it was with the poor fellow to feel shocked. Miss Laura's tact served her well in the replies she made to him, in the interest with which she seemed to listen to his conversation, in her well-feigned ignorance of there being anything unusual in his apparel or manner. But it failed her in her efforts to conceal her deep-seated apprehension, that stole like a shadow into her face when she looked downward in some interval of silence that enabled her to think, or when her eyes met mine.

After dinner my cousin fetched his pipe and asked me to join him on deck. I took advantage of his absence to say swiftly to Miss Laura, "We must not forget that Lady Monson is on board. Upon my word, I believe you are right in your suggestion this afternoon that Wilfrid has forgotten all about it, or surely he would have made some reference to her dining."

"I'll take care that she is looked after, Mr. Monson," she answered. "I purposely abstained from mentioning her name at dinner. I am certain, by the expression in his face, that he would have been irritated by the lightest allusion to her; and unnatural as his mood is after such a morning as we have passed through," here she glanced in the direction of the cabin where the colonel's body lay, "I would rather see him as he is than sullen, scowling, silent, eating up his heart."

He returned with his pipe at that moment, and we were about to proceed on deck when he stopped, and said to his sister-in-law, "Come along, Laura, my love."

"I have a slight headache, Wilfrid, and I have to see that my cabin is prepared."

I thought this answer would start him into questioning her, but he looked as if he did not gather the meaning of it. "Pooh, pooh!" he cried, "there are two stewards and a maid to see to your cabin for you. If they don't suffice, we'll have Muffin aft—that arthritic son of a green-grocer, whose genius as a valet will scarcely be the worse for the tar that stains his hands. Muffin for one night only!" He delivered one of his short roars of laughter and slapped his leg.

By Jupiter! thought I, Lady Monson will hear *that* and take it as an expression of his delight at her presence on board! Does she know, I wondered, that her colonel lies dead? but I had found no opportunity of inquiring.

"Come along, Laura," continued Wilfrid; "I'll roll you up as pretty a cigarette as was ever smoked by a South American belle."

She shook her head, forcing a smile.

"Perhaps Miss Jennings will join us later," said I, distrustful of his temper, and passing my hand through his arm, I got him on deck.

"Laura is a sweet little woman," said he, pausing just outside the hatch to hammer at a tinder-box.

"Ay, sweet, pretty, and good," said I.

"You're in love with her, I think, Charles."

"My dear Wilf, let us talk of this beautiful night," I exclaimed.

"Why of a beautiful night in preference to a beautiful woman?" cried he.

But I was determined to end this, so I called to a figure standing to leeward of the main-boom, "Is that you, Finn?"

"No, it's me," answered Crimp's surly note; "the capt'n's a-laying down, but he's guv orders to be aroused at four bells."

"Why?" inquired Wilfrid.

Crimp probably supposed the question put to me, for which I was thankful. "He may mistrust the weather, perhaps," I answered, softly, that old Jacob might not hear. "Yet the sky has a wonderfully settled look, too. Let's go right aft, shall we, Wilf? The down-draught here is emptying my pipe."

We strolled together to the grating abaft the wheel and seated ourselves. I cannot tell how much it affected me to find him so easily thrown off the line of his thoughts. It had been dark some time, for in those parallels night treads on the skirts of the glory which the departing sun trails down the western slope of the sea. There would be no moon sooner than ten o'clock or thereabouts, and it was now a little after eight—for my cousin's strange humor had made a much longer sitting than usual of the dinner. There was a refreshing sound of rushing wind in the star-laden dusk, a noise as of the sweeping of countless pinions, with a smooth hissing penetrating from the cut-water that made one think of the shearing of a skater over ice. The cabin lamps glowing into the skylight shed a yellow, satin-like sheen upon the foot of the main-sail, the cloths of which soared the paler for that lustre till the head of the gaff-topsail looked like the brow of some height of vapor dissolving against the stars. We sat on a line with the side of the deck on which he had shot Colonel Hope-Kennedy. The gloom worked the memory of the incident in me into a phantasm, and I remember a little shiver creeping over me to the vision of that tall, noble figure, with face upturned to heaven a moment or two, as though he watched the flight of his spirit, then falling dead with the countenance of a man in easy slumber. But Wilfrid had not a word to say about it. I could not reconcile his extraordinary silence with his attire and manner, which at all events indicated the recollection of the duel as strong in him. He chatted volubly and intelligently, without any of his customary breakings away from his train of thought; but not of his wife, nor of the colonel, nor of his infant, nor of this ocean chase that was now ended so far as the fugitives were concerned. He talked of his estate: how he intended to build

a wing to his house that should contain a banqueting-room, how he proposed to convert some acres of his land into a market-garden, and so on and so on. His face showed pale in the starlight; his evening costume gave him an unusual look to my eye; though he talked carelessly on twenty matters of small interest, I could yet detect an undue energy in the tone of his voice, comparatively subdued as it was, and in his vehement manner of smoking, puffing out great clouds rapidly and filling the bowl afresh with hasty fingers. It would have vastly eased my mind had he made some reference to the morning. You felt as if the memory of it must be working in him like some deadly swift pulse, and I confess I could have shrunk from him at moments when I thought of the character of the source whence he drew the strength that enabled him to mask himself with what might well have passed for a mere company face.

When three bells, half-past nine, were struck, I made a move as though to go below.

"Going to turn in?" he asked.

"It has been a long, tiring day," said I, evasively.

"A grand day," he exclaimed; "the one stirring, memorable day of our voyage. Come, I will follow you, and we will pledge it in a bumper before parting."

We entered the cabin; it was deserted. Wilfrid asked where Miss Laura was, and the steward replied that he believed she was gone to bed.

"She should be with us, Charles," cried my cousin, with a light of excitement in his eyes, his face flushed, though above it had looked marble in the starlight, and a half-smile of malicious triumph riding his lips.

"No, no," said I. "The poor child is tired. What is our drink to be, Wilf? I want to see you turned in, my dear boy."

"Pooh, pooh; hang turning in! I feel myself of forty-spirit power to-night, just in the humor, if I were a member, to go down to the House and terrify the old ladies in it who call themselves Sir Johns and Sir Thomases, and who wear swallow-tailed coats and broad-brimmed hats, with a passionate attack on the British Constitution."

He called for brandy and seltzer. However, we had not been sitting twenty minutes when his mood changed; his dinner-party face darkened. He folded his arms and lay back in his chair, looking downward with a gathering scowl upon his brow. I rose.

"Good-night, Wilfrid," said I.

He viewed me with an absent expression, said "Good-night," and at once went, but in a mechanical way, governed by habit without giving his mind to the action, to his berth, at the door of which I saw him stand a moment while he gazed hard at the cabin abreast him; then rubbing his brow with the gesture of one who seeks to clear his brain, he disappeared.

Four bells were struck forward. I quietly stepped on deck, and while I stood looking into the binnacle Finn came up to me.

"Shall we tarn to now, sir," said he, "and get this here melancholy job over?"

"Yes," said I, "the sooner the better. Sir Wilfrid has gone to his cabin. Tell your people to be quick and secret."

He trudged forward, and presently returned with Cutbill and another seaman. The three of them went below, leaving Crimp to get the gangway rigged and lighted. A couple of globular lamps, such as might be used for riding-lights, were suspended against the bulwarks, and between them a seaman rested a grating of the length of a stretcher. The moon was rising at this moment on our starboard beam, an arch of blood defining the indigo-black line of the horizon there that on either hand of her went melting out into a blending of star-laden sky, with the dark and gleaming ocean brimming to the yacht, vast as the heavens themselves looked. Presently up through the hatch rose the figures of Captain Finn and the two men, swaying under the weight of the canvas-shrouded form they bore. The watch on deck came aft and gathered about the gangway, where they glimmered like visionary creatures to the dull, yellow shining of the lamps. Face after face seemed to come twisting and wriggling out of the dusk—visions of hairy salts, rendered life-like and actual by the dull illumination that glanced upon their shadowy lineaments. The wind filled the rigging with melancholy noises, there was a yearning sob in the sound of the water as it washed aft, broken and hissing serpent-like from the bow. The canvas rose dark, but it was now gathering to its loftier cloths a faint, delicate, pinkish tinge from the red moonbeam, though in a few minutes, when the planet had lifted her ill-shapen face clear of the black line of brine, all would be of a snow-white softness above us, and a sparkling line of bulwark-rail and glittering constellations in the skylight glass and a wake of floating and heaving silver rolling fan-shaped to us.

A couple of seamen caught hold of the grating and raised it level with the bulwarks, one end supported by the rail. The body was

placed upon it, and ghostly it looked in that spectral commingling of starlight and lamplight and moonlight not yet brightening out of its redness—ghastly in the nakednesss of its canvas cover, though, to be sure, there was no need at that hour to conceal it under a flag. Finn pulled a thin volume from his pocket and opened it close against one of the lanterns, peering into it hard and coughing hoarsely, as though loath to begin. At last he mustered up courage and made a start. He pronounced many of the words oddly, and there was a deep sea note in his delivery. I watched his long face twitching and working to his recital as he brought his eyes in a squint to the page, with the lantern-light touching his skin into a hue of sulphur that made one think of it as the likeness of a human countenance wrought in yellow silk upon black satin. But the mystery of death was with us; it seemed to breathe, hot as the night was, in an ice-cold air off the dark surface of the sea, and a man's sense of humor must have been of the feather-weight quality of an idiot's to flutter in the presence of the pallid, motionless bundle upon the grating, whose chill, secret subduing inspirations were unspeakably heightened by the eyes of the sailors round about gleaming out of the weak glimmer of their countenances vaguely shaped by the rays of the oil-flames upon the obscurity, by the silver gaze of the countless equinoctial heaven surveying us over the yard-arms and through the squares of the ratlines and amid the exquisite tracery of the gear, and by the steadfast watching of stars low down in the measureless dark distances of the west and north and south, as though they were the eyes of giant spirits standing on tiptoe behind the horizon to observe us, and by the slow soaring of the moon that was now icing her crimson visage with crystal and diffusing a soft cloud of white light over the eastern sky with an edging already of brilliant glory under her upon a short length of the dark sea-line there that made the water in that direction look as though its boundary were beating in ivory foam against the wall of sky.

I was standing with my back to the companion-hatch; my eyes were rooted upon the white form which in a few moments now would be tilted and sent flashing with a heavy cannon-ball at its feet into the black depths on which we were floating. The man in life had acted a scoundrel's part, and had richly merited the end he had met; but he lay dead; his grave was this mighty wilderness of waters; not a hole in the earth to which those who mourned him could repair and say, pointing downward, "What remains of him is here," but a tomb rivalling the heavens in immensity, a material eternity

that would absorb him and his memory as though his form, waiting there to be launched, was but a drop of the dew that glittered in the moonshine upon the grating that supported him.

That bundle was a text to fill me with melancholy musings, and I was thinking of the man as I had beheld him in the morning, worn, indeed, by shipwreck and privation, but stately, erect, soldierly; his cheek crimsoning to the blow that Wilfrid had dealt him; life and passion strong in him, when I was startled out of my thoughts by Finn ceasing to read. I glanced at him and observed that he was peering over the top of his book, goggling some object with eyes that protruded from their sockets. I looked to see what had called off his attention, and remarked a tall female figure attired in a light dress, but with her face concealed by a long dark veil, standing close beside the head of the grating perfectly motionless save for such movements as came to her by the swaying of the yacht. She had appeared among us with the stealthiness of a ghost, and she looked like one in that conflicting light, with the faint gleam of her eyes showing through the veil, and the stitched-up form on the grating to give a darker and more thrilling accentuation to her presence than she could have got from an empty grave or a ruptured coffin. The sailors backed away from her, shouldering one another into the gloom with much wiping of their leather lips upon the backs of their hands. I was startled on beholding her, but quickly rallied to a sense of deep disgust that possessed me on contrasting this illustration of emotion with her language and treatment of Wilfrid that morning.

"Proceed," I exclaimed to Finn. "Read on, man, and shorten the service too if you can."

He croaked out afresh, but the poor fellow was exceedingly nervous. The ceremony, so far as it had gone, had been chill, doleful, depressing enough before; but a character almost of horror to my mind now came into it with the tall, stately, motionless apparition that stood—scarce won by the lamplight and the moonlight from the shadowiness that clothed her with unreality—at the head of that ashen-tinctured length lying prone and resembling a hammock upon the grating. It was the moral her ladyship's presence put into the occasion that made the ceremony all on a sudden so hideously gaunt, so wild, so inhuman, striking, ice-like, to the heart. For *this* she had quitted her child, as she believed, forever; for *this* she had abandoned her husband, had pricked the bubble of her honor, extinguished the inspiration of her womanhood's purest, truest, deep-

est, holiest feelings! What but an affrighting vision could that dead man wrapped in his sea-shroud convert her ladyship's dream of passion and pleasure into? Something, one should think, to blind the very eyes of her soul. But, Lord, how I hated her then for the base dishonor she did herself by this subtle, sneaking attendance at the funeral of her shame with the ghost of it to slip with her to her cabin again, and to act, maybe, as a sentinel to her for the rest of her natural life, stalking close at her heels, so steadfast there as to make her presently dread to look behind her!

Finn's croaking delivery ceased.

"Overboard with it!" he rumbled, for his gesture to tilt the grating had been unobserved by the two men who held it, or else not understood.

The sailors raised their arms; the glimmering bundle sped like a small cloud of smoke from the side to the accompaniment of the noise of a long, creaming wash of water simmering aft from the bow, through which I caught the note of a half-stifled shriek from Lady Monson. She flung her hands to her face and reeled, as if she would fall. I sprang to her assistance, but on freeing her eyes and seeing who I was, she waved me from her with a motion of which the passionate haughtiness, disdain, and dislike were too strong for me to miss, confusing as the lights were. She then walked slowly aft.

I believed she was going below again, and said to Finn: "Shut the book. Make an end now. The man is buried, and thank God for it!"

Lady Monson, however, walked to the extreme end of the vessel, kneeled upon the little grating abaft the wheel, and overhung the taffrail, apparently gazing into the obscurity astern where the colonel's body was sinking, and where the white wake of the yacht was glittering, like a dusty summer highway, running ivory-like through a dark land on a moonlit night. I watched her with anxiety, but without daring to approach her. The sailors unhitched the lanterns, and took them forward along with the grating.

I said to Finn, "I hope she does not mean to throw herself overboard."

His head wagged in the moonlight. "Sir," he answered, "the likes of her nature ain't quick to kill themselves. If she were the wife of the gent that's gone, I'd see to it. But *she'll* not hurt herself."

Nevertheless, I kept my eye upon her. The awning was off the deck; the planks ran white as the foam alongside under the moon,

that was now brilliant, and all objects showed sharp upon that ground, while the flitting of the ebony shadows to the heave of the deck was like a crawling of spectral life. I spied the fellow at the glistening wheel turn his head repeatedly towards the woman abaft him, as though troubled by that wrapped, veiled, kneeling presence. Finn's rough, off-hand indifference could not reassure me. The fear of death, all horror induced by the cold, moonlit, desolate, weltering waters upon which her eyes were fixed, might languish in the heat of some sudden craze of remorse, of grief, of despair. There were shapes of eddying froth striking out upon the dark liquid movement at which she was gazing—dim, scarce definable configurations of the sea-glow, which to her sight might take the form of the man whose remains had just sped from the yacht's side; and God knows what sudden beckoning, what swift, endearing, caressing gesture to her to follow him, she might witness in the apparition—real, sweet, alluring as in life to the gaze of her tragic eyes—which in imagination I could see glowing against the moon. It was with a deep sigh of relief that, after I had stood watching her at least ten minutes in the shadow of the gangway, I observed her dismount from the grating and walk to the companion, down which she seemed to melt away as ghostly in her coming as in her going. Twenty minutes later I followed her, found the cabin empty, and went straight to bed.

CHAPTER XXVI.

WILFRID'S DELUSION.

It was pleasant to learn next morning that the breeze which had been slipping us nimbly through it since we had trimmed sail for our homeward-bound run had not only blown steadily all night, giving us an average of some seven knots an hour, but had gathered a little increase of weight at sunrise, so that I awoke to as much life in the vessel in the resonant humming from aloft, the quick wash and eager seething of recoiling seas, the straining noises of strong fastenings to the sloping of the spars, as though the north-east trades were pouring full upon the starboard bow, and we were buzzing through the cool Atlantic parallels within a distance of soundings that would render talk about Southampton and arriving home reasonable.

For my part, ever since we had penetrated these "doldrums," as they are called, I was dreading the long dead calms of the frizzling belt where a cat's-paw is hailed in God's name, and where the roasting eye of the sun sucks out the very blue of the atmosphere till the heavens go down in a brassy dazzle to the ocean confines as though one were shut up in a huge burnished bell with a white-hot clapper for light. My spirits were good as I sprang out of my bunk and made for the bath-room. It was not only that the fresh wind whistling hot through the open scuttle of my berth caused me to think of home as lying at last fairly over the bow instead of over the stern, as it had been for weeks; the object of this trip, such as it was, had been achieved; there was nothing more to keep a look-out for: nothing more to hold one's expectations tautened to cracking-point. Everything that was material had happened on the preceding morning, and the toss of the colonel's body last night over the gangway by lantern-light, with Lady Monson looking on, was like the drop of the black curtain: it was the end of the tragedy; the orchestra had filed out, the lights were extinguished, and we could now pass into heaven's invigorating air, and live again the old easy life of commonplaces.

So ran my thoughts as I emerged from my berth with a very good appetite and made my way to the sparkling breakfast-table. I seated

myself on a couch waiting for Wilfrid and Miss Laura; the stewards hung about ready to serve the meal. I called the head one to me and said, "Is there any chance of Lady Monson's joining us at table, do you know?"

"I think not, sir," he answered.

"Who attends to her—I mean as regards her meals?"

"Miss Jennings's maid, sir. She told me this morning her ladyship's orders are that a separate tray should be prepared for her for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Her breakfast was taken to her about ten minutes ago."

"So I may presume," said I, "that she finds herself pretty well this morning? And my cousin, steward?"

"I was to tell you, sir," he answered, "that Sir Wilfrid will not come to table."

"How is he?"

"He didn't complain, sir; just said, 'I'll breakfast in my cabin this morning.'"

"All right," said I, and the man retired.

There was nothing unusual in Wilfrid's breakfasting in his cabin. I was glad to hear that he did not complain; as a rule he was very candid if in suffering; owned freely to whatever troubled him, however trifling, and made much of it.

In a few minutes Miss Laura came from her berth. Her face had the delicacy of look that in her at all events I took to express a troubled or sleepless night. Her eyelids were a little heavy; her lips wanted their dewy freshness of hue. Yet no woman, I thought, could ever show sweeter than she as she advanced and took my hand, smiling up at me, and subtly incensing the atmosphere with a flower-like fragrance that had nothing whatever to do with the scent-bottle. I told her that Wilfrid would not breakfast with us, and we seated ourselves.

"He is well, I hope?"

"Oh, I should think so, if I may judge from what the steward tells me. I'll look in upon him after breakfast. Have you seen Lady Monson this morning?"

"No," she answered, "I sent my maid with a message, and the reply was that Lady Monson wishes to be alone."

"Now, Miss Jennings," said I, gently, but with some emphasis, "you must let nothing that Lady Monson does vex you. You have done your duty; she is on board this yacht: I shall grow fretful if I think you intend to waste a single breath of the sweetness of your

heart upon the arid air of Madam Henrietta's desert nature. I dare say you have scarcely closed your eyes all night thinking about her."

"About her and other things."

"Why tease yourself? A sister is a sister only so long as she chooses to act and feel as one. It is indeed a tender word—a sweet relationship. But if a woman coolly cuts all family ties—"

She shook her head, smiling. "Your views are too hard, Mr. Monson. You would argue of a sister as you would of a wife. We must bear with the shame, the degradation, the wickedness of those we have loved, of those we still love spite of bitter repulse. There is no one, I am sure, would dare kneel down in prayer if it was believed that God's mercy depended upon our own actions. All of us would feel cut off."

Not all, I thought, looking at her; but I sat silent a while, feeling rebuked. I was a young man then; I can turn back now, scarred as I am by many years of life's warfare, and see that I was hard, too hard, in those thoughtless days of mine; that knowing little or nothing of suffering myself, I knew little or nothing of the deep and wondrous vitality of human sympathy. You find many corridors in human nature when you enter, but sympathy is the only way in; and to miss that door is merely to go on walking round the edifice.

I ate for a little in silence, and then said, "I suppose, as you have seen almost nothing of your sister, you are unable to form an opinion of her state of mind?"

"She is naturally of a cold nature," she answered; "dispositions such as hers, I think, do not greatly vary, let what will happen to them. Though one knows not what passion, feeling, emotion may have its fangs buried in such hearts, yet suffering has to pass through too many wraps to find expression."

I smiled. "Yes," said I, "I know what you mean. She is like a person who lies buried in half a dozen coffins; a shell, then lead, then oak, and so on. Nothing but the last trumpet could influence the ashes inside."

"But why did you ask that question, Mr. Monson?"

"Well," said I, "you know that we buried the colonel last night?"

She started. "I did not know!" she exclaimed.

"Yes," I continued. "We slung a couple of lanterns, and Finn read the service. Just before the body was launched your sister arrived, rising like a ghost among us."

She looked greatly shocked. "Was Henrietta really present?"

she exclaimed. "How could she have known—what could the men have thought of her? What madness of bad taste!"

"The forefinger follows the thumb," said I, "and when you come to the little finger you must begin again. All's one with some people when they make a start. Am I too hard on human nature in saying this?"

But she merely exclaimed, as though talking to herself, "How could she be present? How could she be present?"

"Well, now, mark what follows, Miss Jennings," said I; "when the body had vanished, your sister walked right aft, kneeled upon the grating, and in that posture of supplication continued to watch the dark waters for upwards of ten minutes. Meanwhile I was gazing at her from the gangway, where I stood in the dusk fidgeting exceedingly. For what was in my mind? Suppose she should fling herself overboard!"

Her violet eyes rested thoughtfully upon my face. "I should not have been afraid," she exclaimed, with a faint touch of scorn which made wonderfully sapid her voice that was low and colorless.

"Of course you know your own sister," said I. "Finn took your view. I mentioned my misgiving, and his long head waggled most prosaically in the moonlight."

"Women who behave as my sister has, Mr. Monson," she exclaimed, with the gravity of a young philosopher, "are too selfish, too cowardly, too much in love with themselves and with life to act as you seem to fear my sister might. They may go mad, and then, to be sure, there is an end of all reasoning about them; but while they have their senses they may be trusted so far as they themselves are concerned. In perfectly sane people many noble qualities go to impulses or resolutions which are deemed rash and impious by persons who falter over the mere telling of such deeds. My sister has not a single noble quality in her. She may poison the lives of others, but she will be extremely careful to preserve her own."

"Now, if I had said that," said I.

"Oh," she answered, with the little color that had come into her cheeks fading out of them, "I will never reproach you for telling the truth."

After breakfast I went to Wilfrid's cabin, and found him up and dressed, sitting in an easy-chair reading his diary, which I took the book to be. He held the volume close to his face; his legs were crossed, his feet in slippers, his right hand grasped his big meerschaum pipe, which was filled with yellow tobacco not yet lighted.

The cabin window was open, and the draperies of the handsome little apartment stirred to the pouring of the rich, hot, ocean breeze through the orifice.

"You look vastly comfortable, Wilf," said I. "Glad to find you well. But it must be a bit dull here, though?"

"Not at all," said he, putting down the book and lighting his pipe. "Sit and smoke with me."

"Why not on deck?" I answered, sitting, nevertheless. "A wide view in hot weather takes the place of a cool atmosphere. The sight is sensible of the heat as well as other organs. It may be cooler down here in reality than it is under the awning above, but these cribbed and coffined bulkheads make it very hot to the eye spite of that pleasant gushing of wind there."

He quietly sucked at his pipe, looking at me through the wreaths of tobacco-smoke which went up from his bowl. I lighted a cigar, furtively observing his face as I did so. He was pale: there was nothing novel in that, but I noticed an expression of anxiety in his eyes that was new to me; a look of sane concern, as though some difficulty novel and surprising, yet not of a character to strike deep, had befallen him. I glanced at the breakfast-tray that was upon the table near which he was seated, and easily guessed by what remained that he had made a good meal. His manner was quiet, even subdued; no symptoms of the old jerkiness, of the odd probing gestures of head with a thrust of his mind, as it were, into one's face as if his intellect were as short-sighted as his eyes. He was airily clothed in white, a colored shirt wide open at the collar, and a small silk cap of a jockey pattern was perched upon his head.

"Has Finn removed the five-guinea piece from the main-mast?" said he.

"I don't know, Wilf."

"I must send word to him to take charge of it, and to tell the men that the money will be distributed among them on our arrival. I shall be glad to get home."

"And so shall I, upon my word."

"The ceaseless motion of the sea," he continued, talking quietly and with a more sensible look in his face than I had witnessed in him since the hour of our start, "grows so distractingly monotonous after a time that I can readily believe it affects weak heads. This trip has about exhausted my love of seafaring. I shall sell the *Bride*."

I nodded.

"How long should the run home occupy us?" he asked.

"Let us call it a month, or five weeks at the outside for everybody's sake," I answered.

He smoked for a minute in silence with a thoughtful face and then said, "Five weeks in one's cabin is a long imprisonment."

I imagined he referred to his wife, and that he was feeling his way in this roundabout fashion to talk about her. "There is no necessity to be imprisoned for five weeks," said I. "Your yacht is not an ocean liner full of passengers whose stares and whispers might indeed prove embarrassing. So far as I am concerned, I am quite willing to promise very honestly never even to look. Miss Jennings is all tenderness and sweetness and sympathy; there could be nothing to found a plea for seclusion upon in her presence. As to the sailors," I continued, noticing without comprehending an air of bewilderment that was growing upon his face as I talked, "Jack meets with so many astonishments in his vocation that surprise and curiosity are almost lost arts with him. The crew will take one long thirsty stare; then turn their quids and give what passes aft no further heed whatever."

"I don't follow you," he exclaimed, poising his pipe, with his eyes intently fixed on me; "what are you talking about?"

"You were speaking of the tediousness of a five weeks' imprisonment."

"Quite right," said he, "and tedious it is if it's to last five weeks."

"But, my dear Wilfrid, I was endeavoring to point out that the imprisonment to which you refer is unnecessary; in fact, after last night—" But here I suddenly bit my lip to the perception that it would be rash and unwise on my part to let him know that his wife had been present at Colonel Hope-Kennedy's burial. "What I mean is," I continued, talking rapidly, "if it's a mere question of sensitiveness or pride recoiling from observation, why not imitate the great Mokanna:

> "'O'er his features hung
> The Veil, the Silver Veil which he had flung
> In mercy there to hide from human sight
> His dazzling brow till men could bear its light.'

In our case we have no dazzling brow, and consequently require no silver veils; but in Miss Laura's wardrobe there should be—"

He was now gaping at me, and cried out: "Your brain wanders this morning, Charles. Do you mean that *I* should go veiled?"

"You!" I exclaimed; "certainly not. I am not talking of you."

"But I am talking of myself, though," he cried.

I looked at him with amazement. "You do not mean to say that *you* intend to imprison yourself in this cabin till we get home?"

He shook his head. "I don't imprison myself," he answered, "I am imprisoned."

"By whom, pray?"

"Can't you see?"

I ran my eyes round the cabin.

"No, no!" he shouted, "look at *me*. Don't you perceive that I can't get out? How am I to pass through that door?"

"How are you to pass through that door?" I exclaimed; "why, by walking through it, of course. How else?"

"Ay, and that's just what I can't do," said he, with a melancholy shake of the head.

"But why not, Wilfrid?" I cried, scarcely yet understanding how it was with him.

"Because," he answered, petulantly, looking down himself, then at his arms and legs, "I am too big."

I perceived now what had come to him, and felt so dismayed, so grieved, so pained, I may say, to the very heart, that for some moments I was unable to speak. However, with a violent effort I pulled myself together, and lighting my cigar afresh in a demonstrative way, for the mere sake of obtaining what concealment I could get out of my gestures and my puffing of the tobacco-clouds, I said: "Big you always were, Wilfrid; but never so big, and not *now* so big, as not to be able to pass through that door. See! let me go first; put your two hands just above my hips, and you'll follow me through as easily as reeving a rope's end through the sheave-hole it belongs to."

I rose, but he waved me off with an almost frantic gesture. "My God, man!" he shouted, "what is the use of talking? I could no more get through that door than I could pass through that port-hole."

"But don't you think we might manage to haul you through?" said I.

"You'd tear me to pieces," he answered. "Sit down, my dear fellow," he continued, speaking with an almost cheerful note in his voice; "it is a very grave inconvenience, but it must be met. This cabin is commodious, and with you and Laura to come and keep me company, and with the further solace of my pipe and books, why, I shall be very nearly as well off as if I could get on deck. Besides,"

he added, lifting his finger and addressing me with that old air of cunning I have again and again referred to, made boyish and pathetic by the quivering of his eyelids and the knowing look his mouth put on, "even if I was not too much swelled to pass through that door"—he glanced at it as if it were a living thing that demanded respectful speech from him—"I should never be able to get through the companion-hatch."

"Well," said I, "it no doubt is as you say. A little patience, and you will find yourself equal, I am sure, to leaving your cabin. If not, and you fear the idea of a squeeze, there is always your carpenter at hand. A few blows dealt at yonder bulkhead would make room for an elephant."

"Ay, that would be all very well," said he, "so far as this cabin is concerned; but would you have me order the carpenter to rip up the deck, with leagues of Atlantic weather right ahead of us?"

I feigned to agree. No useful result could possibly follow any sort of reasoning with him while this extraordinary fancy possessed his brain. I watched him attentively, to remark if he moved or acted as if his hallucination involved physical conditions—as if, in short, he was sensible of the weight and unwieldiness of excessive growth in his body and limbs; for I remembered the case of a man I once heard of who, believing himself to have grown enormously corpulent in a single night, acted the part of an immensely fat man by breathing pursily and with labor, by grasping his stomach as though it stood out a considerable distance ahead of him, and by other samples of behavior which in his madness he might imagine properly belonged to the obese. But I could detect no conduct of this sort in Wilfrid outside that inspection of himself which I mentioned when he first told me that he had grown too big to quit his cabin.

I changed the subject, and sat talking with him for a long half-hour. He asked no questions about his wife, nor as to the disposal of the colonel's body, nor reverted to the extent of the faintest implication to the incidents of the preceding day. Yet he conversed with perfect rationality; his manners were bland, with something of dignity in them; it seemed, indeed, as if the poor fellow's craziness had localized itself in this new and astounding fancy of his being unable to squeeze his way through on deck, leaving his mind in all other directions clear and serene; yet, mad as was the notion that had now seized him, I could not but secretly feel that there was more madness yet in his insensibility to what had happened, as

though, indeed, the light of memory in him had been extinguished, and he was conscious of nothing but what was actually passing before his eyes.

I held my peace on this new and astonishing craze, fancying that at any hour I might find him on deck and his delusion gone. At dinner, however, that day Miss Laura noticed his absence. My silence, I suppose, convinced her that there was something wrong with him. She questioned me, and I told her the truth. Her eyes filled with sadness.

"He grows worse," she said. "I fear he will never recover."

"This marriage," I answered, "on top of what was congenital in him, has proved too much. Have you seen your sister to-day?"

"No."

"Does she intend to keep her cabin until we reach England?"

"I cannot say. She declines to see me."

"Yet she has turned you out of your berth, and does not scruple, I suppose, to use everything that you possess. Well, we are a queer little ship, I must say; the husband self-imprisoned by fancy on one side, and a wife self-imprisoned by Heaven knows what emotions on the other side; and both doors within kick of a foot from either threshold. It is a picture to encourage an ingenuous mind fired with matrimonial resolutions!"

"Men are fools to get married!" she exclaimed, piquantly.

"And women?" said I.

"Oh, it is the business of women to make men fools," she answered.

Her clear eye rested serenely on mine, and she spoke without archness or sarcasm.

"I don't think," said I, "that women make fools of men, but that it is men who make fools of themselves. Yet this I vow before all the gods: if I had married a woman like your sister, and she had served me as she has served her husband, I should wish to be mad as Wilfrid is. He does not ask after her, seems to have utterly forgotten her and the fellow who was sent to his rest yesterday. Oh, how delightful! Why, you hear of women like Lady Monson driving their spouses into hideous courses of life, forcing them to search for oblivion in drink, gambling, and so on until they end as penniless miscreants, as broken-down purple-nosed rogues, and all for love, forsooth! But how is Wilfrid served? Some wild-eyed imagination slips into his brain, turns all the paintings to the wall, and with nimble hands falls to work to garnish the galleries inside

his skull with tapestry hangings which engage his mind to the forgetting of all things else."

"But, Mr. Monson," cried she, "surely with some little trouble one might succeed in persuading him, while feigning to admit he has increased in size, that he is not too big to pass through his door."

"Let us pay him a visit," said I.

She at once rose. We had finished dinner some time. I had been chatting with her over such slender dessert as a yacht's stores in those days supplied—figs, nuts, raisins, biscuits, and the like. The westering sun colored the cabin with a ruby atmosphere, amid which the wines on the table glowed in rich contrast with the snow-white damask and the icy sparkle of crystal, while red stars trembled in the silver lamps, with a soft crimson lustre flaking, as it seemed, upon the eye out of the mirrors. The humming wind gushed pleasantly through the open skylight and down the hatchway, and set the leaves of the plants dancing, and the ferns gracefully nodding. To think of the woman for whom all this show was designed, for whom all these elegancies were heaped together, the mistress indeed of the gallant and beautiful little fabric that was bearing us with a pretty sauciness over this sea of sapphire and under this reddening equinoctial heaven, sulking in her cabin, a disgraced, a degraded, a socially ruined creature, imprisoned by her own hand, and pride acting the part of turnkey to her! But Miss Jennings was making her way to Wilfrid's cabin, and there was no leisure now for moralizing.

We entered. The remains of the dinner my cousin had been served with were still upon his table, and I gathered that he had done exceedingly well. This did not look as though he suspected that eating had anything to do with his sudden astonishing growth. He had emptied one pint bottle of champagne, and another about a quarter full stood at his elbow, with a bumper just poured out, apparently, alongside it. He had attired himself in dress-clothes again, and sat with an air of state and dignity in his arm-chair, toying with a large cigar not yet lighted.

"How d'ye do, Laura, my dear? Sit down. Sit, Charles. There is plenty of room for slender people like you."

I placed a chair for Miss Jennings, and vaulted into Wilfrid's bunk, for though the cabin was roomy in proportion to the burden of the yacht, the accommodation was by no means ample, owing to the furniture that crowded the deck. His high cheek-bones were

flushed, a sort of glassiness coated his eyes, but this I readily ascribed to the champagne; the interior was hot, and Miss Laura cooled her sweet face with a black fan that hung at her waist. My cousin watched her uneasily, as if he feared she would see something in him to divert her.

"Do you feel now, Wilfrid," said I, "as if you could get on deck?"

"Oh, certainly not," he answered, warmly; "I wonder that you should ask such a question. Compare my figure with that door."

He looked at Miss Laura with a shrug of his shoulders, as though he pitied me.

"Surely, Wilfrid," she exclaimed, "you could pass through quite easily, and without hurting yourself at all."

"Quite easily! Yes, in pieces!" he cried, scornfully. "But it is not that you are both blind. Your wish is to humor me. Please do nothing of the sort. What I can see you can see. Look at this bulk." He put down his cigar to grasp his breast with both hands. "Look at these," he continued, slapping first an arm, then a leg. "It is a most fortunate thing that I should have broadened only. Had I increased correspondingly in height I should not have been able to stand upright in this cabin;" and he directed a glance at the upper deck, or ceiling, while a shiver ran through him.

I thought now I would sound his mind in fresh directions, for though while his present craze hung strong in him it was not likely he would quit his cabin, yet if his intellect had failed in other ways to the extent I found in this particular hallucination, he would certainly have to be watched, not for his own security only, but for that of all others on board. Why, as you may suppose, his craziness took the wildest and most tragic accentuation when one thought of where one was—in the very heart of the vast Atlantic, a goodly company of us on board, a little ship that was as easily to be made a bonfire of as an empty tar-barrel, with gunpowder enough stowed somewhere away down forward to complete in a jiffy the work that the flames might be dallying with.

"You do not inquire after Lady Monson, Wilfrid?" said I.

Miss Jennings started and stared at me.

"Why should I?" he answered, coldly, and deliberately producing his little tinder-box, at which he began to chip. "I'll venture to say she doesn't inquire after *me*."

I was astonished by the rationality of this answer and the air of intelligence that accompanied its delivery.

"No, I fear not," said I, much embarrassed. "As she only came on board yesterday—"

"Well?" he exclaimed, finding that I paused.

"Oh," said I, with a bit of a stammer, "it just occurred to me you might have forgotten that she was now one of us, journeying home."

"Tut, tut!" said he, waving his hand at me, but without turning his head. "Laura, you are looking after her, my dear?"

"My maid sees that she has all she requires," answered the girl. "She declines to have anything to say to me—to meet me—to hear of me."

He nodded his head slowly and gravely at her, and lowering his voice, said, "Can she hear us, do you think?"

"No," I exclaimed, "not through the two bulkheads, with the width of passage between."

He smoked leisurely while he kept his eyes thoughtfully bent on Miss Laura. "My cousin," said he, addressing her as though I were absent, "has on more than one occasion said to me, 'Suppose you recover your wife, what are you going to do with her?' I have recovered her, and now I will tell you my intentions. Laura, you know I adored her." She inclined her head. "What term would you apply to a woman," he proceeded, "who should abandon a devoted husband that worshipped the ground she walked upon; who should desert the sweetest little infant"—I thought his voice would falter here, but it was as steady as the fixed regard of his eyes—"that ever came from Heaven to fill a mother's heart with love; who should forfeit a position of distinction and opulence; who should stealthily creep like a thief in the night from a home of beauty, of elegance, and of splendor; who should do all this for an end of such depravity that it must be nameless?" his forefinger shot up with a jerk, and his eyes glowed under the trembling of the lids. "What is the term you would apply to such a woman?" he continued, now scowling, and with an imperious note in his voice.

I guessed the word that was in his mind, and cried, "Why, mad of course."

"Mad!" he thundered, violently, slapping his knee, and breaking into a short, semi-delirious laugh. He leaned forward as though he would take Miss Laura into his strictest confidence, and putting his hand to the side of his mouth, he whispered: "She is mad. We none of us knew it, Laura. My first act, then, when we reach home will be to confine her. But not a word, mind!" He held his finger

to his lips, and in that posture slowly leaned back in his chair again with a face painful with its smile of cunning and triumph.

I saw that the girl was getting scared; so without ado I dropped out of the bunk onto my feet.

"An excellent scheme, Wilfrid," said I; "in fact, the only thing to be done. But, my dear fellow, d'ye know the atmosphere here is just roasting? I'll take Miss Jennings on deck for a turn, and when I am cooled down a bit I'll look in upon you for another yarn for half an hour before turning in."

"All right," he exclaimed. "Laura looks as if she wants some fresh air. Send one of the stewards to me, will you, as you pass through the cabin? But mind, both of you—hush! Not a word—you understand?"

"Trust us," said I; and, sick at heart, I took Miss Laura's hand and led her out of the cabin. As I closed the door she reeled, and would have fallen but for the arm I passed round her. I conducted her to a couch, and procured a glass of water. The atmosphere here was comparatively cool with the evening air breezing down through the wide skylight, and she quickly recovered.

"It is terrible!" she exclaimed, pressing her fingers to her eyes and shaking her head. "I should fall crazy myself were I much with him. His sneers, his smiles, his looks, the boyish air of his face too! The thought of his misery, his injury, the irreparable wrong done him—poor Wilf, poor Wilf!" Her tender heart gave way, and she wept piteously.

When she was somewhat composed she fetched a hat and accompanied me on deck. The dusk down to the horizon was clear and fine, richly spangled to where the hard black line of the ocean ruled the firmament. On high sailed many meteors like flying-fish sparkling out of the dark velvet; some of them scoring under the trembling constellations a silver wake that lingered long on the eye, and resembled a length of moon-colored steam slowly settling away before the breath of a soft air. There were many shooting-stars, too, without the comet-like grace of the meteoric flights; sharp, bounding sparkles that made one think of the flashing of muskets levelled at the ocean by visionary hands in the hovering, star-laden gloom. The wind was failing; the yacht was sailing with erect masts with a rhythmic swinging of the hollows of her canvas to the light weather-rolls of the vessel on the tender undulations. It was like the regular breathing of each great white breast. The dew was heavy, and cooled the draught as a fountain the atmosphere round

about it. A little sleepy noise of purring froth came from the bows. All was hushed along the decks, though as the yacht lifted forward I could make out some figures pacing the forecastle apparently with naked feet, for no footfall reached the ear.

"Alas!" said I, "the wind is failing. I dread the stagnation of these waters. I have heard of ships lying becalmed here for two and three months at a stretch; in all those hideous days of frying suns and steaming nights scarce traversing twenty leagues."

"We were becalmed a fortnight on the Line," said Miss Laura, "on our passage to England. It seemed a year. Everybody grew quarrelsome, and I believe there was a mutiny among the crew."

"Oh, I hate the dead calm at sea!" I cried. "Yet I fear we are booked. Look straight up, Miss Jennings; you will behold a very storm of shooting-stars. When I was in these waters, but much more west and east than where we now are, I took notice that whenever the sky shed meteors in any abundance a calm followed, and the duration of the stagnant time was in proportion to the abundance of the silver discharge. But who is that standing aft by the wheel there?"

My question was heard and answered. "It's me—Capt'n Finn, sir."

"We're in for a calm, I fear, Finn."

"I fear so, sir," he answered, slowly coming over to us. "Great pity, though. I was calculating upon the little breeze to-day lasting to draw us out of this here belt. Them shooting-stars, too, ain't wholesome. Some says they signifies wind, and so they may to the norrards, but not down here. Beg pardon, Mr. Monson, but how is Sir Wilfrid, sir? Ha'n't seen him on deck all day. I hope his honor's pretty well?"

"Come this way, Finn," said I.

The three of us stepped to the weather-rail, somewhat forward, clear of the ears of the helmsman.

"Captain," said I, "my cousin's very bad, and I desire to talk to you about him."

"Sorry to hear it, sir," he answered, in a voice of concern; "the heat's a-trying him, maybe."

"He refuses to leave his cabin," said I, "and why, think you? Because he has got it into his head that he has grown too broad to pass through the door, or even to squeeze through that hatch there."

"Gor bless me!" he exclaimed, "what a notion to take on. And yet it ain't the first time I've heard of such whims. I was once

shipmate with a man who believed his nose to be a knife. I've seen him a-trying to cut up tobacco with it. There's no arguing with people when they gets them tempers."

"But don't you think, Captain Finn," said Miss Jennings, "that, with some trouble, Sir Wilfrid might be coaxed into coming on deck? If he could be induced to pass through his door he would find the hatch easy. Then, when on deck, confidence would return to him and his crazy notion leave him."

"Won't he make the heffort, miss?" inquired Finn.

I answered, "No. He says that it would tear him to pieces to be dragged through."

"Then, sir," exclaimed the skipper, with energy, "if he says it, you may depend upon it he believes it, sir; and if he believes it, then I dorn't doubt that physical force, by way of getting him out of his cabin, would be the most dangerous thing that could be tried. It's all the narves, sir. Them's an arrangement fit to bust a man open by acting upon his imagination. Mr. Monson, sir, I'll tell 'ee what once happened to me. I had a fever, and when I recovered my narves was pretty nigh all gone. I'd cry one moment like a baby, then laugh ready to split my sides over nothin' at all. I took on a notion that I might lay wiolent hands on myself if the opportunity offered. It wasn't that I wanted to hurt myself, but that I was afeared I *would*. I recollect being in my little parlor one day. There was a bit of a sideboard agin the wall, with a drawer in which my missus kep' the table-knives we ate with. The thought of them knives gave me a fright. I wanted to leave the room, but to get to the door I should have to pass the drawer where them knives were, and I couldn't stir. Your honor, such was the state of my narves that the agony of being dragged past that door would have been as bad as wrenching me in halves. So I got out through the window, and it was a fortnight afore I had the courage to look into that parlor again."

"My father knew a rich gentleman in Melbourne," said Miss Jennings, "who lost his mind. He believed that he had been changed into a cat, and all day long he would sit beside a little crevice in the wainscot of his dining-room waiting for a mouse to appear."

"But when it comes to imaginations of this kind," said I, "one is never to know what is going to follow. Captain Finn, my cousin may mend—I pray God he will do so, and soon—"

"Amen," quoth Finn, in his deepest note.

"Meanwhile," I continued, "I am of opinion that he should be watched."

"You think so, sir?" he exclaimed.

"Why, man, consider where we are. Send your eye into that mighty distance," I cried, pointing to the black junction of scintillant gloom and the spread of ocean coming to us thence in ink. "Think of our loneliness here and the condition that a madman's act might reduce us to. That is not all. Lady Monson, this young lady, and her maid sleep close to his cabin. Who shall conjecture the resolution that may possess a diseased brain on a sudden? Sir Wilfrid must be watched, Finn."

"I agree with you, sir," he answered, thoughtfully, "but—but who's to have the ordering of it? 'Tain't for the likes of me, sir—" He paused; then added, "He's master here, 'ee know, sir."

"I'll make myself responsible," I exclaimed; "the trouble is to have him watched with the delicacy that shall defy the detection of his most suspicious humor should he put his head out of his berth or quit it—which he is not likely to do *yet*. Of course an eye would have to be kept upon him from without. Name me two or three of your trustiest seamen."

"Why, sir, there's Cutbill, a first-class man; and there's two others, Jonathan Furlong and William Grindling, that you may put your fullest confidence in."

"Then," said I, "I propose that these men should take a spell of keeping a lookout turn and turn about. The stewards would have been fit persons, but they are wanting in muscle. Let the man who keeps watch in the cabin so post himself that he may command the passage where Sir Wilfrid's berth is. You or Crimp, according as your watch comes round, will see that the fellow below, whoever he may be, keeps awake. Pray attend to this, Finn. I am satisfied that it is a necessary measure."

"I shall have to tell old Jacob the truth, sir, and the men likewise," said he, "and also acquaint the stewards with what's wrong, otherwise they'll be for turning the sailor that's sent below out of the cabin."

"By all means," said I; "I'll stand your lookout while you are making the necessary arrangements. But see that you provide your men with some ready and quite reasonable excuse for being in the cabin should Sir Wilfrid chance to come out during the night and find one of his seamen sitting at the table."

"Ay, ay, sir; that's to be managed with a little thinking," answered Finn, and forthwith he marched towards the forecastle into the darkness there.

"It is fortunate," I said to Miss Jennings, "that I am Wilfrid's

cousin. If I were simply a guest on board, I question if Finn would do what I want."

We fell to pacing the deck. Even as we walked the light breeze weakened yet, till here and there you'd catch sight of the gleam of a star in some short fold of black swell running with a burnished brow. The dew to the fluttering of the canvas aloft fell to the deck with the pattering sound of rain-drops.

"Oh," groaned I to Miss Laura, "for a pair of paddle-wheels!"

We stepped to the open skylight to observe if aught were stirring below, but gladly recoiled from the gush of hot air there rising with a fiery breath stale with the smell of the dinner-table spite of the sweetness put into it by the flowers. Heavens, how my very heart sickened to the slopping sounds of water alongside lifting stagnantly and sulkily melting out into black ungleaming oil! We seated ourselves under the fanning spread of main-sail, talking of Wilfrid, of his wife, of features of the voyage, until little by little I found myself slowly sliding into a sentimental mood. My companion's sweet face, glimmering tender and placid to the starlight, came very near courting me into a confession of love. The helmsman was hidden from us, we seemed to be floating alone upon the mighty shadow that stretched around. A sense of inexpressible remoteness was inspired by the trembling of the luminaries, and the sharp shooting of the silver meteors, as though all the life of this vast hushed universe of gloom were up there, and we had come to a pause upon the very verge of creation, with no other vitality in the misty confines save what the beating of our two hearts put into them.

On a sudden she started and said, "See! There is my sister."

The figure of Lady Monson rose, pale and veiled, out of the companion-hatch. She did not observe us, and approached the part of the deck where we were seated, courted haply by the deeper dye the shadow of the main-sail put into the atmosphere about it. I was struck by the majesty of her gait, by the tragic dignity of her carriage as she advanced, taking the planks with a subtlety of movement that made her form look to glide wraith-like. The sweet heart at my side shrank with so clear a suggestion of alarm in her manner that I took her hand and held it. Lady Monson drew close—so close without seeing us that I believed she was walking in her sleep, but she caught sight of us then, and instantly flung, with an inexpressible demeanor of temper and aversion, to the other side of the deck, which she paced, going afterwards to the rail and overhanging it, motionless as the quarter-boat that hung a little past her.

"She frightens me!" whispered Laura; "ought I to join her? Oh, cruel, cruel, that she should hate me so bitterly for her own acts!"

"Why should you join her? She does not want you. The heat has driven her on deck, and she wishes to muse and perhaps moralize over the colonel's grave. Why are you afraid of her?"

"Because I am a coward."

Just then Finn came along. He went up to Lady Monson and I saw his figure stagger against the starlight when he discovered his mistake. He peered about, and then came over to us, breathing hard and polishing his forehead.

"Nigh took the breath out of my body, sir," he exclaimed, in a hoarse whisper; "actually thought it was your honor, so tall she be. Well, I've arranged everything, sir, and a lookout 'll be established soon arter the cabin light's turned down."

Laura suddenly rose and wished me good-night. I could see that Lady Monson's presence rendered her too uneasy to remain on deck, so I did not press her to stay, though I remember heartily wishing that her ladyship was still on board the *'Liza Robbins*. She continued to hold her stirless posture at the bulkwark-rail, as though she were steadily thinking herself into stone. But for her contemptuous and insolent manner of turning from us I believe I should have found spirit enough to attempt a conversation with her. It was not until four bells that she rose suddenly from her inclined attitude, as though startled by the clear echoing chimes. Past her the sky was dimly reddening to the moon, whose disk still floated below the horizon, and against the delicate, almost dream-like flush I perceived her toss up her veil and press her hands to her face. She then veiled herself afresh, came to the companion, and disappeared. Was it remorse working in her, or grief for her foundered colonel, or some anguish born of the thought of her child? Easier, I thought, to fathom with the sight the mysteries of the ooze of the black, vaporous-looking surface that our keel was scarce now wrinkling than to penetrate the secrets of a heart as dark as hers!

Half an hour later I quitted the deck, and as I passed through the cabin nodded to Cutbill, who sat awkwardly and with a highly embarrassed air, with his back upon the cabin table, commanding the after-cabins—a huge salt, all whisker, wrinkles, and muscle.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A DEAD CALM.

I WAS up and about a great deal during the night. It was not only that the heat murdered sleep; there was something ominous in the profound stillness which fell upon our little ship that the mind found itself weighed down as with a sense of misgiving, a dull incommunicable dread of approaching calamity. Of the dead calm at sea I was by no means ignorant; in African and West Indian waters I had tasted of the delights of this species of stagnation over and over again. One calm, I remember, came very close to realizing Coleridge's description, or rather the description that the poet borrowed from the narrative of old Sir Richard Hawkins preserved in the foxed and faded pages of the Rev. Samuel Purchas. The water looked to be full of wriggling fiery creatures burning in a multitude of colors till the surface of the sea resembled a vast, ghastly prism reflecting the lights of some hellish principality deep sunk in the dark brine. But I never recollect the ocean until this night as without some faint heave of swell; yet after the weak draught of air had utterly died out, somewhere about midnight, the yacht slept upon a bosom as stirless as the surface of a summer lake. There was not the lightest movement to awaken an echo in her frame, to run a tremor through her canvas, to nudge the rudder into the dimmest clanking of its tiller-chains. The effect of such a hush as this at sea is indescribable. On shore, deep in the country, far distant from all hum of life, the stillness of night is a desired and familiar condition of darkness; it soothes to rest; whatever vexes it is a violence; the sweeping of a gale through hissing and roaring trees, the thunder of wind in the chimney, the lashing of the windows with hail and rain, the red bolt of lightning, to whose hue the bedroom glances in blood to the eye of its disturbed occupant—all this brings with it an element of fear, of something unusual, out of keeping, out of nature almost. But at sea it is the other way about. 'Tis the dead calm that is unnatural. It is as though the mighty forces of heaven and ocean had portentously sucked in their breath in

anticipation of the shock of conflict, as a warrior fills his lungs to the full and then holds his wind while he waits the cry of charge.

I tried to sleep but could not, and hearing one o'clock struck on the forecastle, dropped out of my bunk for ten minutes of fresh air on deck. Cutbill sat with his back against the table; the small flame of the lamp that hung without the least vibration from the cabin ceiling gleamed in the sweat-drops that coated his face as though oil had been thrown upon him. I said softly, pausing a moment to address him, "A wonderfully still night, Cutbill."

"Never remember the like of it, sir," he answered, in a whisper that had a note of strangling in it with his effort to subdue his naturally tempestuous utterance.

"All quiet aft?"

"As a graveyard, sir."

"In case Sir Wilfrid Monson should look out and see you, what excuse for being here has Captain Finn provided you with?"

"I'm supposed to be watching the bayrometer, sir. If Sir Wilfrid steps out I'm to seem to be peering hard at that there mercury, then to go on deck as if I'd got something to report."

"Oh, that'll do, I dare say," I exclaimed. "He may wonder, but that must not signify. Heaven grant, Cutbill, that I am unnecessarily nervous; but we're a middling full ship; it is the right sort of night, too, to make one feel the hugeness of the ocean and the helplessness of sailors when deprived of their little machinery for fighting it; and what I say is a misgiving under such circumstances ought to serve us as a conviction—so keep a bright lookout, Cutbill. Nothing is going to happen, I dare say; but our business is to contrive that nothing *shall* happen."

The huge fellow lifted his enormous hand very respectfully to his glistering forehead and I passed on to the deck.

The moon shone brightly and her reflection lay upon the sea like a league-long fallen column of silver, with the ocean going black as liquid pitch to the sides of the resplendent shaft. Not a wrinkle tarnished that prostrate pillar of light: not the most fairy-like undulation of water put an instant's warping, for the space of a foot, into it. I set the main-mast head by a star and watched it, and the trembling, greenish, lovely point of radiance hung poised as steadfastly on a line with the truck as though it were some little crystal lamp fixed to an iron spike up there.

I spied Jacob Crimp near the wheel, but I had come up to breathe and not to talk. I desired to coax a sleepy humor into me, and

guessed that that end would be defeated by a chat with the surly little sailor, with whom I rarely exchanged a few sentences without finding myself drifting into an argument. So I lay over the rail striving to cool my hot face with the breath off the surface of the black profound that lay like a sheet of dark, ungleaming mirror beneath. On a sudden I heard a great sigh out in the gloom. It was as though some slumbering giant had fetched a long, deep, tremulous breath in a dream. I started, for it had sounded close, and I looked along the obscure deck forward, as if, forsooth, there was any sailor on board whose respiration could rise to such a note as *that!* In a moment I spied a block of blackness slowly melting out like a dye of ink upon the indigo of the water with the faint flash of moonlight off the wet round of it. A grampus! thought I; and stared about me for others, but no more showed, and the prodigious midnight hush seemed to float down again from the stars like a sensible weight with one wide ripple from where the great fish had sunk, creeping like a line of oil to the yacht's side, and melting soundlessly in her shadow.

This grave-like repose lasted the night through, and when early in the morning, awakened by the light of the newly risen sun, I mounted to the deck I found the ocean stretched flat as the top of a table, the sky, of a dirty bluish haze, thickening down and merged into the ocean line so that you couldn't see where the horizon was, save just under the sun where the head of the misty white sparkle in the water defined the junction. It baffled and bothered the sight to look into the distance, so vaporous and heavy it all was, with a dull blue gleam here and there upon the water striking into the faintness like a sunbeam into mist, and all close to, as it seemed, though by hard peering you might catch the glimmer of the calm past the mixture of hazy light and hues where sea and sky seemed to end.

Jacob Crimp had charge. I asked him if all had been quiet below in the cabin.

"Ay," he answered, "I've heard of nothin' to the contrairy. Her ledship came on deck during the middle watch and had a bit of a yarn with me."

"Indeed!" said I.

"Yes, she scared me into a reg'lar clam. I was standing at the rail thinking I see a darkness out under the moon as if a breath of wind were coming along, and a woice just behind me says, 'What's your name?' Nigh hand tarned my hair white to see her, so quiet she came and her eyes like corposants."

"What did she talk about?" said I, in a careless way.

"Asked what the sailor was a-sitting in the cabin for. 'To prewent murder being done,' says I. 'Murder!' says she. 'Yes,' says I, 'and to prewent this wessel from being set on fire and blown to yellow blazes,' says I; 'for God knows,' says I, 'what weight of gunpowder ain't stowed away forrards.' 'Who's a-going to do all this?' says she; so I jist told her that Sir Wilfrid had been took worse, and that the order had come forrard that the cabin was to be watched."

"What did she say to that?" I exclaimed.

"Why, walked to t'other side of the deck and sot down and remained an hour, till I reckoned that when she went below she must ha' been pretty nigh streaming with dew."

"What do you think of the weather, Mr. Crimp?"

"It's agin nature," he answered. "Like lying off Blackwall for smoothness. 'Tain't going to last, though. Nothing that's agin nature ever do, whether its weather, or a dawg with two tails, or a cat with height legs."

"I wish you were a magician," said I; "I'd tassel your handkerchief for a strong breeze. A roasting day with a vengeance, and the first of a long succession, I fear."

At breakfast I told Miss Laura of Lady Monson's visit on deck in the middle watch, and the mate's blunt statement to her. "It was a mighty dose of truth to administer," said I. "She will pass some bad quarters of an hour, I fear. Think of old Jacob talking to her of murder and fire, and explosions unto yellow blazes, whatever *that* may mean, with her husband sleeping right abreast of her cabin, and armed, as she must know."

"Has he those pistols?" she asked.

"Yes," I answered; "I gave the case to one of the stewards to return to him, and now I am sorry I did so."

"Of course Henrietta will be frightened," she exclaimed. "I do not envy her in her loneliness. Why should she refuse to see me? I easily understand her objection to showing herself on deck by daylight; but I am her sister; I could sit with her; I could be company for her, win her perhaps," she said, with a wistful look, "to something like a gentle mood." She sighed deeply and continued: "Wilfrid scared me yesterday. There was that in his face that shocked me, but I could not explain what it was. Yet I am not the least bit afraid he will commit any deed of violence. Let him be twenty times madder than he now is, his heart is so tender, his spirit so boy-

like, pure, honorable, there is so much of sweetness and affection in his nature that I am certain his cruelest delirium would be tempered by his qualities."

I was grateful to her for thus speaking of my poor cousin, but I could not agree with her. The qualities she pinned her faith to had suffered him, at all events, to shoot Colonel Hope-Kennedy, and to make nothing of the man's death. Yet, thought I, looking at her, seeing how this sweet little creature values, and to a large extent understands him, what devil's influence was upon the loving, large-hearted, child-like man when he chose the *other* one for his wife? But, fond of him and sorry for him as I was, I could not have wished it otherwise—for my sake, at all events; though on her part it would have made her "her ladyship," and found her a husband whose brain I don't doubt might year by year have grown stronger in the cheerful and fructifying light of her cordial, sympathetic, radiant character.

I looked in upon him after breakfast. Miss Laura wished to accompany me, but I advised her to delay her visit until I had ascertained for myself how he did. He was lying in his bunk, a large pipe in his mouth, at which he pulled so heartily that his cabin was dim with tobacco-smoke. His cheek was supported by his elbow, and his eyes fixed upon his watch, a superb gold time-keeper that dangled at the extremity of a heavy chain hitched to a little hook screwed into the deck over his head. On the back of this watch were his initials set in brilliants, and these gems made the golden circle show like a little body of light as it hung motionless before his intent gaze. He did not turn his head when I opened the door, then looked at me in an absent-minded way when I was fairly entered.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, languidly, "it is you, Charles. You promised to sit with me a while last night."

"I did, but the heat below was unendurable. It is no better now. The temperature of this cabin must be prodigious. What calculations are you making?" said I.

"None," he answered. "I have slung the watch to observe if there is any movement in the yacht. She is motionless. Mark it. There is not a hair-breadth of vibration. We are afloat of course?" he said, suddenly, looking at me.

"I hope so," said I. "Afloat? Why, what do you suppose, Wilf? That we've gone to the bottom?"

"It would be all one for me," he answered, with a deep sigh; and

then applying himself to his pipe again with a sort of avidity that made one think of a hungry baby sucking at a feeding-bottle. He clouded the air with tobacco-smoke and said, "I am heartily weary of life."

"And why?" cried I; "because we are in a dead calm, with the equator close aboard. The very deep is rotting. A calm of this kind penetrates through the pores of the skin, enters the soul, and creates a thirsty yearning for extinction. Being younger than you, Wilf, I give myself another twelve hours, and then, if no breeze blows, I shall, like you, be weary of life and desire to die."

"It is easily managed," said he.

"Yes," cried I, startled, "no doubt. But the weather may change, you know," and not at all relishing his remark nor the looks that accompanied it, I seized my hat and fell to fanning the atmosphere with the notion of expelling some of the tobacco-smoke through the open port-hole.

"I am of opinion," said he, puffing and dropping his words alternately with the clouds he expelled, while he kept his eyes fixed upon his watch, "that, spite of the arguments of the divines, life is a free gift to us to be disposed of as we may decide. Nature is invariably compensative. We are brought into this world without our knowledge, and, therefore, of course, without our consent, d'ye see, Charles?" (and here he rolled his eyes upon me) "and by way of balancing this distracting obligation of compulsory being, Nature says you may do what you like with existence; keep it or part with it."

"I say, Wilfrid," said I, "there are surely more cheerful topics for an equinoctial dog-day than this you have lighted on. *Don't* speculate, my dear fellow; leave poor old Nature alone. Take short views, and let the puzzling distance unfold and determine itself to your approach. It is the wayfarers who decline to look ahead, who whistle as they trudge along the road of life. The melancholy faces are those whose eyes are endeavoring to see beyond the horizon towards which they are advancing. Tell me now, about this cabin door of yours. My dear fellow, it must be big enough this morning to enable you to pass through; so come along on deck, will you, Wilfrid?"

"D—— it, how blind you are!" he exclaimed.

"No, I'm not," said I.

"D'ye mean to say that you can't see what's happened to me since we last met?"

"What now, Wilfrid?"

"What now?" he shouted. "Why, man, I can't stand upright."

"Why not?" I asked.

"Because I'm too tall for this cabin," he answered, in a voice of passion and grief.

"Pray, when did you find that out?" said I.

"On rising to dress myself this morning," he answered, "I was obliged to clothe myself in my bunk. What a dreadful blow to befall a man! I can't even quit my bed now, and everything I want must be handed to me."

Well, well, thought I, God mend him soon. Hot as it was, a chill ran through me to the crazy, wistful, despairing look he directed at me, and I was oppressed for a moment with the same sickness of heart that had visited me during my interview with him on the preceding day.

"I had resolved to sell the *Bride*," said he, mournfully, putting his pipe into a shelf at the back of him and folding his hands, which seemed to me to have grown thin and white during the past few days, upon his breast, "but I sha'n't be able to do so now." I was silent. "She will have to be broken up," he added.

"Nonsense!" I exclaimed.

"But I say *yes!*" he suddenly roared; "how the devil else am I to get out of her?"

"Oh, I see," I answered, soothingly; "I forgot that. But, Wilf, since you're too big to use this cabin for the present only—for I am certain you will dwindle to your old proportions before long—don't you think you ought to have an attendant constantly with you, some one at hand sitting here to wait upon you?"

"Why, yes," said he; "no doubt of it. I am almost helpless now. But I'll not have that rascal Muffin."

"No, no," said I. "Nor would the stewards make the sort of servants you want. If I were in your place I should like to be waited on by a couple of jolly, hearty sailors, fellows to take turn and turn about in looking after me, chaps with their memories full of long yarns, unconventional, sympathetic, no matter how rough their manners, agile, strong as horses, with lively limbs, used to springing about. One or two such men are to be met forward among your crew."

"A good idea!" he cried. "Gad! after my experiences of Muffin I'd rather be waited upon by the tarriest of tarry tarpaulins than one of your sleek, soft-stepping, trained rogues who come and ask

you for a situation with an excellent character in one pocket from their late master, and in the other the contents of his dressing-case. Ha, ha, ha!" and here he delivered one of his short roars of laughter.

I remained conversing with him until an hour was gone. Now that he had put his pipe down, the atmosphere of the cabin grew somewhat endurable, yet the heat was extraordinarily great, and due, so far as one's sensations went, not more to the temperature than to the incredible motionlessness of the yacht, so that there was not the faintest stir of air in the port-hole. I spoke of Lady Monson, fancying that the thought of her might help to steady his mind and bring him away from his crazy notions of growth and expansion; but he would not talk of her; as regularly as I worked round to the subject of her ladyship, as regularly was he sliding off into some other topic. Sometimes I'd think that feeling had utterly changed in him; that there had grown up in him for the woman whom he had again and again vowed to me he adored, a loathing to which his innate good taste forbade him to give expression. How it would be if they should meet I could not tell. Her black, tragic eyes might not have lost their fascination, nor her shape of beauty and dignity its power of delighting and enamouring him. But certainly as we sat conversing, the sort of cowering air that accompanied his abrupt changing of the subject every time I mentioned his wife's name was strongly suggestive of disgust and aversion. He talked very sensibly save about his dimensions, but I took notice in him of a hankering after the topic of suicide. Several times he tried to bring me into an argument upon it.

"Am I to be told," he said, "that a man's life is not his own? If not, to whom does it belong, pray?"

"To Heaven," I responded, sullenly.

"Prove it," he sneered.

"Oh, 'tis too plain and established a fact to need proving," said I.

"If a man's life is his own," he cried, "who the deuce in this world has the right to hinder him from doing what he will with it?"

"Wilf, if this goes on," said I, "we shall be landed in a religious controversy—a thing unendurable even under the sign of the frozen serpent, but down here with a thermometer at about one hundred and twelve degrees in the cabin, no ice nearer than fifty-six degrees north!—see here, my dear cousin, get you small again as soon as you can, back to your old size, join Laura and myself at the table afresh, walk the decks with us, taste the fragrance of a cigar upon the cool night air; realize that your little one is at home waiting

for you, and that on your return you will have plenty of homely occupation in looking after those excellent improvements in your property which you were telling me the other day you had in your mind. This sudoriferous speculation as to whether people have a right to hinder a man from taking his life will then exhale."

And so I would go on chatting, talking him away, so to speak, from this gloomy subject which his condition rendered depressing and most uncomfortably significant in his mouth.

However, my visit to him had led to one stroke of good, for on quitting him I at once went to Finn, who was on deck, and told him how Sir Wilfrid had fallen into my scheme, and was for having a couple of sailors to wait upon him, one of whom should be constantly in his cabin.

"You must be plain with the fellows, captain," said I; "tell them that Sir Wilfrid's craze grows upon him, and that he must be narrowly watched, but with tact."

"I'll see to it, sir," said he; "can't do better than Cutbill and Furlong, I think. They're both hearty chaps, chock-a-block with lively yarns, and they've both got good tempers. But dorn't his honor get no better, then, sir?"

"No," said I.

"Dorn't he feel as if he was a-coming back to his old shape, sir?"

"On the contrary," I answered, "yesterday he had only broadened, but this morning he feels so tall that he can't stand upright."

"Well, to be sure," cried the worthy fellow, with his long face working all over with concern and anxiety. "It's all her ladyship's doing. It's her caper-cutting that's brought him to this. Such a gentle heart as he has, too, and a true gentleman through and through him when his mind sits square in his head! But Lor' bless me, sir, what did he want to go and get married for? 'Tain't as if he'd wanted a home, or a gal with money enough to keep him. Not that it's for me to say a word agin marriage, for my missus has always kept a straight helm steady in my wake ever since I took her in tow. But all the same, I'm of opinion that matrimony is an institootion that don't fit this here earth. It's a sort of lock-up; a man's put into a cell along with a gal. If she's a proper kind of gal, why, well and good. The window dorn't seem barred, and ye dorn't take much notice of your liberty being gone; but if she tarns out to be of her ladyship's sort, why, there's nothin' to do but to sing out through the key-hole for a rope to hang yourself with, or, if ye ain't got sperrit enough for that remedy, to hang *her* with."

The delivery of this harangue seemed to ease his mind, and he went forward, with a face tolerably composed, to give instructions to the two men who were to serve as companions, or, to put it bluntly, as keepers to Wilfrid.

The weather held phenomenally silent and breathless. Just before lunch I went right aft, where I commanded the length of the vessel, and steadfastly watched her, and though I had my eye upon the line of her jib-boom I did not see that the end of the spar lifted or fell to the extent of the breadth of a finger-nail. The sole satisfaction that was to be got out of this unparalleled condition of stagnation was the feeling that it could not possibly last. The dim and dirty blue of the sea went rounding not above a mile distant into a like hue of atmosphere, with a confused, half-blinded vagueness of sky overhead that did not seem to be higher up than twice the height of our masts, and the appearance made you think of sitting in a glass globe sunk a fathom or two under water with the light sifting through to you in a tarnished, misty, ugly azure. A strange part of it was that though the sky was cloudless the atmosphere was so thick you could watch the sun, which hovered shapeless as a jelly-fish almost overhead, for a whole minute at a time without inconvenience; yet his heat bit fiercely for all that; there was a wake, too, under him, flakes of muddy yellow-like sheets of a ship's sheathing scaling one under another as though they were going to the bottom in a procession. If you put your hand upon the rail clear of the awning you brought it away with a stamp of pain. I touched the brass binnacle-hood by accident, and bawled aloud to the burn which raised me a blister on the side of my hand that lasted for three days. A sort of impalpable steam rose from the very decks, so that if a man stood still a moment you saw his figure trembling in it like the quivering of an object beheld in clear running water. And how am I to express that deeper quality of heat which seemed to come into the atmosphere with the smell of the blistering of paint along the yacht's sides?

Yet there was no fall in the mercury, no hint above or below to indicate a change at hand. Close alongside, the burnished water lay clear as crystal, and gave back every image with almost startling brilliance. I remember looking over and seeing my face in the clear profound as distinctly as ever I had viewed it in a mirror. It lay like a daguerrotype there. It was of course as deep down as I was high above the surface, and I protest it was like looking at one's self as though one floated a drowned man.

It was the right kind of day for a plunge, and I pined for a swim, for the delight of the cool embrace of the glass-clear brine. But the skipper would not hear of it.

"To the first splash, sir," he exclaimed, "there'd sprout up a regular crop of black fins. It isn't because there's nothing showing now that there ain't a deal more than I for one ud care to see close at hand. No, sir; be advised by me; don't you go overboard."

"Oh, captain," said I, "I've been a sailor in my day and of course know how to obey orders. But I've cruised a good deal in my time in John Sharkee's waters, and with all due deference to you I must say that whenever there are sharks about one or more will be showing."

"Sorry to contradict ye, sir, but my answer's no to that," he replied. "Tell 'ee what I'll do, sir—there's nothin' resembling a shark hanging round now, is there?"

We both stared carefully over the water, and I said no.

"Well, now, sir," he exclaimed, "I'll bet ye a farden's worth of silver spoons that I'll call up a shark to anything I may choose to chuck overboard."

"Make it a pennyworth of silver spoons," said I, "and I'll bet."

"Done," said he, with a grin, and straightway walked forward. After a little he returned with a canvas bag stuffed full of rubbish—potato-parings, yarns, shavings enough to make it floatable, and the like. He hitched the end of a lead-line to it, jumped onto the taff-rail clear of the awning, and whirling it three or four times, sent it speeding some distance away on the quarter. It fell with a splash, and the blur it made upon the flawless surface was for all the world like the impress of a damp finger upon a sheet of looking-glass. He towed it gently, and scarce had he drawn in three fathoms of the line when, a little distance past the bag, up shot the fin of a shark with a gleam off its black wetness as though it were a beer-bottle. He hauled the bag aboard and the fin disappeared.

"Are they to be egg-spoons or dessert-spoons, Finn?" said I, laughing. "By George, I shouldn't have believed it, though. But it's always so. Let a man fancy that he knows anything to the very top of it, and he's sure to fall in with somebody who has a trick above him."

But it was too hot for shark-fishing, let alone the mess of a capture on our ivory-white planks. At first I was for decoying the beasts to the surface and letting fly at them with one of the muskets below, but Finn suggested that the firing might irritate Sir Wilfrid. What was

to be done but lie down and pant? Miss Laura was so overcome by the heat that for once she proved bad company. At lunch she could not eat; she was too languid to talk.

"Just the afternoon for a game of draughts," said I, in playful allusion to the want of air.

She waved away the suggestion with a weak movement. In fact, she was so oppressed that when I told her about Wilfrid's new phase of growth she could only look at me dully as though all capacity of emotion lay swooning in her heart. I sat by her side fanning her, while the perspiration hopped from my forehead like parched peas.

"Oh," cried the little creature, "how long is this calm going to last? What would I give for an English Christmas Day to tumble down out of the sky upon us, with its snow and hail!"

"Let us go on deck," said I; "I am certain it is cooler up there."

We mounted the steps, but she was scarcely out of the companion-hatch when she declared it was a great deal hotter above than below, and down she went again. After all, thought I, Sir Wilfrid and his wife are as well off in their cabins as though they had permitted themselves to wander at large about the yacht. Yet it seemed a roasting existence, to my fancy, for the self-made prisoners when I glanced aft and thought of the size of their cabins, with not air enough to stir a feather in the open ports, and Cutbill's huge form in Wilfrid's berth to give as distinct a rise to the thermometer there as though a stove had been introduced and a fire kindled in it.

All day long it was the same smoky, confused blending of misty blue water and heaven shrouding down overhead and closing upon us, with the sea like a dish of polished steel set in the midst of it, bright as glass where we lay, then dimming into a bluish faintness into the atmospheric thickness at its confines, and the sun a distorted face of weak, yellow brightness staring down as he slided westward with an aspect that made him look as though he were some newly created luminary. At about six o'clock he hung over the sea-line glowing like a huge live cinder, and the air was filled with his smoky crimson glare, that went sifting and tingling into the distance till one was able to see, twice as far again, a red gleam of sea opening past the dimness, and a delicate liquid dye of violet melting down, as one might have thought, from the highest reaches of the heavens into the eastern atmosphere.

"Holloa!" cried I to Jacob Crimp, who was leaning over the side, with his face purple with heat and full of loathing of the weather;

"direct your eyes into the south, will you, and tell me what you see there?"

He turned with the leisurely action peculiar to merchant-sailors, lifted the sharp of his hand to his brow, and peered sulkily in the direction which I had indicated.

"Clouds," said he—"is that what ye mean?"

"Yes," said I, "and a very noble and promising coast of them, too, as I believe we shall be finding out presently, when the change which I hope their brows are charged with shall have clarified the air."

In fact, I had just then caught sight, away down in the south amid the haziness there, of some bronze streaks stretching from south-east to south-west, with here and there dashes of exceedingly faint shadow of the color of flint. Much looking was not needful; it was quickly to be seen that right astern of our course, though, as the yacht lay just then, the appearance was off the starboard beam, there had gathered and was slowly mounting a long, heavy body of thunderous cloud, scarce visible as yet save in its few bronze outlines.

"It will mean a change, I hope," said I to Crimp; "more than mere thunder and lightning, let us pray. Yet the drop in the glass is scarcely noticeable."

"Time something happened, anyway," said he. "Dum me if it ain't been too hot even for the sharks to show themselves! I allow the '*Liza Robbins* ain't over sweet just now."

"No; I'd rather be you than your brother to-day, Crimp."

"Sorry to hear from the captain," said he, "that Sir Wilfrid's got the notion in his head that he's growed in the night till he's too tall to stand upright."

"Yes," said I, "and I hope his craze may end at that."

"There's but one cure for the likes of such tantrums," said he.

"And pray what is that, Mr. Crimp?"

"Fright. Git the hair of a chap that's mad to stand on end, and see if his crazes don't fly clean off out of it like cannon-balls out of a broadside of guns."

"Ay, but fright, as you call it, might drive my poor cousin entirely mad, Mr. Crimp."

"No fear," he answered. "Tell 'ee what I'll ondertake to do. What's the hour now?"

"Call it six o'clock," said I.

"Well, I'll ondertake by half-past six to have Sir Wilfrid running about these 'ere decks."

"And what's the prescription, pray?"

"Why, there's a scuttle to his cabin, ain't there?"

"Yes," I answered.

"An' it lies open, I allow, a day like this. Wery well. Give me ten minutes to go forrads and black my face and dress up my head according to the notion that's in my mind; then let me be lowered by a bowline over the side. I pops my head into the scuttle and sings out in a terrible woice, 'Holloa, there! I'm the devil,' I says, says I, 'and I've come,' says I, 'to see if ye've got any soul left that's worth treating for.' And what d'ye think he'd do at sight of me? Why, run out of his cabin as fast as his legs ud carry him."

"More likely let fly a pistol at you," I exclaimed, laughing at the look of self-complacency with which the sour little fellow eyed me. "However, Mr. Crimp, we'll leave all remedies for Sir Wilfrid alone till we see what yonder shadow to the southward is going to do for us;" and so saying, I stepped below to change my coat for dinner.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A TERRIBLE NIGHT.

Miss Laura arrived at the dinner-table. She was pale with the heat. She toyed with a morsel of cold fowl and sipped seltzer and hock.

"The dead calm," said I, "gives you a young lady's appetite."

"I am here," she answered, "because I do not know where else to be."

"You are here," said I, "because you are good and kind, and know that I delight in your society."

She fanned herself. As the mercury rises past a certain degree sentiment falls. Emotion lies north and south of the line, hardly on it unless in a black skin. How death-like was the repose upon the yacht! The sun had gone out in the western thickness with a flare like the snuff of a blown-out candle, and a sort of brown dimness as of smoke followed him instead of the staring red and living glare that accompanies his descent in clear weather in those parts. The cabin lamp was lighted; it hung without a phantom of vibration, and sitting at that table was like eating in one's dining-room ashore. I glanced my eye round the interior. Delicate and elegant was the appearance of the cabin. The mirrors multiplied the white oil flames of the silver burners; the carpet, the drapery, the upholstery of chairs and couches, stole out in rich, soft dyes upon the gaze. The table was radiant with white damask and glass and plate and plants. Confronting me was the charming figure of the sweet girl with whom I had been intimately associated for several weeks. Her golden hair sparkled in the lamplight; from time to time she would lift her violet eye with a drowsy gleam in it to mine.

"Heat depresses the spirits," said I. "I feel dull. What is going to happen, I wonder?"

"Is the wind ever likely to blow again?" she asked.

"Yes, I shall have the pleasure of conducting you on deck presently, when I will show you a fine bank of clouds in the south that will be revealed to us by lightning, if I truly gather the character of

the vapor from the bronzed lines of it which I witnessed a little while ago."

"Have you seen Wilfrid since lunch?"

"Yes; he talks very sensibly. He beckoned me to his bunk-side to whisper that Cutbill made him laugh. Anything to divert the dear fellow's mind. I presume you have seen nothing of Lady Monson?"

"Nothing," she answered, fanning her pale face till the yellow hair upon her brow danced as though some invisible hand was showering gold-dust upon her.

"Jacob Crimp," said I, softly, "is of opinion that he could drive Wilfrid on deck by blacking his face, looking in upon him through his open port-hole, and calling himself the devil."

"He need not black his face," said she, with the first smile that I had seen upon her lip that day, "but if he does anything of the sort I hope he will be treated as Muffin was."

"Yet I am of opinion," said I, "that a great fright would impel Wilfrid to make for the door. He would pass through it of course, and then his hallucination would fall from him."

She shook her head. "You must not allow him to be frightened, Mr. Monson."

"Depend upon it, I sha'n't," I replied. "I merely repeat a sour seaman's rude and homely prescription."

As I spoke the yacht slightly rolled, and simultaneously with the movement, as it seemed, one felt the dead atmosphere of the cabin set in motion.

"Good!" I cried, "'tis the first of the change. Now heave to it, my beauty!"

Again the yacht softly dipped her side. I jumped up to look at the telltale compass, and as I did so the skylight glanced to a pale glare as of sheet-lightning. I waited a minute to mark the rolling of the craft, that was now dipping sluggishly but steadfastly with rhythmic regularity on undulations which were still exceedingly weak, and found the set of the suddenly risen swell to be north as near as I could judge.

"Well, Miss Laura," said I, "I think now we may calculate upon a breeze of wind presently, from a right quarter too."

I looked at the hour; it was twenty minutes to eight. The death-like hush was broken; the preternatural repose of the last day and night gone. Once more you heard the old familiar straining sounds, the click of hooked doors, the feeble grinding of bulkheads, with

the muffled gurgling of water outside mingled with the frequent flap of canvas; but I could be sure that there was no breath of air as yet; not the least noise of rippling flowed to the ear, and the yacht still lay broadside on to her course.

"Let us go on deck," said I.

She sent her maid, who was passing at the moment, for her hat, and we left the cabin.

"Holloa!" I cried as I emerged from the companion, holding her hand, that lay almost as cold in mine as if it were formed of the snow which it resembled, "there's another of your friends up there, Miss Laura," and I pointed to the top-gallant yard-arm, upon which was floating a corposant, ghastly of hue but beautiful in brilliance.

She looked up and spoke as though she shuddered. "Those things frighten me. What can be more ghostly than a light that is kindled as that is? Oh, Mr. Monson, what a wild flash of lightning!"

A wild flash it was, though as far off as the horizon. Indeed, it was more than one stroke: a copper-colored blaze that seemed to fill the heavens behind the clouds with fire, against which incandescent background the sky-line of the long roll of vapor stood out in vast billows black as pitch, while from the heart of the mass there fell a light like a fire-ball, to which the sea there leaped out yellow as molten gold.

I strained my ear. "No thunder as yet," said I. "I hope it is not going to prove a mere electric storm, flames and detonations and an up and down cataract of rain breathless in its passage, with a deader calm yet to follow."

All at once the light at the top-gallant yard-arm vanished, a soft air blew, and there arose from alongside a delicate, small, fairy-like noise of the lipping and sipping of ripples.

"Oh, how heavenly is this wind!" exclaimed Miss Laura, reviving on a sudden like a gas-dried flower in a shower of rain; "it brings my spirits back to me."

"Trim sail the watch!" bawled Crimp. But there was little to trim; all day long the yacht had lain partially stripped. No good, Finn had said, in exposing canvas to mere deadness. She wheeled slowly to the control of her helm, bowing tenderly upon the swell that was now running steadily with an almost imperceptible gathering of weight in its folds, and presently she was crawling along with her head pointing north before the weak fanning, with the lightning astern of her, making her canvas come and go upon the darkness,

as though lanterns green and rose-bright were being flashed from the deck upon the cloths. The sea was pale with fire round about us. Indeed, the air was so charged with electricity that I felt the tingling of it in the skin of my head as though it were in contact with some galvanic appliance, and I recollect pulling off my cap while I asked Miss Laura if she could see any sparks darting out of my hair. The skylight, gratings, whatever one could sit upon, streamed with dew. I called to the steward for a couple of camp-stools, and placed them so as to obtain the full benefit of the draught feebly breezing down out of the swinging space of the main-sail. The air was hot, and under the high sun it would doubtless have blown with a parching bite that must have rendered it even less endurable than the motionless atmosphere of the calm; but the dew moistened it now; it was a damp night air, with a smell of rain behind it besides, and the gushing of it upon the face was inexpressibly delicious and refreshing.

"We are but little better than insects," said Miss Laura; "entirely the children of the weather."

"Rather compare us to birds," said I; "I don't like insects."

"You complained of feeling depressed just now, Mr. Monson. Are you better?"

"I am the better for this air, certainly," said I; "but I don't feel particularly cheerful. I shouldn't care to go to a pantomime, for instance, nor should I much enjoy a dance. What is it? The influence of that heap of electricity out yonder, I suppose," I added, looking at the dense black massed-up line of cloud astern, over all parts of which there was an incessant play of lightning, with copperish glances behind, that gave a lining of fire to the edges of the higher reaches of the vast coast of vapor. It was like watching some gigantic hangings of tapestry wrought in flame. The imagination, rather than the eye, witnessed a hundred fantastic representations—heads of horses, helmets, profiles of titanic human faces, banners, and feathers, and I know not what besides. It was very dark overhead and past the bows; the thickness that had been upon the sky all day was still there; not the leanest phantom of star showed, and the stoop of the heavens seemed the nearer and the blacker for the flashings over our taffrail, and for the pale, phosphoric sheets which went wavering on all sides towards the murkiness of the horizon.

I spied Finn conversing with Crimp at the gangway; the lightning astern was as moonlight sometimes, and I could see both men

looking aloft, and at the weather in the south, and consulting. In a few minutes they came our way.

"What is it to be, Finn?" said I.

"Well, sir," he answered, "this here swell that's slowly a-gathering means wind. It will be but little more, though, than an electric squall, I think—a deal of fire and hissing, and a burst of breeze—and then quietness again, with the black smother spitting itself out ahead. The barometer don't seem to give more caution than that, anyway, sir. But there's never no trusting what ye can't see through." He turned to Crimp. "Better take the main-sail off her, Jacob," said he, "and let her slide along under her foresail till we see what all that there yonder sinnifies."

The order was given; the sailors tumbled aft; the great stretch of glimmering, ashen cloths, burning and blackening alternately as they reflected the tempestuous flares withered upon the dusk as the peak and throat halyards were settled away; the sail was furled, the huge main-boom secured, and the watch went forward softly as cats upon their naked feet.

Ha! what is that? Right ahead, on a line with our bowsprit, there leaped from the black breast of the sea, on the very edge of the ocean, if not past it, a body of flame, brilliant as sunshine, but of the hue of pale blood. It came and went; but while it lived it made a ghastly and terrifying daylight of the heavens and the water in the north, revealing the line of the horizon as though the sun's upper limb were on a level with it till the circle of the sea could have been followed to either quarter.

"*That* was not lightning," cried Miss Laura, in a voice of alarm.

"Finn," I shouted, "did you see that?"

"Ay, sir," he cried, with an accent of astonishment from the opposite side of the deck.

"What in the name of thunder was it, think you?" I inquired.

"Looked to me like a cloud of fire dropped clean out of the sky, sir," he answered.

"No, no," exclaimed the hoarse voice of the fellow who grasped the helm, "my eye was on it, capt'n. It rose up."

"Listen," cried I, "if any report follows it."

But we could hear no sound save the distant muttering of thunder astern.

"It looked as though a ship had blown up," said Miss Laura.

"I say, captain," I called, "d'ye think it likely that a vessel has exploded down there?"

"There's been nothin' in sight, sir," he answered.

"And why? Because the atmosphere has been blind all day," I replied. "You'd see the light of an explosion when the craft herself would be hidden."

"'Twarn't no ship, sir," muttered the fellow at the wheel, considering himself licensed by the excitement of the moment to deliver his opinion. "I once see the like of such a flare as that off the Maldives."

"What was it?" inquired Miss Laura.

"A sea-quake, miss."

"Ha!" I exclaimed, "that'll be it, Finn."

We fell silent, all of us gazing intently ahead, never knowing but that another wild light would show that way at any moment. Though I was willing enough to believe it to have been a volcanic upheaval of flame, I had still a fancy that it might be an explosion on board a ship too, some big craft that had been out of sight all day in the thickness; and I kept my eyes fixed upon the horizon in that quarter with a half-formed fancy in me of witnessing something there by the light of some stronger flash than the rest out of the stalking and lifting blackness astern of us.

"I cannot help thinking," said Miss Laura, rising as she spoke, and arching her fingers above her eyes to peer through the hollow of her hands, "that I sometimes see a pale, steam-like column resembling ascending smoke that spreads out on top in the form of a palm-tree. *Now* I see it!" she cried, as a brilliant flash behind us sent its ghastly yellow into the far confines ahead, till the whole ocean lifted dark and flat to it.

The thunder began to rattle ominously, the light breeze faltered, and the foresail swung sulkily to the bowing of the vessel upon the swell that was distinctly increasing in weight. We all looked, but none of us could distinguish anything resembling the appearance the girl indicated.

"If the flame rose from the sea," said I, "it is tolerably certain to have sent up a great body of steam. That is, no doubt, what you see, Miss Jennings."

"It lingers," she exclaimed, continuing to stare.

"The draught's a-taking off," rumbled Finn. "Stand by for a neat little shower."

As the air died away it grew stiflingly hot again, hotter, it seemed, than it was before the breeze blew. The huge volumes of dense shadows astern were literally raining lightning; the swell ran in

molten glass, and the still comparatively subdued roar of the thunder came rolling along those sweeping, polished brows as though the ocean were an echoing floor, and there were a body of giants away down where the lightning was sending colossal bowls at us.

All at once, and in a manner to drive the breath out of one's body with the suddenness and astonishment of it, the yacht's bows rose to a huge roller that came rushing at her from right ahead. Up she soared till, I dare say, she showed twenty foot of her keel forward out of water. The vast liquid mass swept past the sides with a roar that drowned the cannonading of the heavens. Down flashed the vessel's bow, while her stem stood up as though she were making her last plunge. I grasped Laura by the waist, clipping hold of a backstay just in time to save us both from being dashed on the deck. Finn staggered, and was thrown. Out of the obscurity in the fore part of the schooner rose a wild, hoarse cry of dismay and confusion mingled with the din of crockery tumbling and breaking below, and the grinding sound of movable objects sliding from their places. Heaven and earth, what is it? Another! Not so mountainous this time, but a terribly heavy roller nevertheless. Up rose the yacht again to it, then down fell her stem with a boiling of white waters about her bow, amid the seething of which and the thunder of the liquid volume rushing from off our counter you heard a second cry, or rather groan of amazement and alarm, from the sailors forward, with more distracting noises below.

I continued to grip Laura and to hold firmly to the backstay with my wits almost scattered by the incredible violence of the yacht's soaring and plunging, and by the utter unexpectedness of the swift, brief, headlong dance. But now the yacht floated on a level keel again, and continued so to float, the calm being as dead as ever it had been in the most stagnant hour of the day, saving always the southerly undulation which the two gigantic rollers had temporarily flattened out, though the heaving presently began again. I saw Finn rubbing his nose like a dazed man as he stood staring towards the lightning.

"What could it have been?" cried Laura.

"Two volcanic seas, mum," answered the fellow who grasped the wheel, "there's most times three. Capt'n, beg pardon, sir, but that'll ha' been a mighty bust up yonder to have raised a weight of rollers to be felt as them two was all this distance away."

"The most surprising thing that ever happened to me, Mr. Monson," cried Finn, still bewildered.

A great drop of rain—a *drop*, do I call it? it seemed as big as a hen's egg—splashed upon my face, and at the same moment a flash of lightning swept an effulgence as of noontide into heaven and ocean, followed rapidly by an ear-splitting burst of thunder.

"Finn's little shower is beginning," said I, grasping Laura's hand; "let us take shelter. Anyway, the wet should cool the atmosphere if no wind follows. Bless me! how disgusting if it's to prove merely a thunder-storm."

I conducted her to the cabin. At the foot of the companion-steps stood Lady Monson. She was without a hat, her face was of a deadly white, her large black eyes glowed with terror, her hair was roughly adjusted on her head, and long, raven-hued tresses of it lay upon her shoulder and hung down her back. I could well believe that the old lord whom Laura had met at my cousin's found something in this woman's tragic airs and stately person to remind him of Mrs. Siddons as Lady Macbeth.

"What has happened?" she exclaimed, addressing me without noticing her sister. I explained. "Are we in danger?" she exclaimed, with an imperious sweep of her fiery eyes over my figure as though she could not constrain herself to the condescension of looking me full in the face.

"I believe not," said I, coldly, making as though to pass on, for I abhorred her manner, and was shocked by her treatment of her sister.

She stood a moment looking up; but there came just then a fierce flash of lightning; she covered her eyes; at the same moment somebody on deck closed the companion. She then, without regarding us, went to her cabin.

Hardly had we seated ourselves when down plumped the rain. It seemed to roll over the edge of the cloud like the falls of Niagara, in a vast unbroken sheet of water. There was as much hail as rain; the stones of the bigness you find only in the tropics, where there is plenty of lightning to manufacture them, and the sound of the downrush as it struck the deck and set the sea boiling was so deafening that though the thunder was roaring almost overhead nothing was to be heard of it. The lightning was horribly brilliant, and the cabin seemed filled with the sulphur-smelling blazes, though there was only a comparatively small skylight for them to show through. In a few minutes the rush of rain slackened, the volleying claps and rolling peals of thunder were to be heard again, with a noise, in the intervals, of the gushing of water overboard from our filled decks.

"I hope the lightning will not strike the yacht," exclaimed Laura.

"There is no safer place in a thunder-storm than a vessel in the middle of the wide ocean," I answered.

At that moment the burly form of Cutbill came out of Wilfrid's cabin. His head dodged to right and left a while in the corridor while he sought to make out who we were; then distinguishing us, he approached.

"Beg pardon, sir," he exclaimed, "but his honor's growed very crazy, and wants to know what was the cause of the yacht pitching so heavily just now."

"I will go to his berth and explain," said I.

"Oh, Mr. Monson, please don't leave me," cried Laura. "The lightning terrifies me."

"Then, Cutbill," said I, "give my love to Sir Wilfrid, and tell him that the pitching of the yacht was owing to a couple of seas caused, as we suppose, by a submarine earthquake away down in the north, probably fifteen miles distant."

"Thought as much, sir," said Cutbill, from whose face the perspiration was streaming, while his immense whiskers sparkled like a dew-laden bramble-bush in sunrise.

"Also explain that I do not desire to leave Miss Jennings until this deafening and blinding business is over. I shall hope to carry my pipe to his berth by-and-by. But it must be very hot for you, Cutbill, in that cabin?"

"Melting, sir. I feel to be a-draining away. Reckon there'll be nothin' left of me but my clothes if this here lasts."

"How is Sir Wilfrid?"

"Well, sir, to be honest, I don't at all like what I see in him. There's come a sing'ler alteration in him. Can't 'xactly describe it, sir; sort of stillness, and a queer whiteness of face, and a constant watching of me; his eyes are never off me, indeed. The heat'll have a deal to do with it, I dessay."

"Some change may be at hand," said I, "from which he may emerge with his miserable hallucinations gone. Yet the heat should account for a deal too. Give him my message, Cutbill."

The man knuckled his forehead and withdrew. The heat was so great, owing to the companion-hatch and skylight being closed, that my sweet companion seemed half dead with it, and leaned against me, with her eyes closed, almost in a swoon. But the worst of the storm was over apparently, for the rain had ceased, and though the

lightning was still intensely vivid, one knew by the sound of the thunder that what was fiercest had forged ahead of us and was setting away into the north. I called to the steward to open the companion doors and report the state of the weather. The moment the hatch lay clear to the night I felt a gush of refreshing and rain-sweetened air. Laura sat upright and gave a deep sigh.

"Does it rain, steward?" I sung out.

"No, sir."

"Tell Captain Finn," said I, "to get some space of deck swabbed dry for Miss Jennings. The heat here is too much for the young lady."

In a few moments I heard the slapping of several swabs, and Finn's long face glimmered through the open skylight. "The weather's a-clearing, sir," he called down. "There's a nice little air a-blowing. The lady'll find the port side of the quarter-deck comfortable now."

I conducted the girl up the ladder, but she kept her hand on my arm. Her manner had something of clinging in it, not wholly due to fear either. It was, in fact, as though she was influenced by an overpowering sense of loneliness, easy to understand when one thought of Wilfrid lying mad in his cabin and her sister shunning her with hate and rage.

What Finn meant by saying the weather was *clearing* I could not quite understand. It was pitch black to windward—that is to stay, right over the stern—whence there was a small breeze blowing in faint, fitful, weak gusts, as though irresolute. The thunder-storm was ahead, and its rage seemed spent, for the lightning was no longer plentiful or brilliant, and the thunder had faded into a sullen muttering. A lantern or two had been brought up from below, by whose feeble lustre you witnessed the shadowy forms of seamen swabbing the decks or squeezing the water with scrubbing-brushes into the scuppers. The dark swell ran regularly and with power from the south, but there was nothing to be seen of it saving here and there the glittering of green sea fire upon some running brow to let you guess how tall it was. I went aft with Laura and looked over; the wake was a mere dim, glistening, crawling, dying out after a few fathoms. Indeed, the yacht had but the foresail on her, with a headsail or two, and she seemed to owe what small way she was making more to the heave of the swell than to the light breeze. The darkness was a wonderful jumble of shadows. I never remember the like of such confusion of inky dyes. The obscurity resem-

bled an atmosphere of smoke denser in one place than another, a little thin yonder, then just over the mast-heads a stooping belly of soot, elsewhere a sort of faintness merging into impenetrable darkness.

"Lay aft and loose the main-s'l," rattled out Finn. "Double reef and then set it."

The breeze now began to freshen; the watch came running on to the quarter-deck, and presently the wan space of double-reefed canvas slowly mounted.

"I wish it would brighten a bit astern," said I; "no wolf's throat could be blacker. There'll be more than a capful of wind there, but it will blow the right way for us, so let it come."

"I feel," said Laura, "as though I had recovered perfect health after a dreadful illness."

"Now she walks," cried Finn, approaching where we stood to peer over the side; "blow, my sweet breeze. By the nose on my face, Mr. Monson, I smell a strong wind a-coming."

It did not need the faculty of smell to hit the truth. The breeze was freshening as if by magic. A little sea was already running, and the yeasty flashing of breaking heads spread far into the gloom. A loud noise of torn and simmering waters came from the bows, and a white race of foam was speeding arrow-like from under the counter.

"There is my sister," whispered Laura.

I instantly spied the tall figure of Lady Monson standing on the top step of the companion-ladder taking in the deep refreshment of the wind. She stepped on to the deck, approached, saw us, and crossed to the other side. She called to Captain Finn.

"Yes, my lady."

"A chair if you please. I will sit here."

A seat was procured from the cabin, and placed for her abreast of the wheel close against the bulwarks. This time Laura was not to be driven below by the presence of her sister. The heat in the cabin outweighed her sensitiveness; and then, again, there was the darkness of the night, which sundered the sides of the deck as effectually as if each had been as far off as the horizon. Yet, for all that, the sort of fear in which she held Lady Monson subdued her now through the mere sense of the woman being near, scarce visible as she was, just a shadow against the bulwarks. I had to bend my ear to catch her voice through the hissing of the wind aloft and the singing and the seething of the foam alongside, so low

was her utterance. We sat together right aft against the grating on the port side. The helmsman stood near, with his eyes on the illuminated compass-bowl, the reflection of which touched him as with a lining of phosphor, and exposed a kind of gilded outline of his figure against the blackness as he stood swinging upon the wheel with a twirl of it now and again to left or to right as the vessel's course on the compass-card floated to port or starboard of the lubber's mark. Though it was Finn's watch below he kept the deck with Crimp, rendered uneasy by the thunder-black look of the night, along with the freshening wind and the lift of seas leaping with a foul-weather snappishness off the ebony slopes of the swell that had grown somewhat heavy and hollow. I could just distinguish the dark forms of the two men pacing the deck abreast of the gangway. The main-sheet was well eased off, the great boom swung fairly over the quarter, and there was a note of howling in the pouring of the wind as it swept with increasing power into the glimmering ashen hollow of the reefed canvas and rushed away out from under the foot of it. There was no more lightning; the sea, with its glancings of foam, went black as ink to the ink of the heavens. There was no star, no break of faintness on high. The yacht flashed through the mighty shadow, whitening a long narrow furrow behind her, and helped by every dusky fold that drove roaring to her counter.

On a sudden there arose a loud and fearful cry forward.

"Breakers ahead!"

The hoarse voice rang aft sheer through the shrill volume of the wind strong as a trumpet-note with the astonishment and fear in it.

Finn went to the side to look over, while I heard him roar out to Crimp, "Breakers in his eye. The nearest land's a thousand miles off."

I jumped up and thrust my head over the rail and saw, sure enough, startlingly close ahead a throbbing white line that, let it be what else it might, bore an amazing resemblance to the boiling of surf at the base of a cliff. There was nothing else to be seen; the pallid streak stretched some distance to right and left. "It'll be a tide rip, sir!" shouted Finn to me, and his figure melted into the obscurity as he went forward to view the appearance from the forecastle.

I continued peering. "No, it is breakers, by Heaven!" I cried, with a wild leap of my heart into my very throat to the dull thunderous warring note I had caught during an instant's lull in the sweep of the wind past my ear.

Laura came to my side; we strained our eyes together.

"Breakers, my God!" I cried again, "we shall be into them in a minute."

Then out of the blackness on the forecastle there came from Finn, though 'twas hard to recognize his voice, a fierce, half-shrieking cry: "Hard a starboard! Hard a starboard!"

I rushed to the wheel to assist the man in putting it hard over. At that instant the yacht struck. In a breath the scene became a hellish commotion of white waters leaping and bursting fiercely alongside, of yells and cries from the men, of screams from Lady Monson, of the grinding and splintering of wood, the cracking of spars, the furious beating of canvas. I felt the hull lifted under my feet with a brief sensation of hurling, then crash! she struck again. The shock threw me on my back; though I was half stunned, I can distinctly recollect hearing the ear-splitting, soul-subduing noise of the fall of the main-mast, that broke midway its height, and fell, with all its gear and weight of canvas, like a thunder-bolt from the heavens, on the port side of the vessel, shattering whole fathoms of bulwark. I sprang to my feet; Laura had me by the arm when I fell, and she still clung to me. There was a life-buoy close beside us; it hung by a lanyard to a peg. I whipped it off, and got it over Laura's head and under her arms, and the next thing I remember is dragging her towards the forecastle, where I conceived our best chance would lie.

What had we struck? There was no land hereabouts. If we had not run foul of the hulk of some huge derelict buried from the sight in the blackness, and revealing nothing but the foam of the seas beating against it, then we must have been caught by a second volcanic upheaval, into whose fury we had rushed while the devilish agitation was in full play. So I thought, and so I remember thinking; but that even a rational reflection could have entered my mind at such a time, that my brain should have retained the power of keeping its wits in the least degree collected, I cannot but regard as a miracle when I look back out of this calm mood into the distraction and horror and death of that hideous night. The seas were breaking in thunder shocks over the vessel; the wind was hoary with flying clouds of froth. In a few instants the *Bride* had become a complete wreck aloft. Upon whatever it was that she had struck she was rapidly pounding herself into staves, and the horrible work was being expedited outside her by the blows of the wreckage of spars which the seas poised and hurled at her with the weight and rage of battering-rams. The decks were yawning and splitting under-

foot; every white curl of sea flung inboard black fragments of the hull. There is nothing in language to express the uproar, the cries and groans and screams of men maimed and mutilated by the fall of the spars or drowning alongside. I thought of Wilfrid; but the life of the girl who was clinging to me was dearer to my heart than his or my own. I could hear Lady Monson screaming somewhere forward as I dragged Laura towards the forecastle. Sailors rushed against me, and I was twice felled in measuring twenty paces. The agony of the time gave me the strength of half a dozen men; the girl was paralyzed, and I snatched her up in my arms and drove forward, staggering and reeling, blinded with the flying wet, half-drowned by the incessant play of seas over the side, feeling the fabric crumbling under my feet as you feel sand yielding under you as the tide crawls upon it. I knew not what I was about nor what I aimed at doing. I believe I was influenced by the notion that since the yacht had struck bow on, her forecastle would form the safest part of her as lying closest to whatever it was that she had run foul of. I recollect that as I approached the fore-rigging, stumbling blindly with the girl in my arms, a huge black sea swept over the forward part of the wreck, and swept the galley away with it as though it had been a house of cards. The rush of water floated me off my legs; I fell and let go of Laura. Half-suffocated, I was yet in the act of rising to grope afresh for her when another sea rolled over the rail, and I felt myself sweeping overboard with the velocity that a man falling from the edge of a cliff might be sensible of.

What followed is too dream-like for me to determine. Some small piece of floating spar I know I caught hold of, and that is what I best and perhaps only remember of that passage of mortal anguish.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A VOLCANIC ISLAND.

I LOST my senses after I had been in the water a few minutes; whether through being nearly strangled by the foam which broke incessantly over me, or through being struck by some fragment of the wreck, I cannot say. Yet I must have retained my grip of the piece of spar I had grabbed hold of on being swept overboard with the proverbial tenacity of the drowning, for I found myself grasping it when I recovered consciousness. I lay on my back with my face to the sky, and my first notion was that I had dropped asleep on the yacht's deck, and that I had been awakened by rain falling in torrents. But my senses were not long in coming to me, and I then discovered that what I believed to be rain was salt spray flying in clouds upon and over me from a thunderous surf that was roaring and raging within a few strides. It was very dark; there was nothing to be seen but the white boiling of the near waters, with the intermittent glancing of the heads of melting seas beyond. I felt with my hands and made out that I was lying on something as hard as rock, honey-combed like a sponge. This I detected by passing my hand over the surface as far as I could reach without rising. After a little I caught sight of a black shadow to the right, thrown into relief by the broad yeasty throbbing amid which it stood. It was apparently motionless, and I guessed it to be a portion of the *Bride*. The wind howled strongly, and the noise of the breaking seas was distracting. Yet the moment I had my mind, as I may say, fully, I was sensible of a heat in the air very nearly as oppressive as had been the atmosphere in the cabin of the yacht that evening; and this in spite of the wind which blew a stiff breeze, and which was full of wet besides. Then it was that there entered my mind the idea that the yacht had struck and gone to pieces upon a volcanic island newly hove up in that sudden great flame which had leaped upon our sight over the *Bride's* bows some two or three hours before, at a distance, as we had computed, of fifteen miles, and which had seemed to set the whole of the northern heavens on fire.

I felt round about me with my hands again; the soil was unques-

tionably lava, and the heat in it was a final convincing proof that my conjecture was right. I rose with difficulty, and standing erect looked about, but I could distinguish nothing more than a mere surface of blackness blending with and vanishing in the yelling and hissing night flying overhead. I fell upon my knees to grope in that posture some little distance from the surf, to diminish by my withdrawal something of the pelting of the pitiless storm of spray; and well it was that I had sense enough to crawl in this manner, for I had not moved a yard when my hand plunged into a hole to the length of my arm. The cavity was full of water, deep enough to have drowned me for all I knew, while the orifice was big enough to receive three or four bodies of the size of mine lashed together. There was no promise of any sort of shelter. The island, as well as I could determine its configuration by the surf which circled it, went rounding out of the sea in a small slope after the pattern of a turtle-shell. However, I succeeded in creeping to a distance where the spray struck me without its former sting, and then I stood up, and putting my hands to the sides of my mouth, shouted as loud as my weak condition would suffer me.

A voice deep and hoarse came back like an echo of my own from a distance, as my ear might conjecture, of some twenty paces or so.

"Holloa! Who calls?"

"I, Mr. Monson. Who are you?"

"Cutbill," he roared back.

I brought my hands together grateful to God to hear him, for how was I to know till then but that I might be the only survivor of the yacht's company?

"Can you come to me, Cutbill?" I cried.

"I don't like to let go of the lady, sir," he answered.

"Which lady?" I shouted.

"Miss Jennings."

"Is she alive, Cutbill?"

"Ay, sir."

By this time my sight was growing used to the profound blackness. The clouds of pallid foam along the margin of the island flung a sort of shadow of ghastly illumination into the atmosphere, and I fancied I could see the blotch the figure of Cutbill made to the right of me on the level on which I stood. I forthwith dropped on my knees again and cautiously advanced, then more plainly distinguished him, and in a few minutes was at his side. It was the shadowy group—the outlines barely determinable by my sight even when I was close to—of the big figure of the sailor seated with the girl sup-

ported on his arm. I put my lips close to the faint glimmer of her face, and cried "Laura, dearest, how is it with you? Would to God it had been my hand that had had the saving of you!"

She answered faintly, "Take me; let me rest on you."

I put my arm round her and brought her head to my breast, and so held her to me. Soaked as we were to the skin, like drowned rats, the heat floating up out of the body of volcanic stuff on which we lay prevented us from feeling the least chill from the pouring of the wind through our streaming clothes.

"Oh, my God, Laura!" I cried, "I feared you were gone forever when I lost my hold of you."

"The life-buoy you put on saved me," she exclaimed, so faintly that I should not have heard her had not my ear been close to her lips.

"The lady had a life-buoy on, sir," said the deep voice of Cutbill; "she was stranded alongside of me, and I dragged her clear of the surf, and have been holding of her since, for this here soil is a cuss'd hard pillow for the heads of the likes of her."

"Are you hurt, Cutbill?"

"No, sir, not a scratch that I'm aware of. I fell overboard, and a swell run me ashore as easy as jumping. But I fear most of 'em are drownded."

"Lady Monson?" I cried.

"I don't know, sir."

"And my cousin?"

"Mr. Monson!" he exclaimed, in a broken voice, "the instant I felt what had happened I laid hold of Sir Wilfrid to drag him on deck. He yelled out and clung, and 'twould have been like mangling the gentleman, sir, to have used my whole strength upon him if so be as my arms had been equal to the job of even making him budge. I gave up; I wanted to save my life, sir; I could hear the vessel going to pieces, and reckoned upon his following me if I ran out. I fear he's drownded, sir."

"Ah, great Heaven! Poor Wilf! Merciful Father, that this desperate voyage should end thus!"

I felt the girl shuddering and trembling on my breast.

"Darling," I cried, "take heart. Daylight has yet to tell us the whole story. How sudden! How shocking! Cutbill, you have lungs; for God's sake, hail the darkness, that we may know if others are living!"

He did so; a faint holloa, sounding some distance from the right,

replied. He shouted again, and an answer was again returned, this time in another voice; it was feebler, but it proved at all events that there were others besides ourselves who had survived the destruction of the yacht. What the hour was I did not know. The night wore away with intolerable and killing slowness, the wind decreased, the sea moderated, the boiling of the surf that had been fierce for a long while took a subdued note, and the wind blew over us free of spray. Till daybreak I was cradling Laura on my arm. Frequently she would sit up to lighten the burden of her form, but as often as she did so again would she bring her head to my breast. What the dawn was to reveal I could not imagine, yet I felt so much happiness in the thought of Laura's life being spared, and in having her at my side, that I awaited the disclosures of daybreak without dread.

At last there came a sifting of gray light into the east. By this time there was no more than a gentle wind blowing; but the sky had continued of an impenetrable blackness all night, and when day broke I witnessed the reason of the oppressive obscurity in a surface of leaden cloud that lay stretched all over the face of the heavens without the least break visible in it anywhere.

It was natural that the moment light enough stole into the atmosphere to see by my first look should be at the girl by my side. Her head was uncovered; I, in slipping on the life-buoy, or Cutbill in removing it from her, had bared her hair, and the beautiful gold of it lay like a cloud upon her back and shoulders. It was as dry as were our clothes: the heat of the island had indeed served us as an oven. She was deadly pale, hollow-eyed, with a shadow as of the reflection of a spring leaf under each eye; her lips blanched, her countenance piteous with its expression of fear. Her dress had been torn by the wreckage: more shipwrecked than she no girlish figure could ever have looked, yet her beauty stole through all like a spirit breathing in her, and I could not release her without first pressing her to my heart and kissing her hand and fondling it, while I thanked God that she was alive and that we were together.

The yacht had broken in half from a few feet abaft of where her foremast had stood. All the after-part of her had disappeared; nothing remained but the bows with the black planks winding round, jagged, twisted, broken; an incredible ruin! The putty-colored shore that looked to the eye to trend with something of the smoothness of pumice-stone to the wash of the surf was dark with wreckage. I saw several figures lying prone among this litter of ribs and planks and cases and the like; there were others again recumbent

higher up—five of them I counted—a few hundred paces distant, two of whom, as the three of us sat casting our eyes about us, slowly rose to their legs to survey the scene. One of these was Finn, the other one of the crew of the *Bride.*

I exclaimed, pointing to the farthest of the three figures who continued recumbent, "Isn't that a woman?"

Cutbill stared; Laura, whose eyes were keen, said, "Yes. Is it Henrietta or my maid?"

Finn perceived us, and held up his hand and made as if to come to us; but on a sudden he pressed his side, halted, and then slowly seated himself. I gazed eagerly around me for signs of further life. It was now clear daylight, with a thinning of the leaden sky in the east that promised a sight of the sun presently, with assurance of a clear sky a little later on. It was to be easily seen now that this island which had brought about the destruction of the *Bride* was a volcanic upheaval created in the moment of the prodigious blaze of light we had viewed in the north. It was of the form of an oyster-shell, going with a rounded slope to amidships from one margin to another, and was everywhere of a very pale sulphur color. It was within a mile in circumference, and, therefore, but a very short walk in breadth, and at its highest point rose to between twelve and fifteen feet above the sea. There stood, however, on the very apex of it, if I may so term the central point of its rounded back, a vast lump of rock, as I took it to be. But my eye ran over it incuriously. We were making towards Finn and the others when I glanced at it, and my mind was so full that I gave the thing no heed.

It was necessary to walk with extreme caution. The island was like a sponge, as I have before said, punctured with holes big and little, some large as wells and apparently deep. But for these holes walking would have been easy, for everywhere between the surface was as smooth as if it had been polished. In many parts a sort of vapor-like steam crawled into the air. Now that the wind was gone you felt the heat of this amazing formation striking up into the atmosphere, and I confess my heart fell sick in me on considering how it should be when the sun shone forth in power and mingled the sting of its glory with the oven-like temperature of this fire-created island.

There were many dead fish about, some floating belly up in the wells, others dry, of all sizes and sorts, with the dark blue, venomous form of a dead shark a full fifteen feet long close down by the edge of the sea, about forty paces to the left of the wreck.

Laura walked without difficulty. She leaned upon my arm, but

there was no weight in her pressure. The life-buoy had held her head well above water, and she had been swept ashore without suffering; the resting of her limbs, too, through the long hours of the night, had helped her; there was comfort also in the dryness of her clothes, and I was very sensible likewise that my presence gave her heart and spirit.

"It is Henrietta!" she exclaimed.

Yes! the figure that at a distance might have passed for Lady Monson or Laura's maid now proved to be the former. She had been resting some little distance apart from the others, with her head upon her arm, but suddenly she sat upright, and looked fixedly towards us. She, like Laura, was without covering to her head; her pomp of black hair fell with gypsy wildness to her waist; her posture was so still, her regard of us so stubbornly intent, that I feared to discover her mind was wanting.

"I will go to her," said Laura.

Yet I witnessed the old recoil in her as though there was nothing in the most tragic of all conditions to bate her sister's subduing influence. She withdrew her hand from my arm and pressed forward; as she approached, Lady Monson slowly rose, tottered towards her, threw her clasped hands upward, with her face upturned, and then fell upon Laura's neck.

Finn called feebly to me, "God be praised you're safe, Mr. Monson, and sound, I hope, sir? And how is it with ye, mate?" addressing Cutbill.

I grasped his hand; the tears gushed into his eyes, and he pointed towards the wreck, and to the bodies among the stuff that had been washed ashore, while he slowly shook his head. He looked gray, haggard, hollow, ill, most miserable, as though he had lived ten years since last night, and was sick and near his end.

"Cap'n," cried Cutbill, in a broken voice, "'twas no man's fault. Who's to keep a lookout for islands after this pattern?"

I seated myself by Finn's side. "Keep up your heart," said I. "You are not hurt, I trust?"

"Something struck me here," said he, putting his hand to his left breast, "while I was swimming, and it makes me feel a bit short-winded. But it isn't that what hurts me, Mr. Monson. It's the thoughts of them who've gone, and the sight of what was yesterday, sir, the sweetest craft afloat. Who'd have thought she'd crumbled up so fast? reg'larly broke her back and gone into staves aft! She was stanch, but only as a pleasure wessel is,"

I asked Cutbill to examine the people who were lying on what I must call the beach, and report if there was any life in them.

"My cousin is drowned," I said to Finn.

"Oh, blessed God!" he answered. "Cutbill knows; he couldn't get him out of his berth, I allow."

"Ay, that was it," I said, "but this is no time for grieving for the dead, Finn. Regrets are idle. How are we who are spared to save our lives? Are the yacht's boats all gone?"

I ran my eye along the beach and over the sea, but nothing resembling a boat was visible. The sailor that had stood up with Finn when I had first caught sight of them had seated himself a little distance away, Lascar fashion, and I noticed him at that moment dip his forefinger into a hole close beside him, suck it, and then drink by lifting water in the palm of his hand. I called to him, "Is it fresh?"

"Pretty nigh, sir," he answered.

There was such another little hole near me half full of water, as indeed was every well or aperture of the kind that I saw. I dipped as the sailor had, and found the water slightly, but only very slightly, brackish. This I concluded was owing to the overwhelming weight of rain that had followed the upheaval of this island overflowing the hollows and holes in it so abundantly as to drown the salt water, with which, of course, the cavities had been filled when this head of lava had been forced to the surface. I bade Finn dip his hand and taste, and told him that our first step must be to hit upon some means of storing a good supply before the heat should dry up the water.

There were two sailors lying close together a few yards from where the seaman had squatted himself, and I called to him to know if they were alive. He answered yes, and shouted to them, on which they turned their heads, and one of them languidly rose to his elbows, the other lay still.

"It will be the wreckage that drownded most of them, and that hurt them that's come off with their lives," exclaimed Finn. "It was like being thrown into whirling machinery. How many shall we be able to muster? I fear *they're* but bodies, sir," indicating the figures over which Cutbill was stooping.

All this while Laura and her sister were standing and conversing. I was starting to walk to the wreckage that stood at the foreshore, when Laura slightly motioned to me to approach her. I at once went to her, watching every foot of ground I measured, for the

island was just a surface of pitfalls, and one could not imagine how deep the larger among them might prove. Lady Monson bowed to me with as much dignity as if she were receiving me in a ball-room. Her face looked like a dead woman's vitalized by some necromantic agency, so preternatural was the ghastly air produced by the contrast between the tomb-like tincture of the flesh and the raven blackness of her mass of flowing hair, and the feverish glow in her large dark eyes. I returned her salutation, and she extended a lifeless, ice-cold hand.

"I am asking Laura what is to become of us?" she exclaimed, with a distinct hint of her imperious nature in her voice, and fastening her eyes upon me as from a habit of commanding with them.

"I cannot tell," I answered; "our business is to do the best we can for ourselves."

"How many are living?" she asked.

"We do not as yet know, but I fear no more than you see alive. My cousin is drowned, I fear."

Her eyes fell; she drew a deep breath and continued looking down; then her gaze, full of a sudden fire, flashed to my face again.

"I am not accountable for his death, Mr. Monson. Why do you speak significantly of this dreadful thing? I did not desire his death. I would have saved his life, had the power to do so been given to me. O God!" she cried, "it is cruel to talk or to look so as to make me feel as if the responsibility of all this were mine!"

She clasped one hand over another upon her heart, drawing erect her fine figure into a posture full of indignant reproach and passionate deprecation. Indeed, had I never met her before, and not known better, I should have taken her to be some fine tragedy actress who could not perform in the humblest article of an every-day commonplace part without dressing her behavior with the airs of the stage.

"Pardon me," I exclaimed, "you mistake. I meant nothing significant. I thought you would wish to know if your husband had been spared. This is no moment for discussing any other question in the world but how we are to deliver ourselves from this terrible situation."

As I turned to leave them I thought she regarded me with entreaty, almost with wistfulness, if such eyes as hers could ever take that expression, but she remained silent; and giving my love a smile —for my love she was now, and I cannot express how my heart went to her as she stood pale, worn, heavy-eyed, but lacking nothing of her old tenderness and sweetness and fairness, by the side of her

sister, listening timidly to the haughty, commanding creature's words—I walked to meet Cutbill, who was slowly returning from his inspection of the bodies.

"They're all dead, sir," he exclaimed.

"Ah!" I cried.

"There's poor old Mr. Crimp"— his voice failed him; he added, a little later, "They look more to have been killed than drownded, sir."

"Sir Wilfrid?"

"No; he isn't among them."

We stood together, looking towards the bodies.

"Cutbill," said I, "we must all turn to now and collect what we can from the wreck that may prove useful to us. There's nothing to eat here saving dead fish, which will be rotting presently."

The sea stretched in lead under the lead of the sky, saving in the far east, where the opening of the heavens there had shed a pearly film upon it bright with sunrise. The swell had flattened and was light, and rolled sluggishly to the island, sliding up and down the smooth incline soundlessly, save when now and again some head of it broke and boiled and rushed backward white and simmering. I sent a long look round, but there was nothing in sight. One could follow the ocean girdle sheer round the island with but the break only of the queer, rugged mass of rock in the centre where the slope came to its height. The line of shore which the remains of the yacht centred was a stretch of some hundred and fifty feet of porous rock like meerschaum in places, the declivity very gradual. It was covered with wreckage, and remains of the vessel continued to be washed ashore by the set and hurl of the swell.

I went to work with Cutbill to haul high and dry whatever we were able to deal with. We were presently joined by two of the sailors. Finn and the other man made an effort to approach, but I perceived they were too weak and would be of no use to us, and I called to them to continue resting themselves. Laura and Lady Monson were seated together, and watched us. I could not gather that they conversed; at least, though I often directed a glance at them, I never observed that they looked at each other as people do who talk.

We toiled a long hour, and in that time had stacked, at a good distance from the wash of the sea, a store of articles of all kinds: casks of flour, salt beef, biscuit for forecastle use, a cask of sherry, some cases of potted meats, and other matters which I should only

weary you by cataloguing. Had the shore been steep we should probably have got nothing, but it shelved gently far past the point where the yacht had struck, and as the goods had floated out of the yacht they were rolled up like pebbles of shingle by the swell till they stranded; and as I have said, even as we were busy in collecting what we wanted other articles came washing towards us. Every cask and barrel that was recoverable we saved, for the sake of the drink it might contain. Among other things, we succeeded in dragging high and dry the yacht's foresail. This was a difficult job, for first it had to be cut from the gear that held it to its wreck of spar, and then we had to haul it ashore, which was as much as the four of us could manage. We also saved the yacht's chest of tools, a box of Miss Laura's wearing apparel, and a small chest of drawers which had stood in my poor cousin's cabin. Cutbill and another seaman who stood the firmest of the rest of us on their shanks had to wade breast high before we could secure many of these goods which showed in the hollow of the swell, but were too heavy to be trundled farther up by the heave of the water, whose weight was fast diminishing. There was little risk, but it took time; plenty of rope had come ashore, and we secured lines to the men while they carried ends in their hands to make fast to the articles they went after. Then they waded back to us and the four of us hauled together, and in this way, as I have said, we saved an abundance of useful things.

There was plenty yet to come at, but we were forced to knock off through sheer fatigue. Our next step was to get some breakfast. I was very eager that poor Finn and the man that was lying near him should be rallied, and counted on a substantial meal and a good draught of wine going far towards setting them on their legs again.

"Cutbill," said I, "while I overhaul the stores for breakfast will you take Dowling"—referring to the stronger of the two men who had joined us—"and bury those bodies there? They make a terrible sight for the ladies to see. I have not your strength of heart, Cutbill; the handling of the poor creatures would prove too much for me. Yet if you think it unreasonable that I should not assist—"

"Oh no, sir! it's a thing that ought to be done. We shall have to carry 'em 'tother side. They may slip into deep water there." He called to Dowling, and together they went to the bodies.

The carpenter's chest was padlocked. Happily I had a bunch of keys in my pocket, one of which fitted. The chest was liberally furnished. We armed ourselves with chisel and hammers, a gimlet and the like, with which tools we had presently opened all that we

needed to furnish us with a hearty repast. We stood casks on end for tables, and boxes and cases served as seats. There were sailors' knives in the tool-chest, and we emptied and cleaned a jar of potted meat to use as a drinking-vessel. The prostrate seaman, whose name was Johnson, was too weak to rise; so I sent Head to him, this fellow being one of the sailors who had worked with us on the beach, with a draught of sherry, some biscuits, and tinned meat, and had the satisfaction of seeing him fall to after he had tossed down the wine. Finn managed to join us, but he ate little and seemed broken down with grief.

There is much that I find hard to realize when I look back and reflect upon the incidents of this wild excursion of which I have done my best to tell you the story; but nothing seems so dream-like as this our first meal upon that newly-created spot of sulphurous rock in the deepest solitude of the heart of the mighty Atlantic. The leaden curtain had gradually lifted off the face of the east, leaving a band of white-blue sky there, ruled off by the vapor in a line as straight as the horizon. The sun floated clear in it; his slanting beam had flashed up the waters midway beneath into an azure of the delicate paleness of turquoise; but all the western side lay of a leaden hue yet under the shadow of the immense stretch of almost imperceptibly withdrawing vapor. At one cask sat Laura and Lady Monson. The weak draught of wind kept my sweetheart's golden hair trembling, but Lady Monson's hung motionless upon her back; it made one think of a thunder-cloud when one looked at it, and noticed the lightning of her glance as she sent her eyes in a tragic roll from the distant horizon to the fragment of rock, and on to the island slope, with the great, strange bulk of rock nodding, as it seemed, on top; and the corpse-like whiteness of her face was a sort of stare in itself to remind you of the bald, stormy glare you sometimes see in the brow of a tempest lifting sombre and sulkily past the sea-line. Finn's eyes clung with drooping lids to the fragment of the *Bride;* Head reclined near me in a sailor's reckless posture, feeding heartily; down on the beach the figures of Cutbill and Dowling were passing out of sight with one or another of their dreadful burdens and then returning. None of us seemed able to look that way.

"All yon wessel's company saving the eight of us *gone!*" exclaimed Finn. "And she's—what? Look at her! Just the shell of a yacht's head. Oh, my God, Mr. Monson, how terrible sudden things do happen at sea!"

"I never would ha' believed that the *Bride* 'ud tumble to pieces like that though, captain!" exclaimed Head.

"Oh, man," cried Finn, "the swell lifted and dropped her. Didn't ye feel it? Poor Sir Wilfrid! Mr. Monson, sir—I'd take his place if he could be here."

"I believe it, Finn. I am sure you would," I said, with a swift glance at Lady Monson, whose head sank as she caught the poor fellow's remark.

"Has this island been thrown up from the very bottom of the sea?" asked Laura.

"From the very bottom of the sea," I answered, "and from a depth out of soundings, too. It is the head of a mountain of lava, created in a flash of fire, and taller, maybe, from base to peak than half a dozen Everests one on top of another."

"Do not ships sail this way?" asked Lady Monson.

"Plenty of them, my lady," answered Finn. "No fear of our being long here. A hisland in these waters, where it is all supposed to be clear, is bound to bring wessels close in to view it. The '*Liza Robbins* oughtn't to be fur off." He shuddered and cried, "Poor Jacob Crimp! poor old Jacob! Gone! and the werry echo of the yarn he was spinning me last night ain't yet off my ears." He buried his long, rugged face in his hands, shaking his head.

"Is there any means of escaping should a vessel not pass by?" inquired Lady Monson.

"We must pin our faith on being sighted and taken off," I answered.

"But where are we to live meanwhile? What is there on this horrible spot to shelter us," she exclaimed, with a sudden start and darting a terrified look around her. "If stormy weather should come, the waves will sweep this island. How shall we be able to cling to it? All our provisions will be washed away. How then shall we live?"

"It'll take a middling sea to sweep this here rock, your ledship," said Johnson, feebly. "But it *is* to be swept, capt'n. What's the height o' un?"

"Two fadom end on, I allow," said Head.

"Silence!" roared Finn, putting the whole of his slender stock of vitality, as one should suppose, into his shout. "What dy'e want? to scare all hands by jawing? My lady, there's nothin' to be afraid of. It blew strong last night arter the yacht had stranded; but this island wasn't swept, or we shouldn't be here."

I met my sweetheart's frightened eyes, and to change the subject asked Lady Monson if she had reached the shore unaided.

"No," she answered. "I owe my life to the sailor who is with that big seaman down there," meaning Dowling. "I am unable to explain. I was unconscious before I left the yacht."

"Her ladyship was washed overboard," said Finn. "Dowling, who was swimming, got one of his hands foul of your hair, my lady. He kept hold, towed your ladyship as the swell ran him forrads, felt ground, and hauled ye ashore. He behaved well."

"My poor maid is drowned!" cried Laura.

"Too many, miss, too many! Oh, my God, too many!" muttered poor Finn.

Meanwhile my eye had been resting incuriously upon the singular lump of rock that stood apparently poised on the highest slope, in the very centre of the island. On a sudden I started to a perception that for the instant I deemed purely fanciful. The block of stuff was distant from where we were eating our breakfast some two hundred and eighty to three hundred yards. The complexion of it, while the sky was in shadow, had so much of the meerschaum-like tint of the island that one easily took it to be a mass of lava, identical with the rest of the volcanic creation; but the sun was now pouring his brilliant white fires upon it, and I noticed a deal of sparkling in it, as though it were coated with salt, or studded with flints of crystal, while the bed in which it lay, and the slope round about, were of a dead, unreflecting, pale yellow. My fixed regard attracted the attention of the others.

One of the two seamen looked and called out, "That ain't a part of the island, sir."

"What form does it take to your fancy?" I asked, addressing my companions generally.

There was a pause, and Laura said, "It looks like a ship, an unwieldy vessel coming at us. Do you notice two erections like broken masts?"

Finn peered under his hand.

"It certainly looks uncommonly like as if it had been a ship in its day," he exclaimed, "but these 'ere convulsions, I am told, are made up o' fantastics."

Cutbill and his companion were now approaching; they were fiery hot, their faces crimson, and they moved with an air of distress. Yet Cutbill made shift to sing out as he approached, pointing as he

spoke, "Mr. Monson, there's a ship ashore up there, sir. You get the shape of her plain round the corner."

"Come, lads!" I cried, "sit and fall to. There's plenty to eat here and drink to give you life. You have got well through a bitter business. Finn, do you feel equal to inspecting that object?"

"Ay, sir," he answered. "I'm drawing my breath better. But it's the mind, Mr. Monson—it's the mind."

"Then come, all of us who will," I cried. "Laura, here is my arm for you, and here is a pocket-handkerchief too, to tie round your head."

Lady Monson looked at her sister and rose with her. Laura came to my side and we started.

CHAPTER XXX.

WE BOARD THE GALLEON.

The surface of the island was so honey-combed that one dared not look elsewhere than downward while walking, and so it was not until we had drawn close to the huge rock-like lump that I was able to give my attention to it.

How am I to describe this astonishing body? It was most clearly the petrified fabric of a ship, a vessel of considerable tonnage that had been hove from the dark ocean-bed on which it had been resting, for God alone could tell how many scores of years, by the prodigious eruption that had sent this head of rock on which we stood rushing upward through the deep into the view of the Atlantic heaven. She had been apparently a galleon in her day, and to judge from such shape as I could distinguish in her, she was probably upwards of a century and a half old. She was not much above three times as long as she was broad, and the figure of her, therefore, was only to be got by viewing her broadside on. She was incrusted with shells of a hundred different kinds and colors, with much exquisite drapery of lace-like weed. This shelly covering was manifestly very thick and astonishingly plentiful, but though it increased her bulk it did not greatly distort her shape. You saw the form of the craft plain in the astonishing growth and adhesion. There was the short line of poop, and then a little longer line of quarter-deck, then a deep waist broken again by the rise of the forecastle. You could follow the curve of the stem and cut-water, and plainly see the square of the counter rising castle-like to a height of hard upon thirty feet from the surface on which she lay. She suggested the structure of a ship built of shells. The remains of a couple of masts shot up from her decks, one far forward, the other almost amidships, each about twelve feet high, as richly clothed as the hull with shells of many hues. She lay with a slight list; that is to say, a little on one side, the inclination being to starboard, and so far as one could guess, she was disconnected from the bed on which she reposed—probably thundered clear of it by the shock of earthquake, though she looked as solid as a block of cliff. Sparkling lines of water

spouted from her upper works, but from below that part of her main-deck which sailors would call the covering board she showed herself as tight as if she had been newly calked and launched.

The sunshine streamed purely and with great power upon her, and though she had scarce been distinguishable from the rest of the island save in the shape of her when the sky was dark with cloud, she now flashed out on that side of her that faced the sun into the most barbarically glorious, richly colored, admirably novel object that ever mortal eye lighted upon in this wide world. Pearl colored shells blended with blue and green; there were ruby stars; growths of a crystalline clarity prismatic as cut glass; shells of the cloud-like softness of milk but of the hardness of marble; patches of incrustation of an amber tint, others of a vivid green delicately relieved by the scoring of the burnished edges of mussel-like shells. The falls of water fell like curves of rainbow over this magnificence and splendor of marine decoration; the tapestry of weed hung moist and of an exquisite vividness of green. The short height of masts glittered in the sunshine with many lovely colors of silver and rose and other hues which made a very prism of each shaft of spar.

The whole of us stood gazing, lost in wonder, then Finn cried, "This is a wonderful sight, Mr. Monson."

"An old galleon full o' treasure. Who's to know?" exclaimed the seaman Head.

"From what depth will she have been thrown up?" asked Laura.

"From a soil too deep for human soundings," said I. "Wonderful that the blaze of fire in the heart of which she must have soared to this surface did not wither her up. But she seems perfect, not an ornament injured, not a jewel on her broken, no hint of having been scorched that I can anywhere see. She will have belonged to the last century, Finn."

"Ay, sir," he answered, "and mayhap earlier. How would she show if she was to be scraped?"

He held his long chin between his thumb and forefinger, and stared gapingly at the wondrous object.

"We might find shelter in her," said the cold, haughty voice of Lady Monson, "if the sea should break over the island."

"Happily suggested!" I exclaimed. "What sort of accommodation will her decks offer?"

"Grit, I reckon," said Head.

"Well, we can pound a space clear for ourselves, I hope," said I; "there's canvas enough yonder on the beach to furnish us with a roof."

"And she'll give us a rise of twenty or thirty feet above the level of the island, sir," said Finn, "pretty nigh as good as a mast-head lookout. A wessel 'll have to pass a long way off not to see her! Well, thank God! says I, for that she's here. It's something for a man's sperrits to catch hold of, ain't it, Mr. Monson? Lor' bless me, how beautiful them shells look!"

Cutbill and Dowling now joined us, and stood staring like men discrediting their senses.

"William," said Finn, addressing Cutbill, "if ye had her safe moored in the Thames, mate, just as she is, there'd be no need for you to go to sea any more. There's folks as ud pay a pound a head to view such a hobject."

"What's inside of her?" said Dowling.

"That's to be found out," answered Cutbill. "Smite me, Mr. Monson, sir, if the lookout of exploring of her ain't good enough to stop a man from being in a hurry to get away from here."

"Will not one of the sailors climb on board," said Lady Monson, "that we may know the state of her decks? We shall require a shelter to-night if a ship does not come to-day and take us off;" and she sent her black eyes flashing over the sea-line as she spoke, but there was nothing to be seen.

"How is a man to get aboard?" exclaimed Dowling; "there's naught to catch hold of, and sailors ain't flies."

"Pile casks one on top of another," said I, "and then make a pick-a-back, the lightest hand last. I'll lend my shoulders."

Finn shook his head. "No need to risk our necks, sir. The bows are the lowest part. Nothin's wanted but a coil of rope. Dowling, you look about the freshest of us, my lad. Step down where the raffle is, will 'ee, and bring along a length of the gear there."

The fellow trudged to the beach very willingly. Had he been a merchant-sailor pure and simple one might have looked in vain under such conditions for hearty obedience. Mercantile Jack when shipwrecked has a habit of viewing himself as a man freed from all restraint, and instantly privileged by misery to grow mutinous and in all senses obnoxious. But the instincts of the yachtsman come very near to those of the man-of-war's-man; and indeed, for the matter of that, I would rather be cast away with a crew of men who knew nothing of seafaring outside yachting than with a body of blue-jackets—I mean as regards the promise of respectful behavior.

Presently Dowling returned with a line coiled over his shoulder. In truth, rope enough to rig a mast with had come ashore with the

yards, gaffs, and booms of the yacht, and the sailor had had nothing to do but to clear away as much line as he wanted and bring it to us. Cutbill took the stuff from him, and coiled it down afresh over his fingers as though he were about to heave the lead, then nicely calculating distance and height with his eye, he sent the fakes flying, lasso fashion, sheer over the head of the huge, glittering, fossilized structure where the incrustation forked out in a manner to suggest the existence of what the ancient mariner termed a "beak," and the end was caught by Dowling, who had stepped round the bows of the craft to receive it.

"Now up you go, my lad," shouted Cutbill; and the sailor, who was of a light figure, mounted as nimbly as a monkey, hand over hand, three of us holding on to the rope 'tother side to secure it for him. He gained the deck, and looked about him with an air of stupid wonder.

"Why, it's a plantation!" he shouted; "young cork-trees a-sprouting, and flowers as big as targets! vegetables right fore and aft, and a dead grampus under the break of the poop!"

"Avast!" bawled Cutbill; "tarn to and see if the stump of that there foremast is sound."

The spar was stepped well forward, after the ancient custom, with a slight inclination towards the bow. Dowling made for it with his mouth open, staring around and looking behind him as he went, and treading as though he moved on broken glass. He drew close to the shell-covered shaft, that glowed with the tints of a dying dolphin, and glittered and coruscated with the richness and variety of dyes beyond imagination to every movement that one made. After briefly inspecting it he sang out, "Strong enough to moor a line-of-battle ship to, sir!"

"Then make the end of the line fast there!" roared Cutbill.

This was done, and up went the burly salt, puffing and blowing, swinging a crimson visage round to us as he fended himself off the lacerating heads of the shelly armor with his toes. He got over the side, stood staring as the other had, and then, tossing up his hands, shouted down: "Looks like that piece, capt'n, that's wrote down in the Bible 'bout the Gard'n of Eden. Only wants Adam and Eve, d——n *me!* Never could ha' dreamed of such a thing. And it's the bottom of the sea, too. Why, it's worth being drownded if it's all like this down there."

"Any hatches?" cried Finn.

"Can't see nothin' for shells and vegetables."

"Well, just take a look round, will 'ee, and let's know if there's shelter to be got for the ladies."

Dowling sang out, "Main-deck's pretty nigh awash, but there's a raised quarter-deck, and it's dry from the break of it to right aft."

"She will be full of water," said I to Finn. "Why not scuttle her? There are a couple of augers in the carpenter's chest. Is that growth to be pierced, though?"

"Can but try, sir," he answered.

"Well," said I, "one thing is certain. The sun will be standing overhead presently. There's no wind, and we must absolutely contrive to protect the ladies from the pouring heat. There's but one thing to do for the moment, that I can see. We must manage to rig up a sail aboard to serve as an awning. But how are the ladies to be got into her?"

Lady Monson and Laura stood close, listening anxiously.

"Why," answered Finn, after thinking for a few moments, "we must rig up a derrick. There's blocks enough knocking about among the raffle down there to make a whip with. The consarn'll sarve also to hoist the provisions up by. I allow that if once we get stowed up there, there'll be nothin' to hurt us, so far as seas goes, in the heaviest gale that can come on to blow."

"I shall be miserable until I am on board," said Lady Monson. "It is dreadful to be dependent upon this low rock for one's life. The tide may rise."

I met Laura's sad and wondering eyes, and divined her thoughts. The instinct of self-preservation was indeed a very powerful development in her ladyship's bosom. Is she not ashamed to let us all see how anxious she is about *her* life, Laura's glance at me seemed to say, after the sufferings and death her behavior has brought about —her husband drowned, the unhappy man she abandoned her home for floating in the depths beyond the horizon there—

Cutbill descended, followed by Dowling.

"'Tis an amazing sight, sure*ly*," he exclaimed, wringing the perspiration in a shower from his forehead. "The decks is flinty hard with shell, but I reckon a space is to be cleared just under the break of the poop; and it feels almost cool up there arter these here rocks. There's a porpoise aft as'll want chucking overboard. 'Tain't no grampus, as Dowling says. Only I tell ye, capt'n, that there deck's a sight to make a man see twenty times more'n he looks at."

Finn's spirits had improved through his having something else to think of than the loss of the yacht and the drowning of her people,

He was fetching his breath, too, with comparative ease, and only at long intervals brought his hand to his side. This improvement in him greatly cheered me. I liked the rough, homely sailor much, and his death would have been a blow. The man Johnson had by this time made shift to rise and join us, but he walked with a weak step, and looked very sadly, as though a deal of the life had been washed out of him in his struggle to fetch the shore. He was of no use to us, and I told him to go and sit in the shadow of the hull out of the blaze of the sun.

Finn then called a council: Cutbill, myself, Dowling, and Head gathered round him, and very briefly and with but little talk we concerted our plans. We were all agreed that the astonishing shell-armored fabric could be made to yield us a tolerably secure asylum, and that the elevation of its deck would enable us to command a wide view of the sea, and that therefore it was our business forthwith to convey all that we could recover from the yacht into her. I went to work with the rest and toiled hard. The labor mainly consisted in dragging and pulling, for we had to bring a spare boom to the galleon from the beach to serve as a derrick for hoisting; then such sails as had been washed ashore; then the provisions. It was like drawing teeth; everything seemed to weigh about five times more than it should. The work was made the harder, moreover, by the character of the ground. Had the surface been smooth as earth is we could have tramped with tolerable briskness; but our staggering march to the galleon under heavy loads was converted into a very treadmill exercise by our having to dodge the little holes, large enough to neatly fit the leg to as high as the knee, or the wider yawns and great wells, of which some were big enough to receive the whole body of us, goods and all, in one gulp. I had by this time ascertained that the water in the larger pores and holes was too salt to drink. It was in the smaller hollows only, and these, indeed, among the shallowest, that the water lay scarce brackish. In short, the fall of rain, great as it was, had not lasted long enough to drown the brine in the deeper wells. This was an important discovery, for the fierce sun would soon dry up the shallow apertures; and had we taken for granted that the contents of the deeper ones were fit to drink, we should have been brought face to face with thirst.

But happily nearly the whole of the yacht lay in piecemeal before us. All that had been in her forepart, which yet stood, had washed out and rolled ashore or stranded within wading distance.

Our fresh-water had been carried in casks, as I believe was the custom for the most part in those days; some of the barrels had bulged, but a few had been swept high and dry. There were empty water-casks, moreover, which had floated up, and these we rolled aside to be filled the moment we had leisure to devote to that task. There were no bodies to be seen, and I was thankful for it. The sharks, no doubt, had been put to flight by the explosion, but they would not be long in returning; and, indeed, I gathered they were in force again—though I saw nothing resembling a fin—from the circumstance of none of the dead, saving the few forms which Cutbill and Dowling had slipped into the sea on the other side of the island, having drifted in with the wreckage.

The leaden curtain had drawn far down into the west; two-thirds of the heavens now were a dazzle of silver blue, with a high sun looking down out of it with a roasting eye, and the water a surface of shivering glory south and east, and edged crape-like in the west, but not a cloud of the size of a thumb-nail anywhere save there. A thin line of surf purred delicately upon the gradual slope of sulphur-lined beach with a weak, metallic hissing sounding along the length of it as the sparkling ripple slipped up and down upon the honeycombed beach. The remains of the yacht's bows lay gaunt and motionless some distance down. Her gilt figure-head glowed in the sunshine, and made a brightness under it that rode like a fragment of sunbeam upon the delicate lift of sea rolling inward. A plank or two rounding into the stern were gone, and you could see daylight through her. It seemed incredible that so stout a little craft should have gone to pieces as she had; but then the swell had been heavy and the ground on which she beat iron-hard, and then again her scantling was but that of a pleasure vessel, though the stanchest of its kind.

Meanwhile I conveyed, with the help of Cutbill, into the shadow that was cast by the galleon, as I will call her, Laura's box of wearing apparel which we had fallen in with early in the morning. Oddly enough, it was the only trunk or portmanteau that had come ashore. Some sailors' chests had floated in, but nothing belonging to any of us aft saving this box of Laura's and a small chest of drawers out of Wilfrid's cabin, one drawer gone, and the others containing articles of no use to us, such as gloves, neck-ties, writing material, manuscripts sodden and illegible. The removing her clothes from the box and spreading them to dry found Laura occupation, and something else, therefore, to think of than our miserable

condition. Her sister very early had withdrawn to the shadow cast by the galleon, and there sat, Johnson lying a little way from her—apparently stirless for a whole half-hour together—as much a fossil to the eye as the wondrous structure that sheltered her. The black cloud of hair upon her back, her spectral white face and dark eyes, gave me an odd fancy of her as the figure-head of the mysterious fabric that had risen in thunder and flame from the green stillness of its ocean tomb, where it had been lying so long that the mere thought of the years put a shiver into one spite of the broiling orb that hung overhead. Heavens! I remember thinking in some interval of toil, during which I paused, panting, with my eye directed towards the galleon, figure a lonely man coming ashore here on a moonlit night and beholding that woman seated as she now sits, looking as she now looks, stirless as she now is, in the shadow of that shell-covered structure shimmering like a lunar rainbow to the moonbeam!

It was like passing from death to life to send the gaze from Lady Monson to Laura as the little sweetheart busily flitted from sunshine to shadow, spreading the garments to the light, her hair flashing and fading as she passed from the radiance into the violet shade, her figure the fairer to my enamoured eyes maybe for the shipwrecked aspect of her attire, that enriched by fitful and fascinating revelations the beauty of her form by an art quite out of the reach of the nimblest of dress-making fingers. Her spirits and much of her strength seemed to have returned to her. Often she would look my way and wave her hand to me.

Half an hour after noon by the sun—for my watch had stopped when I tumbled overboard, and so had Laura's and Lady Monson's—we all assembled under the overhanging counter of the galleon for a mid-day meal. The sun was almost overhead, and there was very little shadow, which forced us to sit tolerably close together, and I could see that her ladyship did not very much relish this intimate association with the rough sailors; but it was either for her or for them to sit out in the scorching, blinding light, and as she did not offer to go, I insisted on the poor fellows keeping their places, though Finn and Cutbill shuffled as though they were for backing away. She perceived my indifference to her sensitiveness, and shot a look of hate at me. However, I was not so insensible as she imagined, for I was very careful to scarcely glance at her; for there she sat, unveiled, her head uncovered, close to, to be peered at, if one chose, as if she were a picture or a statue, and I would not pain

what weak sense of shame, what haughty confusion there might be in her by a single lift of my eyes to her face, saving when I accosted her or she me. I observed that the sailors were studious in their disregard of her. There was not a man of them, I dare say, but would have squinted curiously at her out of the corner of his eyes on board the yacht had she shown herself on deck; but here it would have been taking an unfair advantage of her: their instincts as men governed them, and no fine gentleman could ever have exhibited a higher quality of breeding than did these rough Jacks in this respect, as they squatted munching biscuit and potted meat, and handing on to one another the jar of sherry and water.

But often, though swiftly and very respectfully too, their glances would go to Laura. They would look as though they found something to hearten them in her sweet pale face, her kind smile, her pretty efforts to bear up.

"There ought to be a ship passing here before long," said Finn, with a slow stare seaward; "'tain't as if this here island was right in with the African coast."

"The '*Liza Robbins* should be looked out for, capt'n," said Cutbill; "she was dead in our wake when we drawed ahead, steering our course to a hair."

"Strange that all the yacht's boats should have disappeared," said I.

"Hammered into staves, your honor," said Finn; "ye may see bits of them on the beach."

"I couldn't swear to it," said Johnson, languidly; "it was so blooming dark; but I've got a notion of seeing some of the men run aft when the yacht struck, as though making for one of the boats."

"I was knocked down by a rush of several sailors," said I.

"If any of our chaps got away in a boat, why aren't they here?" asked Dowling.

"Why, man, consider the size of this island," I exclaimed; "a few strokes of the oars, the boat heading out, or to the eastward, say, would suffice to send them clear of this pin's-head of rock, and then once to leeward they'd blow away. But we need not trouble to speculate: I fear nobody has escaped but ourselves."

Finn shook his head with a face of misery, putting down what he was eating and fixing his eyes, that had moistened on a sudden, on the rock he sat on.

"How long will it be before we enter the ship?" asked Lady Monson.

"Oh, we shall all be aboard before sundown, I don't doubt," said I.

"Will you not have some signal ready in case a vessel pass?" she demanded.

"We'll stack the materials for a bonfire, but there is much to be done meanwhile," said I.

I believed she would have addressed Cutbill or Finn rather than me, but for the downright insolence her disregard of my presence would have signified. No doubt she hated me for being her husband's cousin, for joining in his chase of her, for having helped in the duel that cost the colonel his life, for the part I had acted aboard the *'Liza Robbins*, and for being a witness of her defeat and shame and humiliation. Yes, such a woman as Lady Monson would violently abhor a man for much less than this. Why should poor Wilfrid have been drowned and she spared? I remember thinking. The world would surely have been the better off for the saving of one honest heart out of the yacht's forecastle than for Lady Monson's deliverance. But reflections of this kind were absurdly ill-timed. I started from them on meeting Laura's gaze pensively watching me, and then sprang to my feet to the perception of the overwhelming reality that confronted us all.

"Come, lads," said I, "if you are sufficiently rested shall we turn to?"

They instantly rose; Johnson staggered onto his legs, but I told him to keep where he was.

"You'll be hearty again to-morrow," said I, "and we are strong enough to manage without you."

He knuckled his forehead with a grateful smile and lay down again.

The work ran us deep into the afternoon. There did not seem much to be done, but somehow it occupied a deal of time. The heat was a terrible hinderance; it fell a dead calm, the atmosphere pressed with a tingling vibration to the skin, and swam in a swooning way, till sometimes on pausing and bringing my hand to my brow I would see the hot blue horizon beginning to revolve as though it were some huge teetotum, with myself perched on the top of the middle of it. With a vast deal of trouble and after a long time a boom was secured to the stump of the galleon's foremast with a block at the end of it, through which a line was rove. There had washed ashore close to the great dead shark down on the beach a small arm-chair of red velvet that had formerly stood in Laura's

cabin. Cutbill spied it and brought it to Finn, and said that it would do to hoist the ladies on board by. It was accordingly carried to the galleon, and made fast to one end of the whip. Dowling then climbed on board while the others of us stood by to sway away.

"Will you go up first, Lady Monson?" said I.

She coldly inclined her head and came to the chair, sweeping her hair backward over her shoulders, with a white, scared look at the height up which she was to be hoisted. I snugged her in the chair, and passed the end of a piece of line round her, and all being ready, we ran her up hand over hand till she was on a level with the shell-bristling rail of the galleon's forecastle. Here Dowling caught hold of the chair and drew it inboard, singing out to us to lower away, and a few moments after the chair was floating over the side empty.

We then sent Laura aloft. She smiled at me as she seated herself, but there was a deal of timidity in her sweet eyes, and her smile vanished as if by magic the moment the chair was off the ground. However, she soared in perfect safety and was received by Dowling, and no sooner had she sent a look along the decks than her head shone over the side and she called down to me, "Oh, Mr. Monson, it is exquisite—a very Paradise of shells and sea-flowers!"

"Will you go up now, sir?" said Finn.

"Not yet," I replied; "I can be useful down here. Let us get Johnson hoisted out of the way first."

Cutbill brought the poor fellow round to the chair, and we sent him up. Dowling remained on the vessel to receive what we whipped up aloft to him, and in the course of an hour from the time of swaying Lady Monson aboard we had hoisted all the provisions we had brought into the shadow of the galleon—Laura's box of clothes, the yacht's foresail and fore stay-sail, a bundle of mattresses that had washed out of the forecastle, the cask of sherry, two casks of fresh-water, the carpenter's chest, and other matters which I cannot now recall. This was very well indeed, but we were nigh-hand spent, and had to fling ourselves down upon the pumice-rocks to rest and breathe ere tailing onto the whip again to hoist one or another of us up.

The sun was now in the west, his light a rich crimson and the sea a sheet of molten gold polished as quicksilver under him. The galleon's shadow lay broad on her port side, and in it we sprawled with scarlet faces and dripping brows.

"No chance of being picked up in such weather as this, sir," said Finn, who had worked as hard as any of us and seemed the better for his labors, though I observed that his breath was caught at times as if by a spasm or shooting-pain in the side.

"We must have patience," said I, "but at the worst 'tis a tolerably comfortable shipwreck, Finn. We are well stocked, and there's a deal more yet to be had, if the sea will keep quiet. We're not ashore upon the Greenland coast, all ice ahead of us and all famine astern."

"No, thank the Lord," quoth Cutbill; "it's a bad shipwreck when a man daresn't finger his nose for fear of bringing it away from his face. Better too much sun," says I, "than none at all."

"And then again," said I, with a glance up at the marvellous, shell-incrusted conformation that towered with swelling bilge over our heads, "here's as good a house as one needs to live in till something heaves in view."

"I'm for scuttling her at once, capt'n," cried Head; "she'll hold a vast o' water, and the sooner she's holed the sooner she'll be empty. Who's to tell what's inside of her?"

Cutbill ran his eyes thirstily over the huge fossil. "She was a lump of a craft for her day," said he, "and when wessels of her size put to sea they was commonly nearly all rich ships, so I've heerd."

"Head, you're right," cried Finn. "Ye shall be the first to spike her—if 'ee can. On deck there!"

"Holloa!" answered Dowling, putting his purple, whiskered face over the line of shells.

"Send down the augers and a chopper out of the carpenter's chest."

"Ay, ay, sir!" he answered, and in a few moments down came the tools.

"Before you make a start," said I, "hoist me on aboard, will you?"

I planted myself in the chair, was cleverly run up, got hold of Dowling's hand, and stepped onto the deck.

I was prepared to witness a rich and gorgeous show, but what I now viewed went leagues beyond any imagination I could have conceived of the reality. The ancient fabric had four decks; that is to say, the forecastle, the main-deck, that was like a well, a short raised quarter-deck, and abaft all a poop going to the narrow, castle-like crown of the head of the stern. These decks, together with the inside of the bulwarks, were thickly incrusted with shells of every

imaginable hue and shape and size; but in addition there flourished densely among these shells a wonderful surface of marine growths, not so dense but that the shells could be seen between, yet plentiful enough to submit each deck to the eye as a glorious marine parterre. It was like entering upon a scene of fairy-land; there were growths of a coralline appearance of many colors, from a Tyrian dye to a delicate opalescent azure, huge bulbs like bloated cucumbers, flowers resembling immense daisies, with coral-hard spikes projecting from them like the rays which dart from the sun; long trailing plants like prostrate creepers, others erect, as tall as my knee, resembling ferns, of a grace beyond all expression, with their plume-like archings, blossoms of white and carnation, green bayonet-like spikes, weeds shaped to the aspect of purple lizards, so that one watched to see if they crawled; great round vegetables, bigger than the African toadstools, some crimson, some of cream color, some barred with crimson on a yellow ground; here and there lay fish big and little, of shapes I had never before beheld, whose vividness seemed to have lost nothing through their being dead. Against the front of the quarter-deck was the livid body of a porpoise. There was scarcely a vegetable growth but that might have been wrought of steel, for the unyieldingness of it. I kicked at one toadstool-like thing and my foot recoiled as though it had smote a little pillar of iron. The picture was made the more amazing by the red light of the declining sun, for every white gleam had its tinge of ruby, and what was deep of hue glowed gloriously rich. The two shafts of masts sparkled like the jewelled fingers of a woman. And the deep-sea smell! The atmosphere was charged with an odor of brine and weed of a pungency and quality that one felt to be possible only to a revelation from some deepest and most secret recess of the deep. The water that had covered the main-deck when Dowling and Cutbill had first inspected the craft was fast draining away, but the growths there and the shells were still soaked, and gave a wet surface for the light of the sun to flash up in, and the whole space sparkled with the glory of the rainbow, but so much brighter than the brightest rainbow that the eye, after lingering, came away weeping with the dazzle.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE FIRST NIGHT.

LAURA and her sister sat on one of the sailors' chests that we had sent up; Johnson leaned on top of a flour or biscuit barrel that stood on end, with his eyes fixed upon the western sea. There was still a deal of bright curiosity in Laura's face as her gaze ran over the deck, resting again and again with a sparkle in it upon some lovely fibrine form, some lily-like sea-flower, some plant as of green marble; but Lady Monson's countenance was listless and almost empty of expression. Any astonishment she might have felt was exhausted. I had scarce time after being swayed inboard to take even a swift view of this glittering miracle before she asked me, in a voice cold and commanding, yet, I am bound to say, of beauty too—some of the notes soft almost as a flute's—"When will the men spread the sail as an awning, Mr. Monson? They should prepare for the night. Darkness speedily comes when the sun is gone, and we are without lights."

"The men have worked very well, Lady Monson," said I. "They will rig up a sail promptly for you, I am sure. I am not in command of them, as of course you know, but they have attended cheerfully to many of my suggestions. They were your husband's servants, madam."

"And therefore *mine*, if you put it so," she answered, with an angry flash of her eyes at me.

"I have no doubt," said I, "that they will be willing to do anything you may desire," and with that I stepped to the side to see what they were about, with so strong an aversion in me that I could only heartily hope it would never betray me into any more defined expression of it than mere manner might convey.

Laura came to my side as though to observe with me what the men were about, and whispered: "She is very trying, Mr. Monson, but bear with her. It will not need a long imprisonment of this kind to tame her."

"My dearest," said I, "I have not a word to say against her. My quarrel is with *you*." She stared at me. "I call you Laura.

Again and again last night you let me tell you I loved you. By your own admission I am your sweetheart, and yet you call me *Mr. Monson.*"

"Oh, I will call you Charles; I never thought of it!" she exclaimed, blushing rosy. "What are the men doing?" she exclaimed, peering as though engrossed by the movements of the seamen.

Cutbill was winding away at the shell-thickened side of the galleon with an auger; farther aft stood Head similarly employed. On a line with my face as I looked down there was a finger-thick coil of water spouting out of the vessel's side, smoking upon the rocks and streaming away in a rivulet into holes which it overflowed. I explained to Laura the fellows' employment.

"They have a notion," said I, "that there may be treasure contained in the hold of this old galleon, but before they can search they must empty her of the water she is full of. Below there!" I called.

Finn looked up. "I see that you have bored through her," said I. "Is her side hard?"

"As stone, sir," he answered. "The shells come away pretty easy, but her timber's growed into regular iron."

I asked him how many holes they were going to pierce. He answered three, that she might be draining handsomely through the night.

"The sooner we can rig up a sail, Finn, to serve as a shelter, the better," I called down to him. "When the sun is gone there'll be nothing to see by. The men will be wanting their supper too; then there's that lump of a porpoise to be got out of the craft, for we don't want to be poisoned as well as shipwrecked, and if daylight enough lives after all this," I continued, "we ought to beach high and dry as much as we can come at to-night that may be washing about out of the yacht down there, in case it should come on to blow. There's no moving on this island for the holes in it when the darkness falls."

"Ay, ay, sir! we'll be with ye in a jiffy," he answered.

"What think you of this marine show?" I said to Laura.

"It is too beautiful to believe real. The mermaids have made a garden of this ship. How lovingly, with what exquisite taste have they decorated these old decks!"

"Happy for us," I exclaimed, "that the earthquake should have struck her fair and brought her, beflowered and bejewelled as she is, to the surface. She is more than an asylum. She compels our attention, and comes between us and our thoughts and fears."

"Would she float, do you think, if all the water were to be let out of her?"

"I would not stake a kiss from you, Laura, on it, but unless she is full of petrified cargo and ocean deposit, stones, shells, and so on, I don't see why she shouldn't swim, though she might float deep."

"Imagine if we could launch her and save our lives by her!" cried Laura, clasping her hands; then changing her voice and casting down her eyes, she added: "I must go to Henrietta. She watches me intently. She wonders that I can smile, I dare say, and I wonder, too, when I think for an instant. Poor Wilfrid! poor Wilfrid! and my maid, too, and the others who are lying dead in that calm sea."

She moved away slowly towards her sister.

I looked about me for a forecastle or main-deck hatch, or any signs of an entrance into the silent interior underfoot, but the crust of shells and the grass and plants and vegetation concealed everything. Both the front of the poop and that of the short raised quarter-deck seemed inlaid with shells like a grotto. There was doubtless a cabin under the poop, with probably a door off the quarter-deck, and windows in the cabin front to be come at by beating and scraping. It might furnish us with a shelter, but how would it show? What apparel had the sea clothed it with? An emotion of deep awe filled and subdued me when I looked at this ship. I was sufficiently well acquainted with old types of craft to guess the century to which this vessel had belonged, and even supposing her to have been one of the very last of the ships of her particular build and shape, yet even then I might make sure that she could not be of a less age than a hundred and twenty or thirty years, so that I might safely assume that she had been resting in the motionless dark green depths of this ocean for above a hundred years. She had been a three-masted vessel, but all traces of her mizzen-mast had vanished. Her figure made one think of a tub, the sides slightly pressed in. All about her bows was so thickly incrusted with shells that it was impossible to guess the character of the structure there. I traced the outline of a beak or projection at the stem-head, with a hollow between it and the forepart of the forecastle-deck. Little more was to be gathered, for all curves and outlines here were thickened into grotesque bigness of round and surface out of their original proportions and shape by deposits of shells. Indeed, the well in the head was choked with marine vegetation. It was like a square of tropic soil loaded with the eager growths of a fat and

irresistible vitality, appearances as of guinea-grass, wondrous imitations of tufts of rushes, beds of pink and feathering mosses, star blossoms, thickets of delicate filaments, gorgeous heads in velvet, snake-like trailings, sea-roses, dark satin masses of plants of a crimson color, and a hundred other such things, with a subsoil of shells whose dyes glanced through the growth in gleams of purple and orange and pearl and apple-green, in shapes of mitres, harps, volutes, and so forth.

The men now arrived on board; three holes had been pierced in the galleon's side, and the water hissed with a refreshing sound on to the rocks, intermingled with the faint lipping of the brine that was slowly filtering down the sides from the main-deck. Finn's first directions were to make an awning of the stay-foresail. The canvas had long ago dried out into its original whiteness, so fiery had been the heat of the sun and so ardent the temperature of this porous island. The sail was easily spread. The stump of the foremast, as I have before said, was close into the head; the sparkling shaft served as an upright for the head of the sail to be seized to, and the wide foot of it, shelving like the roof of a house, was secured to the bows. For that night, at all events, we chose the forecastle to rest on, partly because we happened to be on it and our provisions were stocked there, and next because the main-deck was still almost awash; and then again there was the great porpoise to get rid of, and, in truth, until one could force an entrance into the craft it mattered little at which end of her one lay.

The sun still floated about half an hour above the sea. I had again and again looked yearningly around the firm, light-blue ocean-line, but the azure circle ran flawless to either hand the wedge of dark-red gold that floated without a tremble in the dazzle of it under the sun.

"Nothing can show in this here calm, sir," said Finn, as I brought my eyes away from the sea. "No use expecting of steam, and what's moved by wind ain't going to hurry itself this weather, sir."

"Let's get supper," said I. "There should be starlight enough anon, I think, Finn, to enable us to fill a couple of the empty casks with the sweetest of the water that we can find in those holes."

"It can be managed, I dorn't doubt," said he.

"These here chests, capt'n," exclaimed Cutbill, indicating the three sailors' boxes that we had hoisted aboard, "belonged to O'Connor, Blake, and Tom Wilkinson. How do we stand as consarns our meddling with 'em?"

"How d'ye suppose, William?" answered Finn. "Use 'em, man, use 'em."

"Hain't the dead got no rights?" inquired Dowling.

"Ay, where there's law, mate," responded Finn, with a half-grin at me; "but there's no law on the top crust of an airthquake, and I allow that whatever may come to us in such a place is ourn, to do what we like with."

"Oh, certainly," I cried; "who the deuce wants to discuss the subject of law and dead men's rights *here?* Overhaul those chests, Dowling, and use whatever you want that you may find in them."

But one saw the mariner's prejudices in the way in which the sailors opened and inspected the contents of the boxes. Had they had the handling of a portmanteau of mine, or a trunk belonging to Wilfrid, they might not have shown themselves so sensitive; but these were the chests of dead shipmates and messmates—of men they had gone aloft with, eaten and drank with, skylarked and enjoyed sailors' pleasure with—and I saw they felt that they were doing a sort of violence to forecastle traditions by handling the vanished Jacks' little property without the sort of right to do so which on board ship they would have obtained by a sale of articles at the mast. However, they found tobacco and pipes, which went far towards reconciling them towards Finn's theory of appropriation. They also met with shoes, which were an unspeakable comfort to Dowling and Head, who were barefooted, and in torture with every step they took from the sharp edges and points of shells. There were rude articles of clothing, too, which when dried would give the men a shift.

Well, we got supper; and when the meal was ended, there being yet a little space of daylight in the west, Cutbill, Dowling, and Head went to the beach to roll empty water-casks near to the galleon, for filling with such water as we could find that was least brackish, and to drag clear of the wash of the sea any further casks and cases of provisions, wine, and the like which they might chance to come across. Johnson continued too feeble to be of use. We had three mattresses already as dry as if they had never touched salt-water, and one of them I unrolled and made the poor creature lie upon it. Then Finn and I went about to prepare for the night while we could still see. We stretched the gaff-foresail over the plants and shrubs, placed the other two mattresses on one side of it, covering them with a portion of the sail-cloth, that the ladies might have clean couches, and made a roll of the sail at the head of these mattresses

to serve as a bolster. Tough as the growth of plants on the deck was, stiff as steel as I had thought at first, they proved brittle for the most part to rough usage, and were speedily broken by our tramping and stamping so as to form a sort of mattress under the sail; and we were grateful enough when by-and-by we came to lie down, for the intervention of these petals and leaves and bulbs between our bones and the flint-like surface of the shells, as barbed and jagged as though formed of scissors and thumb-screws.

The sun sank, and the darkness of the evening swept over the sea as swiftly as the shadow of a storm; but it proved a glorious dusk, fine, clear, glittering though dark, the sky like cloth of silver, flashful in places, with a view of the Cross of the southern hemisphere low down, to make one contrast this heat and stillness and placid grandeur of constellations with the roaring of Cape Horn and the rush of the mountain-high surge, down upon which that divinely planted symbol was gazing with trembling eyes. Nothing sounded save the plashing of the fountains of water spouting from the sides of the galleon, and the soft, cat-like breathing of the black line of sea sliding up and down the beach.

The men had made short work of filling the casks, and leaving them where they stood for the night, had clambered afresh to the forecastle. It was now too dark to deal with the porpoise, so we agreed to let the great thing rest till the morning. I and one or two of the others had tinder-boxes, and the means, therefore, of procuring a light; but we were without candles or lantern. This was a hardship in the absence of the moon, that rose so late as to be worthless to us, and that would be a new moon presently without light; though if I thought of *that*, it was only to hope in God's name that the rise of the silver paring would find us safe on board some ship homeward bound.

We were unable to distinguish more of one another than the vague outlines of our figures, and this only against the stars over the crested height of bulwark, for the sail we had spread as an awning deepened the gloom; the growths on the galleon's decks were black, and the shadows lay very thick to the height of the rail, where the spangled atmosphere glistened to the edge of the stretched sail overhead. The faces of Laura and her sister showed in a dream-like glimmer. Finn and I had made a little barricade of casks, cases, and the like, between the mattresses on which the ladies were to lie and the other part of the forecastle, that they might enjoy the trifling privacy such an arrangement as this could furnish them with.

The men formed into a group round about the mattress where Johnson lay, and lighted the pipes which they had been fortunate enough to meet with in the seamen's chests. As they sucked hard at the bowls the glowing tobacco would cast a faint coming and going light upon their faces. They subdued their voices out of respect to us, and their tones ran along in a half-smothered growl. Much of their talk was about the yacht, her loss, their drowned mates, and the like. I sat beside Laura, with Lady Monson seated at a little distance from her sister, and we often hushed our own whispers to listen to the men. Their superstitions were stirred by their situation. This galleon lay under the stars, a huge, looming mystery, vomited but a little while since from the vast depths of yonder black ocean; and now that the night had come, her presence, her aspect, the stillness in her of the hushed, unconjecturable, fathomless liquid solitude out of which she had been hurled, stirred them to their souls. I could tell that by the superstitious character of their talk. They told stories of their drowned shipmates' behavior on the preceding day—repeated remarks to which nothing but death could give the slightest significance. Johnson, in a feeble voice from his mattress, said that O'Connor, half an hour before the yacht struck, told him that he felt very uneasy, and that he'd give all he owned if there were a Roman Catholic priest on board that he might confess to him. He had led a sinful life, and he had made up his mind to give up the sea, and to find work, if he could, in a religious house. "I thought it queer," added Johnson, in accents so weak that they were painful to listen to, "that a chap like that there O'Connor, who was always a-bragging and a-grinning and joking, should grow troubled with his conscience all on a sudden. Never knew he was a Papish till he got lamenting that there warn't a priest aboard to confess to."

"Mates," said Finn, whose voice sounded hollow in the darkness, "when Death's a-coming for a man he'll often hail him, sometimes a good bit afore he arrives. The sperrit has ears, and it's them that hears him, men. O'Connor had heard that hail, but only the secret parts in him onderstood it, and they set him a-commiserating of himself for having lived sinfully, and started him on craving for some chap as he at all events could reckon holy, t' whom he could tell how bad he'd been. Though what good the spinning of a long yarn about his hevil ways into an old chap's ear was going to do him, I'm not here to explain."

Then Cutbill had something to tell of poor old Jacob Crimp, and Head of a shipmate whose name I forget. But they rumbled away

presently from depressing topics into the more cheerful consideration of the contents of the galleon's hold. I sat hand in hand with Laura listening.

"This time yesterday," said I, "the cabin of the *Bride* was a blaze of light. I see the dinner-table sparkling with glass and silver, the rich carpet, the elegant hangings, the lustrous glance of mirrors. What is there that makes life so dream-like and unreal as the ocean? The reality of one moment is in a breath made a vision, a memory of in the next. The noble fabric of a ship melts like a snow-flake, and her people vanish as utterly as though they had been transformed into spirits."

"Fire will destroy more completely than the ocean!" exclaimed Lady Monson.

"I think not;" said I, "fire leaves ashes, the sea nothing."

"To the eye," said Lady Monson.

"This time to-morrow we may be sailing home, Charles," said Laura.

"Heaven grant it! Give me once more, Laura, the pavements of Piccadilly under my feet, and I believe there is no man in all England eloquent enough to persuade me that what we have undergone, from the hour of our departure in the *Bride* to the hour of our return in the whatever her name may prove, actually happened."

"But *I* am real," she whispered, and I felt her hand tremble in mine.

I pressed her fingers to my lips. Had Lady Monson been out of hearing I should have known what to say. I tried to put a cheerful face upon our perilous and extraordinary position, but I found it absolutely impossible to talk of anything else than our chances of escape, how long we were to be imprisoned, Wilfrid's death, the destruction of the yacht, incidents of the voyage, and the like. I spoke freely of these matters, caring little for Lady Monson's presence. One of the men in talking with the others said something about the *Eliza Robbins*, and Laura, turning to her sister, exclaimed:

"I hope some other ship may take us off. How could you have endured such a horrid atmosphere, Henrietta, even for the short time you lived on board her?"

But to this her ladyship deigned no reply; her silence was ominous, full of wrath. I can imagine that she abhorred her sister at that moment for recalling that ship, and the infamous withering memories which the mere utterance of the name carried with it.

She rose as though to go to the galleon's side, but sat again after the first stride, finding the deck, with its slippery and cutting shells, and its tripping interlacery of growths, too ugly a platform to traverse in the dark. I had hoped that she would break through the husk of sulkiness, haughtiness, selfishness with which she had sheathed herself for such comfort as Laura might have obtained from some little show in her sister of geniality and humanity and sympathetic perception of the dire disaster that had befallen us. There was indeed a time that evening when I believed her temper was mending; for during some interval of our listening to the conversation of the sailors Laura spoke of Muffin, of the horror and fear that had possessed him that night of the severe squall when I found him on his knees, his detestation of the sea, his eagerness to get home, his tricks to terrify Wilfrid into altering the yacht's course, and how the poor wretch's struggles in that way seemed now justified by his being drowned—"so much so," added Laura, "that I cannot bear to think of the unfortunate fellow having been whipped by the men."

On hearing this, Lady Monson began to ask questions. Apparently she had been ignorant until now that Muffin was on board the *Bride*. Naturally, she perfectly well remembered him, for the man was her husband's valet some time before she ran off with the colonel. Her inquiries led to Laura's telling her of the tricks that Muffin had played. The girl's voice faltered when she spoke of the phosphoric writing on the cabin wall.

"What words did Muffin write?" asked Lady Monson.

"Oh, Henrietta!" exclaimed Laura, who paused to a tremulous sigh, and then added, "He wrote '*Return to baby.*'"

I might have imagined there would be something in this to have silenced her ladyship for a while, but apparently there was as little virtue in thoughts of her child to touch her as in thoughts of her husband. She asked, coldly, but in a sort of dictatorial, pressing way, as though eager to scrape over this mention of her child as you might crowd sail on your ship to run her into deep water off a shoal on which her keel is hung, "This Muffin was a ventriloquist too, you say?"

I could guess how grieved and shocked Laura was by the tone of her answer. She told her sister how the valet had tricked us with his voice, how he had been sent forward into the forecastle to work as a sailor, and how the men had punished him on discovering that it was he who terrified them. Several times Lady Monson broke

into a short laugh, of a music so rich and glad that one might easily have imagined such notes could proceed only from a very angel of a woman. I did not doubt that she sang most ravishingly, and as her laughter fell upon my ear in the great shadow of that galleon, with the narrow breadth of star-clad sky twinkling with blue and green and white-faced orbs, there arose before me the vision of her ladyship seated at the piano, with the gallant Colonel Hope-Kennedy turning the pages of the music for her, and sweet, true, unsuspicious little Laura listening well pleased, and my poor, half-witted cousin maybe up in the nursery playing with his baby.

However, as I have said, this was but a short burst on Lady Monson's part. Laura's reference to the *Eliza Robbins* silenced her; then Laura and I fell still, her hand in mine, and we listened to the men, who were talking of the galleon and arguing over the state and contents of her hold.

"Well, treasure ain't perishable anyhow," said Cutbill.

"That's all right," answered Finn, whose deep-sea voice, I was glad to hear, had regained something of its old heartiness. "Gold's gold whether it's wan or wan thousand years old. But what I says is, bar *treasure*, as ye calls it, which 'ee may or may not find—and I hope ye may, I'm sure—there ain't nothin' worth comin' at in the inside of a wessel that was founded, quite likely as not, afore George the Fust was born."

"But take a cargo of wine," said Dowling. "I've been told that these here galleons was often chock-a-block with wines and sperrits of fust-rate quality. The longer 'ee keep wine the more waluable it becomes."

"If there's naught but wine," said Cutbill, "better put on a clean shirt, mate, and tarn in. There'll be nothin' in any cask under these here hatches that worn't have become salt-water after all them years. Dorn't go and smile in your dreams to the notion that there'll be anything fit to drink below."

"How long's she going to take to drain out, I wonder?" said Head.

"I allow she'll be empty by the time you've lifted the hatches," answered Finn; "that'll be a job to test the beef in 'ee, lads."

"Well," cried Dowling, "there'll be no leaving this here island, as far as I'm consarned, till the old hooker's been overhauled. Skin me, capt'n, if there mayn't be enough aboard to set a man up ashore as a gentleman for life, and here sits a sailor as wants what he can get. I've lost all my clothes and a matter of three pun fifteen on top of them. Blarst the sea, says I!"

"Belay that," growled Cutbill; "recollect who's a-listening onto ye."

"How long's this island going to remain in the road?" asked Head; "do it always mean to stop here? They'll have to put a light-house upon it."

"Likely as not it'll go down just as it came up," answered the sick voice of Johnson.

Laura started. "*That* may not be an idle fancy, Charles," she whispered.

"Do you think this hulk would float, captain," I called out, "if the head of this rock were to subside, as Johnson yonder suggests?"

"Well, she ain't buried, sir!" he exclaimed; "there's nothin' to stop her from remaining behind, that I can see, if she's buoyant enough to swim. If she's pretty nigh hollow she'll do it, I allow; for look at the shape of her. As there's a chance of such a thing, then, when she's done draining we'd better plug the holes we've made."

"I'll see to that," said Dowling; "there's no leaving of her with me till I've seen what's inside of her."

Here Head delivered a yawn like a howl.

"It will be proper to keep a lookout, I suppose, sir?" said Finn.

"Why, yes," I answered; "the night is silent enough now, but there may come a breeze of wind at any minute and bring along a ship, and one pair of eyes at least must be on the watch."

"There's nothin' aboard to make a flare with," said Cutbill; "a pity. This here's a speck of rock to miss a short way off in the dark."

"It cannot be helped," I exclaimed; "we have all of us done a hard day's work since dawn, and there is always, in a miserable business of this sort, some job or other that must be kept waiting. There's plenty of stuff on the beach to collect to-morrow. As for to-night, a breeze may come, as I have said; but mark how hotly those stars burn. There'll be but little air stirring, I fear."

"There are four of us to keep a lookout, lads," said Finn.

"Five," I interrupted; "I'm one of you. I'll stand my watch!"

"Very good, sir," said Finn. "An hour and a half a piece. That'll bring us fair onto daybreak."

"There ain't no timepiece aboard that's going," said Head; "how's a man to know when his watch's up?"

"Well, d——n it, ye must guess," growled Cutbill, sulkily and sleepily.

"I'm the least tired of you all, I believe," said I; "so with your good leave, lads, I'll keep the first lookout."

This was agreed to; the men knocked the ashes out of their pipes, and, with a rough call of "good-night" to the ladies and myself, lay down upon the sail.

They occupied the port side of the galleon's forecastle, and made a little huddle of shadows upon the faintness of the canvas, well apart from where the mattresses for the ladies had been placed. Indeed, as you will suppose, the gaff-foresail of a schooner of the dimensions of the *Bride* provided a plentiful area of sail-cloth, and the space between the ladies and the sailors could have been considerably widened yet, had the main-deck been dry enough to use.

"Where am I to lie?" demanded Lady Monson.

"Your sister, I am sure, will give you choice of either mattress," said I. "These casks and cases will keep you as select as though they were the bulkhead of a cabin."

"A dreadful bed!" she cried. "How long is it possible for these horrors to last? I am without a single convenience. There is not even a looking-glass. To be chased and hunted down to *this!*" she added, in a voice under her breath, as though thinking aloud, while her respiration was tremulous with passion.

"I wish the deck was fit to walk on," said Laura; "I do not feel sleepy. I should like to walk up and down with you, Charles."

"It would be worse than pacing a cabbage-field, my dear," said I. "You are worn out, but will not know it until your head is pillowed. Let me see you comfortable."

She at once rose, went to the mattress that was nearest the vessel's side, and seated herself upon it, preparatory to stretching her limbs.

"I should like that bed," said Lady Monson. "I suffer terribly from the heat. Your blood runs more coldly than mine, Laura."

"Either bed will do for me, Henrietta," answered the girl, with a pleasant little laugh, and she stepped on to the other couch, and stretched herself along it.

I turned the edge of the sail over her feet, saw that the roll of the canvas made a comfortable bolster for her, and tenderly bidding her good-night, crossed to the other side of the deck, leaving to Lady Monson the task of adjusting her own fine figure, and of snugging herself according to her fancy. It was about nine o'clock by the stars. Now that the men had ceased speaking, and the hush as of slumber had descended upon this galleon, I cannot express how

mysterious and awful was the stillness. You heard nothing but the cascading of the water from the holes in the vessel's side, a soft fountain-like hissing sound, and the stealthy, delicate seething of the sea slipping up and down the honey-combed beach. The men at a little distance away breathed heavily in the deep slumber that had swiftly overtaken them. Once Johnson spoke in a dream, and his disjointed syllables, amid that deep ocean serenity, grated harshly on every nerve. The heavens overhead were blotted out by the stretched space of canvas, but aft the line of the galleon rose broken and black against the stars, which floated in clouds of silver in the velvet dusk of the sky. The silence seemed like some material thing, creeping, as though it were an atmosphere, to this central speck of rock, out of the remote glistening reaches of the huge circle of the horizon.

But deeper than any silence that could reign between the surface of the earth and the stars was the stillness of the bottom of the ocean that had risen with this galleon, the dumbness which filled the blackness of her stonified interior. Imagination grew active in me as I sent my sleepless eye over the sombre, mysterious loom of the ship to where the narrow deck of the poop went in a gentle acclivity, cone-shaped, to the luminaries which glanced over the short line of her taffrail like the gaze of the spectres of her crew, who would presently be noiselessly creeping over the sides. I figured, and indeed beheld, the ship in the days of her glory, her sides a bright yellow, the grim lips of little ordnance grinning through port-holes, the flash of brass swivel-guns upon the line of her poop and quarter-deck rail, her canvas spreading on high—round, spacious, flowing, and of a lily-white brightness, enriched by flaring pennants, many ells in length, with figures aft and forward — Spanish ladies in gay and radiant attire, their black eyes shining, their long veils floating on the tropic breeze; grave señors in plumed hats, rich cloaks half draping the sheaths of jewel-hilted swords; a priest or two, shaven, sallow, with a bead-like pupil of the eye in the corner of the sockets; the pilot and the captain pacing yonder deck together, and where I was standing, crowds of quaintly apparelled mariners with long hair and chocolate cheeks, yet with roughest voices rendered melodious by utterance of the majestic dialects of their country—and then I thought of her resting, as I now beheld her, motionless in the tideless, dark-green waters at the bottom of the ocean!—figures of her people, lying, sitting, standing round about her in the attitudes they were drowned in, preserved from decay by the petrifying stagnation of the currentless dark brine.

It was now that I was alone, the deep breathing of sleepers rising from the deck near me, the eyes of my mind quickened by high-strung imagination into perception, vivid as actuality itself, of the visions of this galleon in her sunlit heyday and then in her glory of shells and plants in the unimaginable hush of the fathomless void from which she had emerged, that I fell to thinking gravely and wonderingly over what Johnson, the sick sailor, had said touching the possibility of this island's sudden disappearance. Of such volcanic upheavals as this I had read and heard again and again. Sometimes the land thus created stood for years; sometimes it vanished within a few hours of its formation.

I particularly recollected a story that I had met with in the *Naval Chronicle;* how two ships were in company off a height of land rising sixty feet above the level of the sea, that was uncharted and unknown to the captains of the vessels, though one of them had been in those waters a few weeks before, and both men were intimately well acquainted with the navigation of that tract of ocean; how after masters and crews had been staring, lost in wonder at the tall, pale, sterile, sugar-loaf acclivity, one of the commanders sent a boat over in charge of his mate, that he might land and return with a report; when, while the boat was within a musket-shot of the island, the land sank softly but swiftly, without noise, and with so small a commotion of the sea following the disappearance of the loftiest point of peak that the darkening of the surface of the ocean with ripples there seemed as no more than the shadow of the current.

This and like yarns ran in my head, and, indeed, the more I thought of it, the more I seemed to fancy that this head of pumice upon which the galleon was seated was of the right sort to crumble down flat all in a minute. Why, think of the height of it! Since those times I believe the plummet has sounded the depths of that part of the equinoctial waters, but in those days the ocean there was held unsearchable. Was it all lava that had been spewed up—some mountain of volcanic vomit, hardened by the brine into an altitude of many thousands of feet from ooze to summit, and hollow as a drum, too, with a mere film of crust on top? O God! I mused, wrung from head to foot with a shudder; think of this crust yielding, letting the galleon sink miles down the gigantic shaft of porous stuff, the walls on top yet standing above the water-line, high enough to prevent the sea from rolling into the titanic funnel! Gracious love! figure our being alive when we got to the bottom, and looking up at the mere star of daylight that stared down upon us from the vast

distance as the galleon grounded on a bottom deeper than the seat of the hell of the mediæval terrorists!

I shook my head; such a fancy was like to drive me mad—with the sort of possibility of it, too, in its way. Could I have but stirred my stumps I might have been able to walk off something of my mood of horror, but every pace along that deck was like wading and floundering. I went to the high forecastle-rail and leaned my arms upon it and looked into the night, and presently the beauty and the serenity and the wide mystery of the dark ocean brimming to the wheeling stars worked in me with the influence of a benediction; my pulse slackened and I grew calm. What could the worst that befell us signify but death? I reflected; and I thought of my cousin sleeping in the black void yonder. The splashing of the water streaming from the holes in the side sounded refreshingly upon the ears. There was a suggestion as of caressing in the tender noise of the dark fingers of the sea blindly and softly pawing the incline of the beach. The atmosphere was hot, but the edge of its fever was blunted by the dew.

Thus passed the time, and when I thought my hour and a half had gone I stepped quietly over to Finn and shook him, and with a sailor's promptitude he sprang to his feet, understanding, dead as his slumber had been, our situation and arrangements the instant he opened his eyes. My mind was full, nor was I yet sleepy, and I could have talked long with him on the thoughts which had visited me. But to what purpose? There was nothing that he could have suggested. Like others in desperate straits, our business was to wait and hope and help ourselves as best we could. I took a peep at Laura before lying down; she lay motionless, sound asleep, breathing regularly. Lady Monson stirred as I was in the act of withdrawing, and laughed low and so oddly that I knew it was a dreamer's mirth.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE GALLEON'S HOLD.

I WOKE from a deep sleep, and opened my eyes against the glare of the risen sun. Death must be like such sleep as that, thought I. I sat up and met Laura's gaze fixed upon me. She was seated on a seaman's chest lightly smoothing her hair, and the jewels on her fingers sparkled like dew-drops on the golden fall of her tresses. She looked the better for the night's rest, her complexion fresher, her eyes freed of the delicate haziness that had yesterday somewhat dimmed their rich violet sparkles; the pale greenish shadow under them, too, was gone. A little past her stood Lady Monson gazing seaward under the shelter of her hand. Her shape made a very noble figure of a woman against the blue brilliance of atmosphere between the edge of the spread sail and the forecastle-rail; the cap she wore I supposed she had found in her sister's box. Her hair was extraordinarily thick and long and of a lustreless black, and looked a very thunder-cloud upon her back, as I have before said; it put a wild and almost savage spirit into her beauty, which this slender headgear of lace or whatnot somewhat qualified; in fact, she looked a civilized woman with that cap on, but her cheeks were so white as to be painful to see. The full life of her seemed to have entered her eyes; her breast rose and fell slowly, as if her heart beat with labor; yet, slow as every movement in her was, whether in the turn of her head, the droop of her arm, the lifting of her hand, it was in exquisite correspondence with the suggestion of cold dignity and haughty indifference you seemed to find in her form and carriage.

I had a short chat with Laura, and found she had rested well. The men were off the galleon.

"They have gone to the wreck, I suppose," said I, scarce able to see that way, however, for the blinding dazzle of sunshine that made the leagues of eastern ocean as insupportable to the gaze as the luminary itself.

"The poor man Johnson is dead!" she exclaimed.

"Ah! I feared it. I believed I could hear death in his voice when he spoke in his sleep last night."

"Cutbill and Head," she continued—for she was now well acquaint-

ed with the names of the men—"have carried his body to bury it in the sea, past that slope there."

I sat silent a little. I had all along secretly expected that the man would die, yet the news that he was dead strangely affected me. It might be because he had been among the saved, and it seemed hard and cruel that he should perish after having come off with his life out of a conflict that had destroyed robuster men. Then, again, there was the loneliness of his death, expiring, perhaps, after vainly struggling to make some whispered wants audible to our sleeping ears or to the nodding figure standing at a distance from him on the lookout.

I sent a look round the sea, compassing the blue line as fully as the blaze would permit. The calm was as dead as it had been throughout the night. In the west the heads of a few clouds of the burning hue of polished brass showed with a stare out of a dimness over the sea there. There was bitter loathing of all this deadness and tranquillity in me as I stepped to the side for a sight of Finn down on the beach. What phantom of chance was there for us unless a breeze blew? Dowling was at work below, winding with his auger into the galleon's side. He had made two further holes to starboard, and was now piercing a third.

"There ain't anything like the first weight of water in her now, sir," he sung out; "see how languid these here spurts are as compared to yesterday's spouting."

I overhauled the whip that was rove at the end of the derrick, secured the end, and went down hand over hand. My skin felt parched and feverish and thirsty for a dip. "I am off for a plunge," I called to Laura, who came to the side to look at me as I slipped down. I found Finn exploring among the wreckage on the shore; Cutbill and Head were then coming round from the other side of the island, their heads hung and their feet taking the pumice-rocks with funeral strides.

"How are you, Finn?" I called to him.

"Thank God, I feel myself again. The pain in my side's gone, and my breath comes easy. Poor Johnson's dead."

"I know."

"Something while he was in the water struck agin his heart. But arter all, sir, what does it matter, since a man can die but once, where he takes his header from?"

"We must suffer nothing to depress us, Finn. Good-morning, Cutbill. How are you, Head? A sad job for sunrise to turn you to, men."

"Poor Sammy!" exclaimed Cutbill, in a deep sea growl, full of emotion and a slight lift of his face, smothered in whiskers, to the sky. "He's been hailed for the last time. He's gone where there's no more tarning out."

"He's lived hard, worked hard, and died hard," said Head, bringing his eyes in a squint to my face, "and it would be hard if he's gone to hell arter all."

"Stow all sarmons!" cried Finn; "let's see now if there's anything come ashore worth having."

I left them wading and searching, and trudging to the other side of the island, stripped, and advanced into the water to the height of my hips, not daring to venture farther for fear of sharks. The plunge made a new man of me, and when I returned, it was with a good appetite and a hearty disposition to help in any sort of work that might advantage us. The men met with a barrel of pork and another case of potted meats. The water was as pure and bright as glass over the shelving beach, and what lay near to on the fluctuating sulphur-colored bottom was as plain as though viewed through air. We were thus enabled to rescue much of what in thick water we should never have seen—among other matters, three cases of champagne, a case of bottled beer, a small cask of brandy, and one or two other articles which had formed a portion of the forecastle stores, not to mention many armfuls of stuff for making flares with, should a vessel show in the night. Of the cabin provisions we recovered but little, owing to their having been stowed aft for the most part, where the yacht had been literally torn to pieces. The bows of the vessel stood gaunt and bare in the light-blue water. I saw poor Finn gazing at the remains until his eyes moistened, and he broke away with a deep sigh and a dreary look at me. I never could have imagined that anything inanimate could have appealed so humanly as that mutilated fragment of a fabric that but a little while before shone as sweet and stately a figure upon the sea as any structure of her size that ever lifted a snow-white spire to the sky.

It was after ten o'clock, as was to be guessed by the sun's height, when we started to break into the interior of the galleon. We had worked hard since sunrise; filled another brace of empty casks which we had found on the beach with water out of the holes in the rocks; hoisted these casks aboard along with the other provisions and spirits we had fallen in with; got our breakfast; then, with prodigious labor and difficulty, had turned the great dead porpoise out of the ship by clapping tackles to it and prizing it up with

a small studding-sail boom that served as a handspike. The main-deck was now as dry as the poop or forecastle. Lady Monson remained seated under the awning. Laura, on the other hand, with a handkerchief tied over her head, reckless of her complexion, wandered like a child about the decks, examining the many gorgeous sea-plants, bending her fair face to an iridescent cluster of shells, gazing with rounded eyes, and an expression of charming wonder, at some flat, flint-colored, snake-like creeper as if she believed it lived. The wondrous marine parterre seemed the richer for the presence and movements of the lustrous-haired girl, as a rose appears to glow into darker and finer beauty when lifted to some lovely face.

We resolved to attack the cabin entrance first, but it was hard to tell where the door lay, whether in the front of the poop or of the quarter-deck. There were steps leading from one deck to the other on either hand close against the bulwarks, as you easily guessed by the incline and appearance of the thick moulding of shells upon them. Cutbill was for attacking the quarter-deck front, but Finn agreed with me that the state cabin would lie under the poop, and that the door to it, therefore, would be somewhere in the front of that deck. To this part, then, we carried the tool-chest. There were five of us; every man seized an implement, and to it we fell, scraping, hammering, chipping, prizing. Dowling and Head worked as though they had already caught sight of the glitter of precious metal within. Some of the shelly adhesions were hard as rock, some broke away easily in lumps, like bricks from a house that is being demolished; but the thickness was staggering; it was a growth of layer upon layer, and every man had a great mound of splintered or concreted shells at his feet when the front at which we worked was still heavily coated. There seemed a sort of sacrilege in the destruction of so much beauty. Again and again I would pause to admire a shape of exquisite grace, a form of glorious hue, before striking; and then, it seemed to me as I toiled, many fancies crowding into my head, now that I looked close into this glorious incrustation, that it was impossible this galleon could have been sunk to the depth I had first imagined. Surely no such rainbow-like life as I now witnessed existed in the black and tideless depths, countless fathoms out of reach of the longest and fiercest lance of light the sun could dart. No, she had probably settled down on some hill-top within measurable distance of the surface, on some submarine volcanic eminence, where the vitality of the deep was all about her.

We came to wood-work at last, or what had been wood. It was

fossilized timber, and the blows of a hammer rang upon it as though an anvil was struck.

"Here's where the door is," roared Cutbill.

We saw the line of what was manifestly a door-way, showing in a space clear of shells, and in a moment we all fell upon it, and presently laid it bare—a little door about five feet high close against the starboard heap of shells which buried the poop-ladder there.

"Don't smash it if 'ee can help it," called out Finn.

But it would not yield to any sort of coaxing short of Cutbill's thunderous hammer, which he swung with such Herculean muscle that after half a dozen blows the door went to pieces and tumbled down with a clatter, as of the fragments of iron. It was pitch-dark inside, of course, but for that we were prepared. Dowling and Head were for thrusting in at once.

"Back!" bawled Finn. "What sort of air for breathing d'ye think this is after being bottled up afore your great grandmothers was born."

Yet, for my part, though I stood close, I tasted nothing foul. The first breath of the black atmosphere came out with a wintry edge of ice, and the chill of it went sifting into the sultry daylight of the open air, till I saw Laura, who stood some little distance away watching us, recoil from the contact of it.

"There's nothing to be done in there without a light of some kind," said I. "How was this cabin illuminated? From the deck, I presume, as well as by port-holes."

"Let me go and see, sir," said Finn.

The gang of us, armed with tools, crawled up the line of shells against the door, and gained the poop-deck. There was a coffin-shaped heap of glittering incrustation close to where the mizzen-mast had probably stood; the form of it indicated a buried sky-light. We fell upon it, and after we had chipped and hammered for some quarter of an hour the mass of it broke away, and went thundering into the cabin below. The sweep of cold air that rose drove us back.

"Casements of this skylight were blown out, I reckon, when she settled," said Finn; "'stonishing how them shells should have filled up the cavity without anything to settle on."

"Weeds and plants stretched themselves across, maybe," said I, "and made a platform for them."

We returned to the quarter-deck, but waited a while before entering the cabin, that the atmosphere might have time to sweeten.

Thickly as the upper works of the vessel were coated, I suspected that they would be sieve-like in some places, from the circumstance of our finding no water in the cabin. I put my head into the door, fetched a breath, and finding nothing noxious in the atmosphere, exclaimed, "We may enter now with safety, I believe." The interior lay very clearly revealed. A sunbeam shone through the deck aperture, and the cold, drowned, amazing interior lay bathed in a delicate silver haze of the morning light. I felt a deeper awe as I stood looking about me than any vault in which the dead had been lying for centuries could have inspired. The hue of the walls was that of ashes. It was the ancient living-room of the ship, and went the whole width of her, and in length ran from the front of the deck through which we had broken our way to the moulding of the castle-like, pink-shaped stern, the planks sloping with a considerable spring or rise. It had been a spacious sea-chamber in its day. There were here and there incrustations in patches of limpet-like shells upon the sides and upper deck; underfoot was a deal of sand with dead weeds, no hint of the vegetation that showed without. There were fragments of wreckage here and there which I took to be the remains of the furniture of the place; it had mostly washed aft, as though the vessel had settled by the stern.

Up in a corner on the port side, that lay somewhat darksome on a line with the door, were a couple of skeletons with their arms round each other's neck. They seemed to stand erect, but in fact they rested with a slight inclination against the scantling of the cabin front. Some slender remains of apparel clung to the ribs and shoulder-bones, and a small scattering of like fragments lay at their feet, as though shaken to the deck with the jarring of the fabric by the volcanic stroke that had uphove her.

"Hearts my life!" murmured Finn. "What a hobject to come across! Why, they've been *men!*"

"A man and a woman, more like," said Cutbill, "a-taking a last farewell as the ship goes down."

"May I come in, Charles?" exclaimed Laura, putting her head into the door.

She advanced as she spoke, but her eye instantly caught the embracing skeletons. She stopped dead and recoiled, and stood staring as if fascinated.

"Not the fittest sight in the world for you, Laura," said I, taking her hand to lead her forth.

"They were living beings once, Charles," she exclaimed, drawing

a deep breath, and slightly resisting my gentle drawing of her to the door.

"Ay, red hearts beat in them, passions thrilled through them, and love would still seem with them. What were they? Husband and wife—father and daughter—or sweethearts going to their grave in an embrace?"

She shuddered, and continued to gaze. Ah, my God! the irony of those skeletons' posture—the grin of each skull, as though in mirthless derision of the endearing, caressing grasp of the long and stirless arms!

"Oh, Charles!" exclaimed Laura, in a whisper of awe and grief, "is love no more than *that?*"

"Yes, love is more than that," I answered, softly, conducting her, now no longer reluctant, to the door; "there is a noble saying, 'Where we are, death is not; where death is, we are not.' Death is yonder, and so love is not. But *that* love lives, horrible as the symbol of it is—it lives, let us believe; and where it is death is not. Would Lady Monson like to view this sight?"

"It is a moral to break her heart," she answered; "she would not come."

She went towards her sister thoughtfully.

"There's nothing here, men," said I, returning.

"Them poor covies 'll frighten the ladies," said Dowling, eying the skeletons, with his head on one side; "better turn 'em out of this."

"Let them rest," said I. "The ladies will not choose this cabin now to lie in."

"If them bones, which are a-hugging one another so fondly to-day, could talk," said Cutbill, "what a yarn they'd spin!"

"Pooh!" said I, "I've had enough of this cabin;" and with that I walked right out.

The men followed. It was broiling hot, the sea a vast white gleam tremorlessly circling the island, and steeping like quicksilver into the leagues of faint sky; the bronzed brows of the clouds in the west still burned, looming bigger. I prayed Heaven there might be wind there. Laura had told her sister of our discovery in the cabin, and when, while we sat making a bit of a mid-day meal, my sweet girl, in a musing, tender way, talked of this shipwreck of a century and a half old as though she would presently speak of that cabin memorial of it so ghastly, and yet so touching, Lady Monson imperiously silenced her.

"Our position is one of horror!" she exclaimed; "do not aggravate it."

The men, defying the heat, went to work when they had done eating, to search for the main-hatch, that they might explore the hold. I observed that Finn labored with vigor. In short, the four of them had convinced themselves that there was grand purchase to come at inside this ancient galleon, and they thirsted for a view of the contents of her. I was without their power of sustained labor, was enfeebled by the tingling and roasting of the atmosphere; my sight was pained, too, by the fierce glare on the unsheltered decks; so I plainly told them that I could help them no more for the present, and with that threw myself down on the sail beside the chest on which Laura was seated, and talked with her, and sometimes with Lady Monson, though the latter's manner continued as uninviting as can well be imagined.

However, some hope was excited in me by the spectacle of the slowly growing brass-bright brows of cloud in the west. There was a look of thunder in the rounds of their massive folds, and in any case they promised some sort of change of weather, while they soothed the eye by the break they made in the dizzy, winding horizon, and the bald and dazzling stare of the wide heavens brimming with light which seemed rather to rise from the white metallic mirror of the breathless sea than to gush from the sun that hung almost directly over our heads.

It took the men three hours to find and clear the hatch and then uproot it. The square of it then lay dark in the deck, and Laura and I went to peer down into it along with the others, who leaned over it with pale or purple faces. The daylight shone full down, and disclosed what at the first glance seemed no more to me than masses of rugged, capriciously heaped piles of shells, with the black gleam of water between, and much delicate festooning of sea-weed drooping from the upper deck and from the side, suggesting a sort of gorgeous arras, with the intermingling of red and green and gray. One could not see far fore or aft, owing to the intervention of the edges of the hatch, but what little of the interior was visible discovered a vegetable growth as astonishing as that which glorified the decks; huge fans, plants exactly resembling the human hand, as though some Titan had fallen prone with lifted arms, bunches of crimson fibre, with other plants indescribable in shape and color, of a prodigious variety, though the growths were mainly from the ceiling, or upon the bends where the sides of the galleon rounded to her keel.

"All them heaps'll signify cargo," said Dowling.

"No doubt," said I; "but how is it to be got at?"

"Mr. Monson, sir," exclaimed Finn, "you're a scholar, and will know more about the likes of such craft as this than us plain sailormen. What does your honor think? Was this vessel a plate ship?"

"I wish I could tell you all you want to know," I replied. "She was unquestionably a galleon in her day, and a great vessel as tonnage then went—seven hundred tons; what d'ye think, Finn?"

"Every ounce of it, sir. Look at her beam."

"Well, here is a ship that was bound to or from some South American port. She's too far afield for considerations of the Spanish main and the towns of the Panama coast. Was treasure carried to or from the cities of the eastern American seaboard? I cannot say. But if she was from round the Horn—which I don't think likely, for the Manilla galleons clung to the Pacific, and transshipments came to old Spain by way of the Cape—then I should say there may be treasure aboard of her."

"Well, I'm going to overhaul her, if I'm here for a twelvemonth!" cried Dowling.

"So says I!" exclaimed Head.

"Would she float, I wonder," said Cutbill, "when the water's gone out of her?"

"I'll offer no opinion on that," said I, laughing. "I hope I may not be on board should it come to a trial."

"If she was full up with cargo it must have wasted a vast," remarked Head.

"Where did these here Spaniards keep their bullion?" exclaimed Finn, stroking down his long cheek-bones.

"Why, down aft under the capt'n's cabin. They was leary old chaps; they wouldn't stow it forrads or amidships," exclaimed Cutbill.

"All the water will have run out of her by to-morrow morning, I allow," said Finn; "but there's no sarching of her with it up over a man's head."

"I wish this deck were sheltered," said Laura. "What a glorious scene! I could look at it for hours. But the sun pains me."

I took her hand, and we returned together to the shadow of the sail spread over the forecastle, leaving the four men talking and arguing and staring down, dodging with their heads to send greedy looks into the gloom past the hatch. But there was nothing to be done till the ship was clear of water, as Finn had said, and presently

they came forward and lighted their pipes, seating themselves at a respectful distance from us; but all their talk ran upon the treasure they were likely to meet with, and though I would sometimes catch a half-look from Finn, as though my presence somewhat subdued him, yet I saw that at heart he was as hot and as full of expectation as the others.

The clouds had risen a third of the way to the zenith when the sun struck his fiery orb into them and disappeared, turning them as black as thunder against the heaven of blood-red light that lingered long in waving folds as though the atmosphere were incandescent. Then the lightning showed in zigzag lines of sparkling violet, though all remained hushed, while the sea went spreading in a sheet of glass that melted out of its crimson dye into a whitish blue in the clear east.

"Should it come on to blow," said I to Laura, "this sail over our heads will yield us no shelter. We shall have to betake ourselves to the cabin."

"With two skeletons in it," said Lady Monson, sarcastically.

"We shall not see them," I answered, "and skeletons cannot hurt us."

"We shall see them by the lightning," exclaimed Laura, "and they will be very dreadful!"

"I would rather remain in the storm," said Lady Monson.

"But if those figures are carried out of the cabin," said I, "you will not object to take shelter in it?"

"I would rather die," she said, "than enter that part of this horrid ship."

"Well," said I, mildly, "we will first see what is going to happen."

At half-past five, or thereabouts, we got what the sailors would have called our supper. There was indeed plenty to eat, enough to last us some weeks, with husbandry. All the casked meat, it is true, was uncooked, but enough galley utensils had come ashore—a big kettle, I remember, and a couple of saucepans—to enable us to boil our pork and beef when our stock of preserved food should be exhausted. Our supply of water, however, justified uneasiness. One's thirst was incessant under skies of brass, and on an island whose crust was as hot as the shell of a newly boiled egg. But then, to be sure, the surface was honey-combed with wells. In a very short time the salt-water would have dried out of the deepest of them, and we might hope that the next thunder-shower would yield us drink enough to last out this intolerable imprisonment.

But when was it to end? I stood up to take a view of the sea; the galleon's forecastle probably showed a height of between thirty and forty feet above the water-line, and one seemed to command a wide prospect of ocean; but not a gleam of the size of a tip of feather met the eye the whole wide, stagnant sweep around. The sun was now low in the heart of the dark masses of vapor in the west, a sickly purple shadow underhung the clouds upon the sea, and glanced back with an eye of fire to every lightning dart that flashed from above. Overhead the sky had fainted into a sickly hectic, and it was an ugly, sallow sort of green down in the east, with a large star there trembling mistily.

"It's coming on a black, thundering night," I heard Cutbill say, as he stood up to send a look into the west, with the inverted bowl of a sooty pipe showing past his whisker, and a large sweat-drop glancing like a jewel at the end of his nose.

"There'll be wind there!" exclaimed Finn.

"What signs do you find to read?" said I.

"Well, your honor, there's a haze of rain, if ye look at the foot of that smother down there," he answered, pointing with the sharp of his hand; "and the verse concerning manifestations of that sort is gospel truth:

"'When the rain's before the wind,
Then your top-s'l halyards mind.'"

"If it's coming on a breeze of wind," said Dowling, who, like the others, felt himself privileged by stress of shipwreck to join freely in any conversation that was going forward, "this here sail 'll blow away and we shall lose it"—meaning the jib that we had stretched as an awning.

"Pity to lose it," exclaimed Finn; "shall we take it in, sir, while there's light?"

"No!" cried Lady Monson, who probably imagined that if this shelter went she would be driven to the cabin.

Finn knuckled his forehead to her.

"I'm afraid, Lady Monson," said I, "that this sail will be carried away by the first puff, and it will be carried into the sea."

"If you remove it you leave us without shelter," she answered.

"But we shall be without shelter if the wind removes it," said I.

"Then it cannot be helped," she exclaimed, looking at me as though she found me irritating.

"We shall have to carry this sail aft anyway," said I, pointing to

the one that was spread upon the forecastle. "The first gust of wet will soak it through, and we shall not be able to use it until it is dry for fear of rheumatic fever."

"To what part do you wish it carried?" said Laura.

"To the only sheltered spot the ship supplies, the cabin," I answered.

"You do not intend that we should sleep there, Charles?" she cried.

"We needn't sleep, my dearest, we can keep wide-awake. But will it not be madness to expose one's self to a violent storm merely because—"

"Oh, horror!" interrupted Lady Monson; "I shall remain here though the clouds rain burning sulphur."

"Finn," said I, "when you have smoked your pipe out, fall to with the others, will you, to get this sail into the cabin, and turn the two silent figures there out of it?"

"Where are they to go, sir?"

"Oh, lower them into the hold for to-night. Lady Monson, is your mattress to be left here?"

"Certainly," she answered, indignantly; "how am I to rest without a mattress?"

"Only one mattress, then, is to be carried aft, Finn," said I. "Now bear a hand, like good sailor-men, while there's daylight. We shall have that blackness yonder bursting down upon us in a squall, then it will be thick as pitch, with decks like a surface of trawlers' nets to wade through, and yonder main-hatch at hand grinning like a man-trap."

"Come, lads," cried Finn.

The four of them sprang to their feet, rolled up the sail and hauled it aft, singing out a shipboard chorus as they dragged. When they had got it into the cabin, they cut off a big stretch of it which they spread over the open skylight, and secured by weighting the corners heavily with the masses of shell which had been chipped away to come at the aperture. Then Head arrived for Laura's mattress, flung it over his back, and staggered with it, grinning, along to the quarter-deck. Lady Monson looked on, cold, white, but with anger brilliant in her great black eyes.

"I believed that these men were still my servants to command," she exclaimed.

"I am sure they will obey any order your ladyship may give them," said I.

"They have no right to denude this part of the deck, since it is my intention to remain here," she exclaimed, drawing her fine figure haughtily erect, and surveying me with dislike and temper.

"Henrietta, dear," broke in the soft voice of Laura, "Mr. Monson instructs them in the interests of us all. See how bright the lightning is. You will not be able to remain here. How frightful was the rain when the *Bride* was wrecked!"

"The strongest man had to turn his back to the wind," said I.

Lady Monson, whose eyes had glanced aft at that moment, jumped from the chest on which she was seated, and went in a headlong way to the bulwark as though she meant to leap overboad. I could not understand this sudden wild disorder in her till I saw Cutbill, Dowling, and Head, with Finn superintending the business, bearing the pair of embracing skeletons to the main-hatch. Laura started and looked away; but there was no absurd demonstration of horror in her. A ghastly sight, indeed, the skeleton twain made, dreadfuller objects to behold in the wild, flushed, stormy light of the moment than they had appeared in their twilighted corner of the cabin. The long bones of arms clung like magnets to the skeleton necks, fossilized, I suppose, by the action of the sea into that posture; and thus grimly embracing, while they looked with death's dreadful grin over each other's shoulder, they were lowered by the sailors down the main-hatch.

"Mr. Monson, sir," suddenly bawled Finn, "will you and the ladies step this way and see the beautifullest sight mortal eyes ever beheld?"

"Where is it, Finn?" I called back to him.

"In the hold, sir," he answered.

"He cannot mean the skeletons!" exclaimed Laura.

"Will you come, Lady Monson?" I asked.

"Certainly not," she replied from the bulwark, where she stood staring seaward and answering without turning her head.

Laura seemed a little reluctant. "Come, my love," I whispered; "is not a beautiful sight, even according to Finn's theory of beauty, worth seeing?"

I took her hand, and together we proceeded to the open hatch.

On peeping down, my first instinctive movement was one of recoil. I protest I believed the interior of the hull to be on fire. The whole scene was lighted up by crawling fluctuations, creepings, and blinkings of vivid phosphoric flame. It might be that the atmosphere of this storm-laden evening was heavily charged with electric-

ity; yet since the gloom had drawn down I had often cast my eyes upon the sea in the direction where the shadow of the tempest lay, and where the water brimmed darkly to the slope of the beach, and therefore had the ocean been phosphorescent even to a small extent I should have observed it; yet no further signs of fire were apparent than a thin dim edging of wire-drawn, greenish light, flickering on the lip of the brine as it stealthily, almost imperceptibly, crept up and down the declivity of the rock. But in this hold the sparkling was so brilliant that every object the eye rested upon showed even to the most delicate details of its conformation, though the hue was uniform (a pale green), so that there was no splendor of tint, nothing but the wonder of a phosphoric revelation, grand, striking, miraculous to my sight, so unimaginable a spectacle was it. It was like, indeed, a glimpse of another world, of a creation absolutely different from all scenes this earth had to submit, as though, in truth, one were taking a peep into some lunar cave rich with stalactites, wondrous with growths which owed nothing to the sun, all robed with the color of death—the pale pearl of the moonbeam!

Laura, whose hand grasped my arm, held her breath.

"Did ever man see the like of such a thing afore?" exclaimed Finn, in an awed voice, as though amazement were of slow growth in him.

Immediately on a line with the hatch, resting on a heap of shells whose summit rose to within an easy jump, lay the two skeletons in that embrace of theirs which was so full of horror, of pathos, of suggestion, of anguish. Ah, Heaven, what a light to view them in! And yet they communicated an inexpressibly impressive element of unreality to the picture. It was as though the hand of some sorcerer had lifted a corner of the black curtain of the future and enabled you to catch a glimpse of the secret principality of the King of Terrors.

"One sees so little of this marvel here," exclaimed Laura. "How magnificent must be the scene viewed from the depths there!"

"Have you courage to descend?" said I.

She was silent a moment, eying askant, with averted face, the two skeletons immediately beneath; then, fetching an eager breath of resolution, she said, "Yes, I have courage to go—with you."

"Finn," I exclaimed, "this is too grand and incomparable a spectacle to witness only in part. If we are to come off with our lives in this galleon, there," said I, pointing into the hold, "is the chance of a memory that I should bitterly reproach myself for not

grasping and making the most of. Can you lower Miss Laura and myself into that hold onto that dry, smooth heap there, clear of where those figures lie?"

"Why, yes, your honor, easy as lighting a pipe. William, fetch the chair, will 'ee, and overhaul the whip, and bring 'em along."

The chair was procured, a turn taken round the stump of the main-mast. I seated myself and was lowered, then down sank Laura and I lifted her out, and a moment after the four seamen sprang from the edge of the hatch. Now indeed we could behold the glowing interior as it deserved to be seen. The galleon was apparently bulkheaded from her forecastle-deck down to the keelson, and the fore-hold, accessible doubtless by a hatch in the lower forecastle-deck, was hidden from us. But aft, the vault-like interior stretched in view to plumb with the poop-deck, past which nothing of the after-hold was to be seen; but the vessel's great beam, and such length of her as we commanded, submitted a large area of illuminated wonders, and as you stood gazing around, it made you feel as if you were under the sea, as if you had penetrated to the silent lighted hall of a dumb ocean-god that was eying you, for all you knew, from some ambush of glittering green growth whither he had fled on your approach.

The irradiation was phosphoric, I was sure, by the hue and character of it, but how kindled I could not imagine: the water had sunk low; in the death-like stillness you could hear through the hatch-way the sounds of it gushing on to the rocks from the perforations. It lay black, with gleams of green fire upon it, deep down amid the billowy sheathing of shell, under which, we might be sure, was secreted such of the cargo as had not been washed out of the vessel. Pendent from the upper deck was a very forest of multitudinous vegetation; the sides, far as the eye could pierce, were thickly covered; the writhings of the grave-like glow quickened the snake-shaped plants, the bulbous forms, the distended fingers as of gigantic hands, green outlines which the imagination easily wrought into the aspect of the heads of men and beasts, and such wild sights as one traces in clouds; these writhings vitalized all such sights into an aspect of growing and increasing life; they seemed to stir uneasily, to mop and mow, elongate and shrink.

"It's almost worth being cast away," cried Cutbill, "to see such a picter as this. Lord, now for a steamer to tow her into port! My precious eyes! what a fortune as a mere sight-seeing job!"

"If there's treasure aboard there's where it'll lie stowed," cried

Dowling, pointing aft; his figure, with his long out-stretched arm, looking like a drawing in phosphorus. Indeed, in that astonishing light we all had a most unhuman, unearthly appearance. Laura's hair and skin were blended indistinguishably into a faint greenish outline, in the midst of which her violet eyes glowed black as her sister's by lamplight. Suddenly I felt her hand tremble upon my arm.

"I feel a little faint," she said, softly; "the atmosphere here is oppressive—and then those—" She averted her eyes in a shuddering way from the skeletons.

As she spoke the hatch was flashed into a dazzling blaze of sunbright light.

"Quick, lads," I cried, "or the storm will be on us! Hark, how near the thunder rattles!"

The detonation boomed through the hollow hold as though a broadside had been fired within half a mile of us by a line-of-battle ship.

"There's her ladyship a-singing out," exclaimed Finn; and sure enough we heard Lady Monson violently calling for her sister.

"Heaven preserve us! I hope she hain't been hurt by that flash," shouted Cutbill.

"Up with us now, lads, before it is upon us!" I cried.

Dowling, seizing the two ends of the whip, went up hand after hand, and in a few moments we were all on deck.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE SECOND NIGHT.

THE dim hectic that was lingering in the atmosphere when we entered the hold was now gone; the evening had fallen on a sudden as dark as midnight; it was all as black as factory-smoke away west and overhead, but a star still shone weak as a glowworm in the east. A second flash of lightning, but this time afar, glanced out the figure of Lady Monson standing on the forecastle and calling to Laura.

"She is not hurt!" I exclaimed.

"I am coming, Henrietta," said Laura.

"I shall die if I am left alone here!" cried Lady Monson. "I believed that that flash just now had struck me blind."

"Keep hold of my arm, Laura," said I, "and walk as if the deck were filled with snakes."

We cautiously stepped over the wild growths of the planks, rendered as dangerous as the holes outside of the rocks by the dusk, and approached Lady Monson.

"May I conduct you to the cabin?" said I.

"I would rather remain here," she answered; but there was no longer the old note of imperious determination in her voice. In fact, it was easy to see that she did not care to be alone when the lightning was fierce, and when a heavy storm of wet and wind was threatened.

"Shall we take in this here sail, sir?" cried Finn from the other side of the deck, "before it's blown away?"

"No; keep all fast, Finn," said I; "her ladyship desires to remain here."

"Are you going to stop with me, Laura?" said Lady Monson.

"Suffer me to answer for Miss Jennings," I exclaimed. "I make myself answerable for her health and comfort. I could not endure that she should be exposed when there is a safe and dry shelter within a biscuit-toss of us."

Just then there was a blinding leap of lightning; the electric spark seemed to flash sheer from the western confines to the eastern star,

scoring the black firmament with a line of fire that was like the splitting of it. A mighty blast of thunder followed.

"Hark!" I cried, as the echoes of it went roaring and rolling into the distance. My ear had caught a rushing and hissing noise, and looking in the direction of the sea, over which the thick of the tempest was hanging, I saw what seemed a line of light approaching us.

"Rain!" I shouted, "flashing the phosphorescent water up into flame."

"No, sir, no!" roared Cutbill; "it's wind, sir, wind! 'Tis the boiling of the water that looks like fire."

He was right. An instant's listening enabled me to catch the yell of the squall, sounding in the distance like a moaning sort of whistling through the seething of the ploughed and lacerated waters.

"Laura, give me your hand," I cried. "Lady Monson, if you are coming—"

"I will accompany you," she answered; and very nimbly, and much to my astonishment, she slipped her hand under my arm and clung to me. So! There was yet a little of the true woman remaining in her, and it would necessarily discover itself soonest in moments of terror.

The illuminated square of hatch-way not only enabled us to avoid the ugly gap, down which it was mighty easy to plump by mistake in the confusion of the blackness, and in the bewilderment following upon the blinding playing of the lightning; it threw out a faint haze of light that went sifting into a considerable area over the main-deck, so that we were able to make haste without risk; and after a few minutes of floundering, with an interval of groping, when we came to the incline of shells which conducted to the quarter-deck, I succeeded in lodging the two ladies fairly in the shelter of the cabin, and not a moment too soon. We were scarce entered when a squall of terrific violence burst upon the little island. It took the galleon with a glare of lightning of noontide brilliance, a roar of thunder, and such a hurricane howling of wind that no tornado ever shrieked under the heavens more deafeningly. One by one the men arrived. The lightning was so continuous that I could see their figures stealing along the deck, and they made for the cabin door by it as directly as though guided by a stretched hand-line.

"Did you get in the sail?" I cried to Finn.

"Lord love 'ee, sir," he roared, "it fled to the first blast like a puff of 'baccy-smoke."

"Hark to the sea a-getting up!" said Dowling. "Here's a breeze

to start this old wagin. Stand by for a slide, says I. I wish them holes was plugged."

"Belay, you old owl," grumbled Cutbill, hoarsely; "ain't there blue lights enough here without you hanging of more out? There'll be no sliding with this here hulk onless it's to the bottom when it's time for her to go."

Nevertheless, the sea had risen as if by magic. The swift heaping up of it was the stranger because there had been no preceding swell. The first of the squall had swept over a sheet of water polished as any mirror, without a heave, as might have been seen by a glance at the island beach, where the edge of the ocean was scarce breathing. *Now* the shrilling and screaming of the wind was filled with the noise of ploughed and coiling surges dissolving in masses upon the rocks, from which they recoiled with a horrible hissing and ringing sound. The continual electric play filled the cabin with light, as it glittered upon the sail over the skylight above, or colored the black square of the door with violet and green and golden brilliance. It was true tropic lightning, a heaven of racing flames, and the thunder a continuous roll, one burst following another till the explosions seemed blended into a uniform roar.

Lady Monson had seated herself on Laura's mattress. My dear girl and I reposed upon a roll of the sail; the men had flung themselves down, one leaning his head upon his elbow, another Lascar fashion, a third sitting upright, with his arms folded. There were no wonders in this cabin as in the hold, no marvellous and beautiful conformations, self-luminous, as one might say, and making a greenish moonlight radiance of their own. Yet the interior seemed the wilder to the imagination for its very nakedness, for the austere desolation of it as it glanced out to the levinbrand to its castle-shaped confines. It forced fancy to do its own work, to revitalize it with the ghostly shapes of beings that in life had filled it, to regarnish it with the feudal furniture of its age. I was heartily thankful that the two skeletons had been turned out. By every flash I could see Lady Monson's black eyes roaming wildly, and though I might have counted upon Laura's spirit while I was by her side and held her hand, I could have reckoned with equal assurance upon some wretched, distracting display in her sister, had the two embracing skeletons remained in yonder corner to serve as a moral for the motive of this voyage, to be witnessed by the illumination of the lightning, and to add a horror of their own to the sound of the thunder, to the fierce crying of the wind, and to the boiling of the beating seas.

"I say, Finn," I shouted to him, "here's the wind before the rain, my friend—you were mistaken."

"My sight ain't what it was, sir," he answered.

"It's a commotion to blow something along in sight of us," said Cutbill.

"Wonder if that there hold's lighted up every night like that?" said Head; "enough to make a man think that there must be sperrits aboard, who trims their inwisible lamps when it comes on dark."

"Sorry I ain't got my green spectacles with me," said Cutbill; "if you was to put them on, mate, you'd see them sperrits dancing."

"Proper sort of ball-room, though, ain't it, miss?" exclaimed Finn, addressing Laura.

"How touching," said Dowling, whom I could see by the lightning pulling out his whiskers, as if trimming himself, "for them skellingtons to go on a-loving of one another for all these years! Supposing they was husband and wife!—then if they was living they'd ha' given up clinging to each other a long time ago."

Cutbill hove a curse at him under his breath, but the man did not seem to hear.

"It's curious," continued this sea philosopher, in a salt, thick voice, that seemed not a little appropriate to the strong fish-like, marine, *drowned* smell of this interior, "they should go on a-showing of affection which they'd sicken at if they was coated with flesh."

"Pray hold your tongue!" said Lady Monson. "Captain Finn, please request that sailor to be silent."

"Told 'ee so," I heard Cutbill growl; "always a-sticking of that hoof of yourn into the wrong b'iling."

Scarce had this been muttered when, all on a sudden, the squall ceased; there fell a black, dead calm. No more lightning played, not a murmur of thunder sounded; there was nothing to be heard but the roar of the near surf upon the beach and the creaming of seas off the huge area of the angry waters. In its way this sudden cessation, this abrupt, this instant hush on high, was more terrifying than the wildest outbreak of tempest. The lightning had been so continuous that in a manner we had grown used to it, and we had been able to see one another's faces by it while we conversed, as though by some lamp that waned and then waxed brilliant to its revolutions. Now we sat plunged in impenetrable blackness, while we sat hearkening, to use an Irishism, to the incredible silence of the atmosphere. Not the faintest loom of the galleon could be dis-

tinguished through the open door, yet the sheen of the mystic illumination in her hold hovered like a faint green mist over the hatch, and dimly touched a little space of the marine growths round about.

"What's agoing to happen now?" cried Finn; but I did not know that he had left the cabin until I heard him calling from the outside, "My eye! your honor, here it comes; a *shower* this time."

I groped my way out, feeling down, with my out-stretched hands, one of the men who was groping to the door also. The stagnant air was as thick as the fumes of brimstone, and oppressively hot. It made one gasp after coming out of the cabin, where it was kept almost cool, somehow, by the strong weedy and salt-water smell that haunted it. I looked over the rail and saw the sea, at the distance of about half a mile away from us, flaming as though it were an ocean of brandy on fire, only that the head of the luminous appearance had as straight a line to the eye as the horizon. But I could now observe how phosphorescent was the sea that, while tranquil, had hung a lustreless shadow by marking the vivid flashes of light in the white smother of the froth down in the gloom of the beach, and the sharp, darting gleams beyond.

I groped back to the cabin, followed by the others, found Laura by the shadow her figure made upon the dim glimmer of the sail, and seated myself beside her. Then plump fell the rain. It was just a sheet of descending water, and, spite of the fossilized decks being thickened by marine verdure, the hull echoed to the downpour with a noise as distracting and deafening as a goods train passing at full speed close alongside. But the wonder of that rain lay not so much in its weight as in its being electric. It came down black, but it sparkled on striking the decks as though every drop exploded in a blaze. I never witnessed such a sight before, and confess that I was never so frightened by anything in all my life.

"Why, it's raining lightning!" called Head.

"The vessel will be set on fire!" cried Lady Monson.

"Nothin' to be afraid of, my lady!" shouted Cutbill; "these fiery falls are common down here. I've been rolling up the maintopgarnsail in rain of this sort in the Bay of Bengal when ye'd ha' thought that the ship had been put together out of lighted brimstone; every rope a streak of flame, and the ocean below as if old Davy Jones was entertaining his friends with a game of snapdragon."

It was no doubt as Cutbill had said; but then there was not only the sight of the fire flashing out along the length of the vessel, as

far as the door-way permitted the eye to follow the deck, to the roaring, ebony, perpendicular discharge of the clouds; there was the tremendous thought of our being perched on the head of a newly formed volcanic rock, that had leaped into existence on such another night as this. Suppose it sank under us! Here were all necessary conditions of atmosphere, at least, to justify dread of such a thing. Would the ship float? Was she buoyant enough to tear her keel from the rock and outlive the whirlpool or gulf which might follow the descent of a mountain of lava of whose dimensions it was impossible to form a conception? But she had six holes in her; and then, again, there was still plenty of water in the hold, whose volume must already have been further increased—rapidly and greatly increased—by the cataract that fell in a straight line to the broad yawn of the uprooted hatch.

My consternation was, indeed, so great that I could not speak. I felt Laura press my hand, as though the dew in the palm of it and the tremor of my fingers were hints sufficient to her of the sudden desperate fit of nervousness that possessed me; but I could not find my tongue. Figure being out in a horrible thunder-storm, miles from all shelter, and seized by an overmastering apprehension that the next or the next flash will strike you dead! My torment of mind was of this sort. I philosophized to myself in vain. There was nothing in the consideration that others shared my danger—most often a source of wonderful comfort to a person in peril; that I could die but once; that there were harder deaths than drowning, and the like, to restore me my self-possession. I was unnerved and in a panic of terror, fired afresh by the fearful fancy that had entered my brain on the preceding night, of this head of rock gaping and letting us down to God knows what depth! All the time I was feeling, with a hideous, nervous intensity with feet, fibres, and instincts, for any faint premonitory jar or thrill in the hull to announce that this island was getting under way for the bottom again.

I believe that the electric rain had a deal to do with the insufferable distress of my mind at that time, for when it ceased—with the same startling suddenness that had marked the drop of the wind—I rallied as though to a huge bumper of brandy. My hands were wringing wet, yet cold as though lifted from a bucket of water; the perspiration poured down my face, but my nerves had returned to me.

"What, now, is to be the next act of this wild play?" said I.

"A breeze of wind, your honor!" cried Finn, out of the black

gap of the door; and sure enough, I felt the grateful blowing of air cooled by the wet.

The weight of rain had wonderfully deadened the sea, and the surf, that a little while ago broke with passion and fury, now beat the rocks with a subdued and sulky roaring sound. It had clarified to the westward somewhat, the dusk was of a thinner and finer sort there, with a look of wind in the texture of the darkness; but it continued a black night, with no other relief to the eye than the pale preternatural haze of light in the square of the main-hatch, and the occasional vivid flash of phosphor out at sea. But the wind swept up rapidly, and within a quarter of an hour of the first of its breezing it was blowing hard upon a whole gale; the old galleon hummed to it as though she had all her rigging aloft. In an incredibly short time the sea was making clean breaches over the island, rendering the blackness hoary with a look of snow-squalls as it slung its sheets of thrilling and throbbing and hissing spume high into the dark sweep of the gale. One saw the difference between this sort of weather and the night on which the *Bride* had struck. Then the heaviest of the surf left a clear space of rock; but there were times now when the smother came boiling to the very bends of the galleon, striking her till you felt her tremble with huge quivering upheavals of froth over and into her; and it was like being at sea to look over the side and witness the white madness of water raging and beating on either hand. Every now and again a prodigious height of steam-like spray would go yelling up with the sound of a giantess's scream into the flying darkness from some pipe-like conduit in the porous rock. These columns of water were so luminous with fire, so white with the crystalline smoke into which they were converted by the incalculable weight of the sea sweeping into the apertures, that, dark as it was, one saw them instantly and clearly. They soared with hurricane speed in a straight line, then were arched by the gale like a palm; and if ever the wind brought the falling torrent to our decks, the stonified ship shook to the mighty discharge as though the point of land on which she lay were being rent by the force of flame and thunder which created it.

We sat in the cabin in total darkness. It made our condition unspeakably dreadful to be without light. We had tinder-boxes, but there was nothing to set fire to, nothing that would steadily flame and enable us to see; nor was there any prospect now of our being able to make a flare should we catch a glimpse of a ship, for what before would have made a fine bonfire was soaked through. It was

up to a man's knees on the main-deck, and the cabin would have been flooded but for the sharp spring or rise of the planks from the poop front to the stern. Such darkness as we sat in was like being blind. There was nothing to be seen through the door but pale clouds of spray flying through the air. Just the faintest outline of our figures upon the white ground of the sail was visible, but so dim, so indeterminable, as to seem but a mere cheat of the fancy. A lamp or candle would have rendered our condition less intolerable. The men could then have made shift to bring some sherry and provisions from the forecastle; the mere toying with food would have served to kill the time. We could have looked upon one another as we conversed, but the blackness of that interior was so profound that it weighed down upon us like the very spirit of dumbness itself. I have often since wondered whether men who are trapped in the bottom of a mine and lie waiting in the blackness there for deliverance—I have often wondered, I say, how long such poor fellows continue to talk to one another. The intervals of silence, I am sure, must rapidly grow greater and greater. There is something in intense darkness in a time of peril that seems to eat all the heart and courage out of a man. The voice appears to fall dead in the opacity as a stone vanishes when hurled at snow.

Cutbill and Finn did their best to keep up our hearts. They spoke of the certainty of this wind bringing a ship along with it. What should we have done without this galleon? they asked; but for the shelter it provided us with we should have been swept like smoke by the seas off the rocks. There was no fear, they said, of the old hooker not holding together. She was bound into one piece by the brine that had made a stone of her, and by the coating of shells, and if all ships afloat were as stanch as she was there would be an end of underwriting, and drowned sailors would be few.

I helped in such talk and did my best, but our spirits could not continue to make headway against the blackness that was rendered yet more subduing by the uproar without, and by our being unable to imagine from moment to moment what was next to happen.

By-and-by the men stretched themselves upon the sail and slept. I passed my arm round Laura's waist and brought her head to my shoulder, and after a little her regular breathing let me know that she was asleep. Lady Monson was close to us, but she might have been on the forecastle for all that I could distinguish of her. Whether she sat or reclined, whether she slumbered or was wide-awake throughout, I could not imagine. She never once spoke. At times

my head would nod, but as regularly would I start into wakefulness afresh to the heavy fall of a sheet of water splashing into the main-deck, or to some sudden shock of the blow of a sea either against the galleon's side or upon the near rock. Nobody had suggested keeping a lookout. Indeed, had ships been passing us every five minutes we could have done nothing.

It was probably about two o'clock in the morning when the gale abated. The wind fell swiftly, as it mostly does in those parallels; a star shone in the black square of the door; the pouring and boiling of waters about us ceased, and the sounds of the sea sank away into the distance of the beach. I should have stepped on deck to take a look round but for Laura, who slumbered stirlessly and most reposefully upon my shoulder, supported by my arm, and I had not the heart to disturb the sweet girl by quitting her. Added to this, I could guess by looking through the door-way that it was still too black to see anything spite of the glance of starlight, and even though I should discern some pallid vision of a running ship, there was nothing dry enough to signal her with. So, being dog-tired, I let drop my chin, and was presently in as deep a sleep as the soundest slumberer of them all.

Deep and death-like indeed must have been my repose, for somehow I was sensible of being stormily shaken even while my wits were still locked up in sleep.

"Why, Mr. Monson, sir," roared Finn in my ear, "ye ain't so sleepy, I hope, as not to care to git away. Holloa, I say, holloa!"

"Father of mercy, what is it now?" I cried, terrified in my dazed condition by his bull-like voice.

"Why, sir," he answered, "there's a bark just off the island. She's seen our signals, and's slipping close in, with hands at the maintops'l brace."

"Ha!" said I, and I sprang to my feet.

Finn rushed out again. I had been the last of the sleepers, apparently, and was the only occupant of the cabin. The sun was risen, but, as I might suppose by his light, he had scarce floated yet to three or four times the height of his diameter. The door-way framed a silvery blue heaven, and the wondrous vegetation of the deck sparkled in fifty gorgeous dyes, streaming wet after the night, and every blob of moisture was jewel-colored by the particular splendor it rested upon. I darted on to the quarter-deck, looked wildly towards the forecastle, then perceived that my companions had gathered upon the poop. Laura came running to me, heedless of the perilous

deck, panting and speechless, her eyes radiant. There was a long swell washing from the westward, but to the eastward of the island the water ran away smooth like the short wake of a great ship, till the shouldering welter swept to it again: and there where the blue heave was, with the sun's dazzle a little away to the right, was a small bark, slightly leaning from the pleasant morning breeze, and sliding slowly but crisply through it with a delicate lift of foam to the ruddy gleam of her sheathing, and her canvas glistening sunward, bright as the cloths of a pleasure-vessel.

"*That's* what we've been a-waiting for!" shouted Finn.

I came to a dead-halt, looking at the bark, with Laura hanging on my arm. There was a fellow in the main-chains swinging a lead-line, but it was plain that the weight fell to the full scope without result. Then on a sudden round came the maintop-sail yard to us, with a flattening in of the cotton white cloths from the folds of the course to the airy film of the tiny sky-sail.

"Forward, Head! forward, Dowling! as if the devil were in chase of 'ee," bawled Finn, "and get that whip rove and the chair made fast."

The men ran to the work. Cutbill was following them.

"No, William," cried Finn; "stop where 'ee are a minute. The shipwreck 'tother night ain't left me my old woice. Hist! there's a chap hailing us."

"What island's that? and who are you, and what manner of craft is that you're aboard of?" came from the rail of the bark's quarter-deck, in a thin, reed-like, but distinctly audible voice.

Cutbill roared back: "We're the surwiwors of the schooner-yacht *Bride*, cast away three nights ago. Will you take us off, sir?"

"How many are there of you?"

"Seven, including two ladies."

"Five, Mr. Cutbill, tell 'em," shouted Dowling from the forecastle; "me and Head stops here."

"Have you a boat?" came from the bark.

"No, sir," roared Cutbill.

"I'll send one. Make ready to come along."

Lady Monson was the first of us to press forward to the forecastle. The main-deck was ankle-deep, but we splashed through it like a pack of racing children, and gained the fore-end of the galleon without misadventure. I was mad with impatience, and all being ready with the whip and chair, I plumped Laura most unceremoniously into the seat, caught hold of the line over her head, and down we

were lowered. Up then soared the empty chair, and out swung her ladyship, who plunged into my arms, and came very near to throwing me, in her eagerness to leap out before the rocks were within reach of her feet.

"Now," said I, "the men can manage for themselves;" and with that I seized hold of Lady Monson's hand, grasped Laura by the arm, and away we trudged to the beach off which the bark was lying. I was still so newly awakened from a very stupor of slumber that I moved and thought as though in a dream; yet my wits were sufficiently collected to enable me to keep a bright lookout for holes. Again and again I secretly heaped curses upon the hinderance of this porous surface, for it forced us into deviations which seemed to make a league of a distance that would have been but a few minutes' walk on reasonable soil. The energy of our strides forbade speech; we could only breathe, and what little mind this sudden chance of deliverance had left us we had to exclusively devote to the pitfalls.

They had lowered a boat aboard the bark by the time that we arrived at the water's edge, breathless, and the three of us staring with a feverish greediness—a thirsty, frantic desire, I may say—which ocean peril, of all earthly dangers, paints with most perfection upon the eye. She was a good-sized boat of a whaling pattern, sharp at both ends, pulled by three men, who peered continuously over their shoulders as they rowed, and steered by a small man in a blue jacket and a broad-brimmed straw hat. By the time she was close in, the others had joined us. I had heard much heated talk among them as they came down from the galleon, springing over the holes and wells, and Finn at once said to me:

"What d'ee think, your honor? here's Head and Dowling gone mad! They say there's bullion to be met with in that hulk up there, and they mean to stop with her till they've got it."

"Nonsense!" I exclaimed.

"By the 'Tarnal, then, Mr. Monson," cried Dowling, "there's no leaving with me yet. Here's a chance that ain't going to happen more'n once to a sailor-man."

"Ashore there!" came from the little chap at the tiller of the boat; "what sort of beach have you got for grounding?"

"Pumice-stone, sir," answered Finn.

"Don't like it," said the little fellow, with a shake of his head. "Is it steep too?"

"He ought to be able to see by looking over the side," grum-

bled Finn; then, aloud, "Slope's as gradual as the calf of a man's leg."

"Well, then, you won't mind wading," said the little fellow.

"Cutbill, Finn," I cried, "carry her ladyship, will you? Dowling, or Head, come and lend me a hand to convey Miss Jennings."

The little fool obliged us to wade waist-high by keeping off, so confoundedly anxious was he to keep his keel clear of the ground. However, we easily got the ladies into the boat; then Cutbill, Finn, and I gripped the gunwale and rolled inboard; but Dowling coolly waded shoreward again to where Head was standing.

"Aren't you two men coming?" cried the little fellow, who afterwards proved to be the second mate of the bark—a doll of a man with bright eyes, diminutive features, red beard, and hands and feet of the size of a boy of ten.

"No, sir," answered Dowling; "there's treasure in that there craft, and my mate and me's going to stop to overhaul the cargo."

The three seamen belonging to the boat stared on hearing this, instantly pricking up their ears with sailors' sympathy, and fastening devouring eyes on the galleon.

"They have no reason to believe there is treasure," I cried; "it is a mere idle hope on their part. Exhort them to come, sir. They stand to perish if they are left here."

"Now, then, don't keep us waiting, my lads," exclaimed the second mate.

"We mean to stop here," responded Head, decisively.

"But have you any provisions?"

"Enough washed out of the yacht to sarve our tarn," answered Dowling; "but we should be glad of another cask of fresh-water."

"Well, you'll not get that," answered the second mate; "our own stock's not over-plentiful. Now, once more, are ye coming?"

They shook their heads, and in a careless, reckless manner Head half swung his back upon us.

"Give way!" cried the second mate.

"But it's like helping them to commit suicide, Finn," I exclaimed.

"They ought to be seized and forced into the boat," said Lady Monson, looking with a shudder at the galleon.

"They've got a notion there's money in that there hulk," exclaimed Finn, "and they'll stick to her till they satisfies themselves one way or the other."

"Small fear of them not being taken off when they're ready to go," said the mate, staring hard at Lady Monson and then at Laura.

"That island's a novelty which'll bring every ship that heaves her mast-head within sight of it running down to have a look at. Volcanic, eh? And that shell-covered arrangement up there rose along with it?"

"Ay," said Finn.

"Well," said the little second mate, "why shouldn't she have treasure aboard? She has the look of one of them plate ships you read of."

"I'd take my chance with them two sailors," said the fellow who was pulling the bow oar.

"So would I," said the man next to him.

The stroke gazed yearningly through the hair over his eyes.

The sea of the preceding night had cleared the beach of every vestige of the yacht; all the fragments which had littered the rocks were gone. As we drew out from the island it took in the brilliant sunshine the complexion of marble, and the wondrous old galleon lying on top sparkled delicately with many tints as our point of view was varied by the stroke of the oars. The resolution of the two men vexed and grieved me beyond all expression; but what was to be done? My spirit shrunk to the mere thought of their determination when I reflected upon the damp, dark, ocean-smelling cabin, the luminous hold, the two skeletons, the vegetation and shells, whose novelty, wonder, glory, seemed to carry the structure out of all human sympathy, as though it were the product of a form of existence whose creations were not to be met with under the stars. We drew rapidly to the bark. She was an exceedingly handsome model, painted green, rigged with a masterly eye to accurate adjustment down to the most trivial detail.

"What's her name, sir?" asked Finn.

"The *Star of Peace*," answered the second mate.

"Homeward bound, I hope, sir?" says Cutbill.

"Ay," said the little man, grinning, "and long enough about it too. Sixty-one days from Melbourne as it is."

Finn whistled; Laura looked at the mate on hearing him say that the ship was from Melbourne.

"Oars!" A boat-hook caught the accommodation-ladder, and we gained the deck. The captain of the bark stood in the gangway to receive us; he was a Scotchman, with a slow, kind, thoughtful face, gray hair that showed like wire on end with thickness and stubbornness as he lifted his straw hat to the ladies. His gray, keen, seawardly eye rapidly took stock of us. I briefly related our story.

"I remember the *Bride*, sir," he said. "She was owned by Sir Wilfrid Monson, who married Miss Jennings, of Melbourne."

"This is Lady Monson," I said; "her sister, too, Miss Jennings."

"Indeed!" he exclaimed, with a sort of slow surprise, giving a little animation to his speech. "I have the honor of being acquainted with Mr. Jennings. He came on board this vessel three days before we sailed along with a gentleman, Mr. Hanbury"—Laura slightly nodded—"to whom a portion of the freight belongs. I see the likeness now," he added, looking with admiration at Lady Monson.

She glowed crimson, and turned with a haughty step to the rail to conceal her face.

"I have always heard this world was a small one, captain," said I, "small enough, thank God, to enable your ship to fall in with that rock there. To what port are you bound?"

"London, sir. There are a couple of cabins at your service. There are no females aboard," looking at Laura and running his eye over her dress, with a glance on to Lady Monson; "I judge ye were cast away in little more than what you stood up in."

"By-the-way, Laura," said I, "we ought not to leave your box of odds and ends behind us."

"Oh no; bring off everything," exclaimed the captain. "I'll send the boat ashore."

It was arranged that Finn should fetch the box, and make a final effort to persuade the two men to come off. The captain of the bark laughed when I told him of the fellows' resolution, and seemed to make little of it. "If they've got a notion there's treasure there, sir," he exclaimed, "you'll not move 'em. I know Jack's nature. He'd follow old Nick if he believed he'd take him to where there were dollars. Ships enough 'll be coming in sight of that rock. I don't fear for the men's safety."

"But it is a volcanic creation, captain. It may vanish just as it rose, in a flash."

"Ha!" cried he, sucking in his breath, "my word! but I should never have thought of that. Better try and coax those men off," he exclaimed, walking to the rail and putting his head over and addressing Finn, who had entered the boat.

"I'll do my best, sir," answered Finn, and shoved off.

"Now, ladies and gentlemen," said the captain, returning to us, "will you step below that we may see how you're to be made comfortable?"

After the galleon, the cabin of a smack would have been sheer Paradise. Here was a breezy, plain, substantial, homely interior. The sunshine brilliantly flooded it, the eastern splendor of water rippled in lines of light upon the bulkheads; the hot morning breeze gushed humming through the skylight into it. The captain led us to a couple of berths forward of the state cabin, and the first object I witnessed was my face reflected in a looking-glass. Heavens! what a contrast to the Pall Mall exquisite of a few months before! Unshaven, sun-blackened, unbrushed, unwashed; my linen dark, my clothes expressing every feature of shipwreck in rents, stains, and the like; I needed but a few further grimy embellishments to have passed to admiration as a back alley sailor. The captain's name was Richardson; he seemed fascinated by Lady Monson, called for his servant or steward, bade him procure at once every convenience of hot water, towels, hair-brushes, and the like; continued to congratulate himself upon having been the means of delivering the daughters of Mr. Jennings, of Melbourne, from a situation of distress and peril, and so warmed up to the occasion, but slowly as the kettle boils, that I easily saw there was small fear of Laura and her sister not being made as thoroughly comfortable as the accommodation supplied by the bark would permit.

I was too anxious, however, about the fellows on the island to linger below, and went on deck leaving Captain Richardson talking to the ladies, protesting in hearty Scotch accents his anxiety to serve them to the utmost of his ability, questioning the steward about sheets and blankets, bidding him likewise tell the cook to make haste with the breakfast, asking Lady Monson if she drank tea or coffee, and so on. The boat was off the island and Finn ashore, coming down from the galleon to the beach with Laura's box slung between him and Dowling, while Head trudged close behind. Then there was a long talk; I could see Finn pointing to the hulk and then to the bark, flourishing his arms and emphatically nodding at one or the other as he addressed them. Cutbill stood in the gangway looking on.

"I hope the captain will prevail upon them to leave that place," said I to him.

"He won't, sir," answered Cutbill; "and blowed if I don't feel now, Mr. Monson, as if I'd made a mistake in leaving it myself!"

Here the mate of the bark stepped up to me—an immense man, even bigger than Cutbill, in a long white coat with side pockets, so

vast that one might have thought that he could have stowed the little second mate away in one of them.

"Do those chaps think that there's plunder to be found aboard that effigy?" he asked, in a voice rendered unutterably hoarse and harsh by probably years of roaring out in foul weather, supplemented by rum and the natural gift of a deep note.

"Don't know about plunder, sir," answered Cutbill, "but they reckon there may be chests of plate and bullion stowed away aft."

"Stowed away in their eye!" growled the mate. "Where did she come from?"

"The bottom of the sea, sir."

"An old galleon," said he, cocking his eye at her, "and a volcanic burst up," he continued. "Well, I don't know, if so be she's a galleon, likely as not those chaps are right. Why, they thought nothing, in the days she belonged to, of stowing a matter of six or seven millions of dollars in the lazarets of craft of that kind."

"By the Lord! Mr. Monson," burst out Cutbill, "I must go ashore, sir! I feel I'm a-doing wrong in being here."

"You'll have to swim, then," said the mate, dryly, "for that boat is meant for our davits when she comes alongside, and it will then be time to trim sail."

At that moment I observed Finn shaking the two sailors by the hand. He then entered the boat and made for the bark, while Head and Dowling walked slowly up to the galleon, and sat down in the shade of her under her counter, whence they continued to watch us.

"It's no good, Mr. Monson, sir," said Finn, as he came clambering and panting over the side; "they call it a gold-mine, and there's no persuading of 'em to leave it."

"Up with this boat," roared the mate; "stand by to round in on those top-sail braces."

The boat soared to her davits, the milk-white squares of canvas on the main went floating onward into full bosoms; the bark, bowing the swell, broke the flashing water into trembling lines; slowly, almost imperceptibly, that marble-looking hump of rock, with its glittering centre-piece, stole away upon the quarter, its solitude somehow making the ocean look as wide again as it was. Laura came on deck and stood by my side.

"Oh, Charles!" she exclaimed, "we have left the poor fellows behind, then?"

"They refuse to leave. Observe Cutbill," said I, pointing to the huge figure of the honest tar as he lay over the rail, his face knotted

up with conflicting emotions, while his expression was rendered spasmodic by his manner of gnawing upon a quid that stood in his cheek. "He is lamenting the loss of a princely income, and would have returned to the island could he have got a boat. Mark Finn, too; with what a mixture of thirstiness and misgiving does he stare!"

"The poor creatures are waving to us," said Laura.

Instantly throughout the bark there was a general flourishing of arms and Scotch caps and straw hats. We lingered watching them till the island looked to be no more than a small blue cloud floating low upon the water.

"Poor Wilfrid!" suddenly exclaimed Laura, and her eyes dimmed with tears.

"It has been a hard time for you, dear one!" I exclaimed, "but the end of the black chapter is reached, let us believe. See, here comes the captain's man with a tray of good things. But I must positively shave before I can sit down to breakfast, if there is a razor on board to borrow."

We walked together to the companion-hatch, but even there we lingered a little, with our eyes dwelling upon that distant azure film which seemed now to be fainting out as though it were a wreath of sea-mist that was being fast devoured by the sun.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

CONCLUSION.

Our passage home was extraordinarily long. It took us seventy-five days to arrive at the English Channel from the latitude of the volcanic island. The captain thought himself under a spell, and swore that he believed his bark was to be made a "Flying Dutchman" of. Yet she was a clipper keel, moulded in exquisite conformity with all theories of swiftness in sailing, and when a fresh and favorable wind blew she ate through it as though with the iron bite of a powerful steamer. But had she spread the canvas of a *Royal George* over the hull of a racing yacht she could have done nothing in the face of the dead calms and light baffling breezes which held us motionless or sent us sliding southward for days and days. Scarce had we struck soundings, indeed—that is to say, hardly had we entered the mouth of the English Channel—when a whole gale of wind blew down upon us from the eastward, and drove us a third of the distance across to the shores of the United States.

How bitterly sick I grew of this time I cannot express. I had lost everything that I had brought with me in the wreck of the *Bride*, and was entirely dependent upon the kindness of the captain and the mates for a supply of the few wants I absolutely required. One lent me a shirt, another a pair of socks, a third a razor, and so on, but it was a miserable existence. A few weeks of it I should have found supportable by comparing the life with the horrors we had been delivered from; but as time went on gratitude languished, the sense of contrast lost something of its edge; I abhorred the recollection of the galleon, yet it really seemed as though we had merely exchanged one form of imprisonment for another; as if old Ocean indeed were suffering us to amuse ourselves with a dream of escape (as a cat humors a mouse in that way), to drop with a spring upon us ultimately when he had sickened the patience out of our souls.

I need not say that Lady Monson made the worst of everything. She had to share a cabin with her sister, and to that extent, therefore, was associated with her, but her behavior to Laura, as to me,

was cold, haughty, disdainful. She froze herself from head to foot, gave us a wide berth when on deck, would break away abruptly if one or the other of us endeavored to engage her in conversation, and was as much alone as she could possibly contrive to be. It is hard to say whether she disliked me more than her sister. Yet I could not but feel sorry for her, heartily as I hated her. What was her future to be? What had life in store for one whose memory was charged as hers was? Laura tried hard to find out what her intentions were, what plans she had formed, but to no purpose. But then it was likely that the woman had not made out any programme for herself.

Both she and my darling were desperately put to it for the want of apparel. Each had but the dress she stood in, for Laura's box had contained little more than under-linen. They had arrived on board the bark without covering for their heads; but this was remedied by the second mate's presenting Laura with a new straw hat, and later on we heard through Finn that one of the crew had a new grass hat in his chest which he desired to present to Lady Monson. I see her ladyship now in that sailor's hat, over which she tied a long brown veil that had come ashore upon the island in Laura's box. I witness again the fiery gleam of her black eyes penetrating the thin covering. I behold the captain, with his slow Scotch gaze following her majestic figure as she glides lonely to and fro the deck, seldom daring to address her, and rapidly averting his glance when she chanced to round her face towards him on a sudden. And I see Laura, too, sweet as a poet's fancy I would sometimes think, in the mate's straw hat perched on top of her golden hair, a sailor's half-fathom of ribbon floating from it down her back, her violet eyes lovely once more with their old tender glow, and with the smiles which sparkled in them and with the love which deepened their hue as she let me look into them.

She had soon regained her health and spirits. I never would have believed that two women born of the same parents could be so absolutely dissimilar as these sisters. Laura made no trouble of anything. She ate the plain cabin food as though she heartily enjoyed it; cooled me down when I was slowly growing mad over some loathsome pause of calm, made light of the embarrassing slenderness of her wardrobe. She had always one answer: "This is not the galleon, Charles. We're bound to England. You must be patient, my dear."

I remember once saying to her, "Your dress is very shabby, my

pet. It no longer sits to your figure as it did. It shows like shipwrecked raiment. Salt-water stains are very abundant, and your elbow cannot be long before it peeps out. How, then, is it that I find you more engaging, more lovely, more adorable in this castaway attire than ever I thought you aboard the *Bride*, where probably you had a dozen dresses to wear?"

"Mere prejudice," she answered, laughing and blushing. "You will outgrow many opinions of this kind."

"No! But don't you see what a moral shipwreck enables you to point to your sex, Laura?" said I. "Girls will half ruin their fathers, and wives almost beggar their husbands, for dress. They clothe themselves for men. No doubt you consider yourself wholly dependent for two-thirds of your charms upon dress. All women think thus—the young and the old, the beautiful and the—others. But what is the truth? You become divine in proportion as you grow ragged!"

"When I am your wife you will not wish that I shall be divine only on the merits of rags," said she.

"Well, my dear," said I, "old Ocean has given me one hint concerning you. Should time ever despoil you of a single charm there is the remedy of shipwreck. We will endeavor to get cast away again!"

Thus idly would we talk away the days. No ship ever before held such a pair of spoonies, I dare swear, spite of the traditions of the East India Company. But sweet as our shipboard intercourse was, our arrival in England threatened delays and difficulties. First of all, she declared that she could not dream of marrying without her father's consent. This was, no doubt, as it should be, and surely I could not love her the less for being a good daughter. But the consent of a man who lived in Melbourne, and who had to be addressed from England, signified, in those ambling times, the delay of hard upon a year.

"A year, Laura!" I cried on one occasion, while debating this subject; "think of it! With the chance, perhaps, of your father's reply miscarrying!"

She sighed. "Yes, it is a long time. Oh, if Melbourne were only in Europe! Yet it cannot be helped, Charles."

"But my heart's delight!" I exclaimed, "why should not we get married first and then write for your father's consent?"

No; she must have her papa's sanction.

"All right, birdie," said I; "anyhow, you will remain in England till you hear from him, and so we shall be together."

"It might shorten the time," she said, with a little blush and a timid glance at me under the droop of her eyelids, "if you and I sailed to Melbourne."

"It would, my precious!" I answered; "but suppose on your introducing me your father should object?"

"Oh no, Charles! he will not object," she exclaimed, with a confident shake of the head.

"In fact, then, Laura," said I, "you are sure your papa will sanction our marriage?"

"Quite sure, dear."

"Then, would it not come to the same thing if we got married on our arrival in England?"

This was good logic, but it achieved nothing for me, and since I saw that her father's sanction would contribute to the happiness of her married life, I never again attempted to reason with her on the subject.

At last, one morning we found ourselves in the English Channel, bowling over the green ridges of it before a strong south-westerly wind, and within fifty hours of making the Lizard Light the brave little bark *Star of Peace* was being warped to her berth in the East India Docks. Down to that very moment, incredible as it may seem, Lady Monson had given neither her sister nor myself the vaguest hint of what she intended to do. As we stood waiting to step ashore she arrived on deck, and approaching Laura, exclaimed,

"Mr. Monson, I presume, will escort you to a hotel."

"Won't you accompany us, Henrietta?" her sister asked.

"No, I choose to be independent. I shall go to such and such a hotel;" and she named the house at which she had stopped with Colonel Hope-Kennedy when she arrived in London on her way to Southampton. "You can address me there, or call upon me, Laura. I have not yet decided on any steps. In all probability I shall return to Melbourne, but not at present."

She extended her hand coldly to her sister, and gave me a haughty bow. Laura bit her lips to restrain her tears, but her pride was stung; disgust, and amazement too, fell cool upon her grief.

The last I ever saw of Lady Monson was as she passed along the quay towards the dock-yard gates. As she paced forward, stately, slow, her carriage queenly and easy, as though sumptuously clothed, and in the full pride of her beauty she trod the floor of a ball-room, the scores of sailors, laborers, loafers, who thronged the decks turned to a man to stare after her. A strange and striking figure indeed

she made, habited in the dress which she wore when the *Shark* foundered, and which, as you may suppose, by this time showed very much like the end of a long voyage. The brown veil concealed her features, and, to a certain degree, qualified the outlandish appearance of the sailor's grass hat upon her head.

"So!" said I, as she disappeared; "and now, Laura, it is for you and me to go ashore."

We bade a cordial farewell to Captain Richardson and his mates, and to Finn and Cutbill, both of whom promised to call upon me. I had the address of the owner of the vessel, and told the skipper that next day I would communicate with the office and defray whatever expenses we had put the ship to. I further took the addresses of the captain and his mates, that I might send them some token of my gratitude for our deliverance, and for the many kindnesses they had done us during the long and tedious passage.

A few hours later I had comfortably lodged Laura in a snug private hotel within an easy walk of my lodgings, to which I forthwith repaired, and took possession of afresh, with such an emotion of bewilderment excited in me by the familiar rooms, and by the feeling that I was once more in London, with no more runaway wives to chase, no more Dutchmen to fire into, no more duels to assist in, no more volcanic rocks to split upon, and no more galleons to sleep in, that I felt like a man just awakened from some wild and vivid dream, whose impressions continue so acute that the familiar objects his eyes open upon seem as phantasms that must presently fade. My first act was to send a milliner and a dress-maker to Laura, and to see in other ways to her immediate requirements; my next to address a letter to Wilfrid's solicitors, in which I acquainted them with the loss of the *Bride* and the death of my cousin. Whom else to write to at once about the poor fellow I did not know. I asked after his infant, and requested them to tell me if the child was still with the lady with whom my cousin had placed it before leaving England. I added that I should be pleased to see one of the partners and relate the full story of the voyage, the object of which I could not doubt Wilfrid had informed them of before sailing.

I spent the evening with Laura. All our talk was about what she was to do until she had heard from her father, to whom she told me she had written a long letter within an hour after her arrival at the hotel, "so as to lose no time, Charles." She had no relations in England—scarcely an acquaintance, for the matter of that; with whom was she to live, then? Even had Lady Monson settled down in a

house, she was not a person with whom I could have desired the girl I was affianced to to be long and intimately associated. The notion of her returning to Australia alone was not to be entertained. There seemed nothing, then, for it but for me to overhaul the list of my connections, to make experiments in the direction of relations, and endeavor to find a home for her with one or another of them until there should some day arrive a mail from Australia, giving me leave to take her to my heart.

Well, it was next morning that I had finished breakfast and was sitting musing over a fire, with a newspaper on my knee. My mind was full of the past. I remember looking round me almost incredulously, with eyes that still found the familiar furniture of my room unreal, and indeed almost impossible, listening with ears that could scarcely accept as actual the transformation of the roar and beat and wash of the seas, into the steady hum of ceaseless traffic in the great London road-way into which the street I occupied opened. Years had elapsed, it seemed, since that night when my servant had ushered in my cousin, and I saw in fancy the wild roll of his eyes round the apartment, the crazy flourish of his hands, his posture as he sank his head upon the table, battling with his sobbing breath.

I was disturbed by a smart knock on the door. "Come in!" The landlord entered; a thin, iron-gray, soft-voiced man, who had for many years been butler in an earl's family, and who had retired and started a lodging-house on discovering that he had married a woman of genius in the shape of a cook.

"There's a person below named Muffin would like to see you, sir."

I stared at him as if he were mad.

"Muffin!" I whispered.

"That was the name he gave, sir," he exclaimed, astonished by my amazement.

"Muffin!" I repeated, scarce crediting my hearing; "describe him, Mr. Cork."

"A clean, yellow-faced man, sir, hair of a coal-blackness, looks down when he speaks, sir, seems a bit shaky in the ankles; a gentleman's servant, I should say, sir."

"Show him up, Mr. Cork!" I exclaimed, doubting the description as I had the name, so impossible did it seem that this person could be Wilfrid's valet.

In a few moments the door was opened and in stepped *Muffin!*—the Muffin of the *Bride*, Muffin the ventriloquist, Muffin the whipped and ducked, and, as I could have solemnly sworn, Muffin the *drowned!*

He stood before me with the old familiar crook of the left knee, holding his hat with both hands against his stomach, his head drooped, his lips twisted into their familiar grin of obsequious apology. His yellow face shone, his hair was as lustrous as the back of a rook; he wore large, loose, black kid-gloves, and he was attired in a brand-new suit of black cloth. I know nothing in the way of shocks severer for the moment, that tells more startlingly upon the whole nervous system, than the meeting with a man whom one has for months and months believed dead. I was unable to speak for some moments. I shrank back in my chair when he entered, and in that posture eyed him, while he stood looking downward, smiling, and suggesting in his attitude respectful regret for taking the liberty of intruding.

"Well," said I, fetching a deep breath, "and so you are Muffin indeed, eh? Well, well! Why, man, I could have sworn we left you a corpse floating close to a volcanic island near the equator."

"So I suppose, sir," he exclaimed, "but I am thankful to say, sir, that I was not drowned."

I motioned him to sit; he put his hat under the chair, crossed his legs, and clasped his hands over his knee. A sudden reaction of feeling, supplemented by his strange appearance, produced a fit of laughter in me. The image of his radish-shaped form, half naked, quivering down the ranks of the seamen, with Cutbill, grotesquely apparelled, compelling him to keep time, recurred to me.

"You seem resolved that I shall believe in ghosts, Muffin," said I; "and pray how came you to learn that I was saved from the wreck? that I had returned to England? was here in these lodgings, in short, where I arrived only yesterday?"

"Sir Wilfrid received a letter from his solicitors this morning, sir, enclosing your letter to them."

"Sir Wilfrid!" I shouted; "is he alive?"

"Oh yes, sir, and very much better both in body and mind, I'm 'appy to say, sir. He would have called on you himself, sir, but he's suffering from an attack of gout in his left foot, and has been obliged to keep his bed for two days."

I jumped from my chair and fell to pacing the room, to work off by locomotion something of the amazement that threatened to addle my brains.

"Wilfrid alive!" I muttered. "What will Laura say to all this? Muffin!" I cried, rounding upon him, "what you are telling me is a miracle, a thing beyond all credibility! Why, we saw the yacht go

to pieces! Nearly the whole mass of her, in fragments, came ashore, along with four or five dead bodies. How in Heaven's name did Sir Wilfrid escape?"

He responded by telling me the story. Johnson, the man who had died upon the island, was perfectly right in saying that he believed a number of men had rushed to one of the boats shortly after the yacht had struck. I myself remember being felled by a gang of people flying aft in the blackness. Muffin was one of them. The white water over the side enabled them to see what they were about. The boat, a noble structure, of a life-boat's quality of buoyancy, was successfully lowered, seven men got into her, one of whom was Muffin. The yacht was then fast breaking up. The men, to escape being pounded to pieces by the battering-rams of the wreckage hurled on every curl of sea, headed out from the island, straining their hearts at the oars; but they were again and again beaten back. There were but five oars, and Muffin and one of the seamen, having nothing to do, sat crouching in the stern-sheets. Suddenly a figure showed close alongside crying loudly for help; Muffin grasped him by the hair of his head, the other fellow leaned over, and between them they dragged the man in. It was my cousin. By dint of sustained and mad plying of oars they drew the boat clear of the wreckage, bringing the white line of the thunderous surf on the island beach upon their quarter; they then gave the stern of the little fabric to the wind and seas, and fled forward like smoke, and when the dawn broke they were miles out of sight of the rock. A day and a night of dead calm followed; they were without food or water, and their outlook was horrible; but at sunrise on the third day they spied the gleam of a sail, towards which they rowed, and before the darkness fell they were safely on board a large English brig bound to Bristol.

Such was Muffin's story. He said that Sir Wilfrid, on being told it was Muffin who had rescued him, promised to take him back into his service on reaching England. He added that my cousin had entirely lost the craze that had possessed him concerning his bulk and stature. The yacht on going to pieces had liberated him, and with his sudden and startling enlargement his mad fancy entirely passed away. So that poor old Jacob Crimp came very near the truth when he had suggested to me that my cousin's senses might be recovered by a great fright.

Muffin asked me the names of the others who were saved. I told him who they were.

"And Mr. Cutbill wasn't drowned, sir?" said he.

"No," I replied.

"And Captain Finn is saved, too. I'm so glad, sir."

But the rogue gave me a look that clearly signified he was very sorry indeed.

An hour later I was sitting by my cousin's bedside. He was stopping at a hotel near Charing Cross. I will say nothing of the warmth of our meeting. The tears were in my eyes as I grasped and retained his hand. He was perfectly rational, had a more sensible look in his face than I had ever witnessed in it, and his memory was as clear as my own. It seemed to me that the shock of shipwreck had worked wonders in him, though, to be sure, strong traces of congenital weakness were still visible in the quivering eyelids, the occasional, irrelevant, loud laugh, the boyish eagerness of manner, with now and again the passing shadow of a darkening humor. For a long time we seemed able to talk of nothing but the wreck of the *Bride* and of our several experiences. I very delicately and vaguely referred to the delusion that had imprisoned him in his cabin, but his stare of surprise advised me that he had no recollection whatever of his craze, and it was like a warning to me to instantly quit the subject. He told me that Muffin had behaved with a touching devotion to him while they were in the boat, pillowing his head when he slept, cooling his hot brow with water, sheltering him from the heat of the sun by standing behind him with his jacket out-stretched to the nature of a little awning. He asked tenderly after Laura, and made many inquiries after the men who had been saved, bidding me tell Finn, should he visit me, to call upon him that he might obtain the names and addresses of the survivors, and enable them to replace the effects they had lost by the foundering of the yacht.

"You do not ask after your wife, Wilfrid," said I, a little nervously.

"Oh, you told me she was saved," he answered, languidly; then after a pause he added, "Where is she?"

"She refused to accompany her sister," said I; "she loves independence. She has gone alone to such and such a hotel, where I presume she is still to be found."

His face flushed at the name of that hotel; he instantly remembered. He bent his eyes downward, and said, as if to himself, "Yes, she is of those who return to their bonnet."

"What are your plans?" said I.

"As regards Lady Monson, do you mean?"

"Well, she is still your wife, and what concerns her concerns you, I suppose, more or less."

"I shall not meddle with her," said he, making a horrible grimace to an involuntary twitch of his gouty foot; "she can do what she pleases."

"She talks of returning to Australia."

"Let her go," said he.

And this, thought I, is the issue of your wild pursuit of her! Had he but waited a few months, disgust and aversion would have grown strong in him. He would have been guiltless of shedding the blood of a fellow-creature; he would have preserved his noble yacht; but then, to be sure, I should probably never have met Laura!

His eye was upon me, while I mused a little in silence.

"My solicitors advise proceedings in the Divorce Court," said he, "but I say no. I certainly should never try my hand at marriage again, and therefore a divorce would serve no end of my own. But it might answer *her* purpose very well indeed; it would free her, and I do not intend that she shall have her liberty."

"You will have to maintain her."

"Oh, my solicitors will see to that," he answered, with a curious smile.

"Wilf," said I, "she may fall very low, and then, when nobody else will have anything more to do with her, she will return to you as your lawful wife, and play the devil with your peace and good name."

"I am not going to free her," said he, snappishly.

"Do you mean to make any stay in London?" said I.

"I am waiting till the gout leaves me," he answered, "and shall then go abroad. I have been recommended to do so. It is pretty sure to come to the ears of Colonel Hope-Kennedy's friends that I shot him in a duel. He was a widower and childless, but he has a sister, a Lady Guthrie, who adored the ground he trod on, and thought him the noblest creature in the universe. My solicitors advise me not to wait until I am charged with the fellow's death, and so I am going abroad."

"Humph!" said I; "and how am I to be dealt with as an accessary?"

"Pooh!" he exclaimed, "one never hears of seconds being charged."

"You will take baby with you, I presume?"

He answered no. During his absence a cousin of his had lost her husband, a colonel in India. She had arrived in England with two grown-up daughters, and was so poor that she had asked Wilfrid to help her. He had arranged that she and the girls should occupy his seat in the North and take charge of his child. This in fact had been settled, and Mrs. Conway and her daughters were now installed at Sherburne Abbey. On hearing this it instantly suggested itself to me that Mrs. Conway would provide Laura with the very home that she needed until we heard from Mr. Jennings. Wilfrid of course acquiesced; he was delighted; he loved Laura as a sister, and his little one would be doubly guarded while she was with it. So here was a prompt and happy end to what had really threatened to prove a source of perplexity, and indeed in some senses a real difficulty.

And now to end this narrative. A fortnight later Wilfrid went abroad to travel, as he said, in Italy and the south of France, and with him proceeded Mr. Muffin. During that fortnight Laura and I were frequently with him, but it was only on the day previous to his departure that he mentioned his wife's name. In a careless voice and off-hand manner he asked if we had heard of her, but neither of us could give him any news. We had not chosen to learn by calling if she continued at the hotel to which she had gone on her arrival. She had not written to her sister, nor had she communicated with Wilfrid's solicitors. However, about a fortnight after I had returned to London from the North, whither I had escorted Laura, there came a letter to my lodgings addressed to my sweetheart. I guessed the handwriting to be Lady Monson's. I forwarded it to Laura, who returned it to me. It was a cold intimation of her ladyship's intention to sail in such and such a vessel to Melbourne on the Monday following, so that when I read the missive she had been four days on her way. For my part, I was heartily glad to know that she was out of England.

Soon after my arrival I sent a description of the volcanic island and the galleon on top of it to a naval publication of the period. It was widely reprinted, and excited much attention, and brought me many letters. But for that article I believe I should have heard no more of Dowling and Head. It chanced, however, that my account of the island was republished in a West Indian journal, and I think it was about five months after my return to this country that I received a letter from the master of a vessel dated at the Havanas, and addressed to me at the office of the journal in which my nar-

rative had been published. This man, it seems, having sighted the rock about three weeks after we had got away from it in the *Star of Peace*, hauled in close to have a good look at an uncharted spot that was full of the deadliest menace to vessels, and observed signals being made to him from what he was afterwards informed was the hull of a fossilized ship. He sent a boat and brought off two men, who, it is needless to say, were Dowling and Head. They very frankly related their story, told the master of the vessel how they were survivors of the schooner-yacht *Bride*, and how they had declined to leave the island because of their expectation of meeting with treasure aboard that strange old ship of weeds and shells. Day after day they had toiled in her, but to no purpose. They broke into the piles of shells, but found nothing save rottenness within, remains of what might have been cargo, but of a character utterly indistinguishable. There was not a ha'porth of money or treasure, so there was an end of the poor fellows' princely dreams. They were received on board and worked their passage to Rio, where they left the ship, which then proceeded to the Havanas.

There can be little doubt that shortly after this the volcanic rock subsided and vanished off the surface of the sea, after the usual manner of these desperate creations. The editor of the naval journal received several copies of logs kept by ships which had traversed the part of the ocean where the island had sprung up, and it was gathered, after a careful comparison of these memoranda, that the rock must have disappeared very shortly after Dowling and Head had been taken off it, for the log-book of a vessel named the *Martha Robinson* showed that three days later she had passed over the exact spot where the island had stood and all was clear sea.

My time of waiting for the hand of Laura was not to prove so long as I had feared. Very unexpectedly one morning I received a letter from my darling from the Abbey. Her father had arrived on the preceding day. She could scarcely believe her ears when a servant came to tell her that Mr. Jennings had called and was waiting to see her. Of course he had not received her letter. He had taken it into his head to visit England, both his daughters being there, mainly with the intention of taking Laura back with him when he returned. He was almost broken-hearted, so Laura wrote, when she told him about Lady Monson. However, he was in England, and after waiting a few days so as to give him time to recover the dreadful shock caused him by the news of his daughter's behavior, I went down to Westmoreland, was introduced to the old

gentleman, and found him a bluff, hearty, plain-spoken man. He told me he could settle twenty thousand pounds upon his child, and seemed very well satisfied to hear that I was not without a pretty little income of my own. He approached the subject of insanity with a bluntness that somewhat disconcerted me. I assured him that so far as I could possibly imagine I was not mad, that my cousin's craziness came from a source which did not concern me in the least degree. He was pleased afterwards to tell Laura that he could see by my eye that my intellect was as sound as a bell; an observation upon which I thought I had some right to compliment myself, for to be suspected of being "wanting" is often to involuntarily and unconsciously look so; and I must say that while Mr. Jennings and I talked about Wilfrid's craziness, and where it came from, he regarded me with a keenness that was at times not a little embarrassing.

Laura and I had been married two years when we heard of Lady Monson. Mr. Jennings had returned to Australia, but in one or two letters we had received from him he never mentioned Henrietta's name. Then came a missive in deep mourning. Lady Monson was dead! She had been received into the Roman Catholic Church—so wrote the father in a letter whose every sentence seemed as though he wrote with a pen dipped in his tears. She had, apparently, given up all thoughts of this world, and devoted her days and nights to ministering to the poor. One day she returned to her home looking ill; two nights later she was delirious. She broke from the grasp of her attendants, and marched with stately step, singing in her rich contralto voice as she went, to an upper chamber that had been Laura's bedroom, where, planting herself before a mirror, she fell to brushing her rich and beautiful hair, singing all the while, till on a sudden she fell with a shriek to the ground, was carried back to her bed, and two hours later lay a corpse!

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