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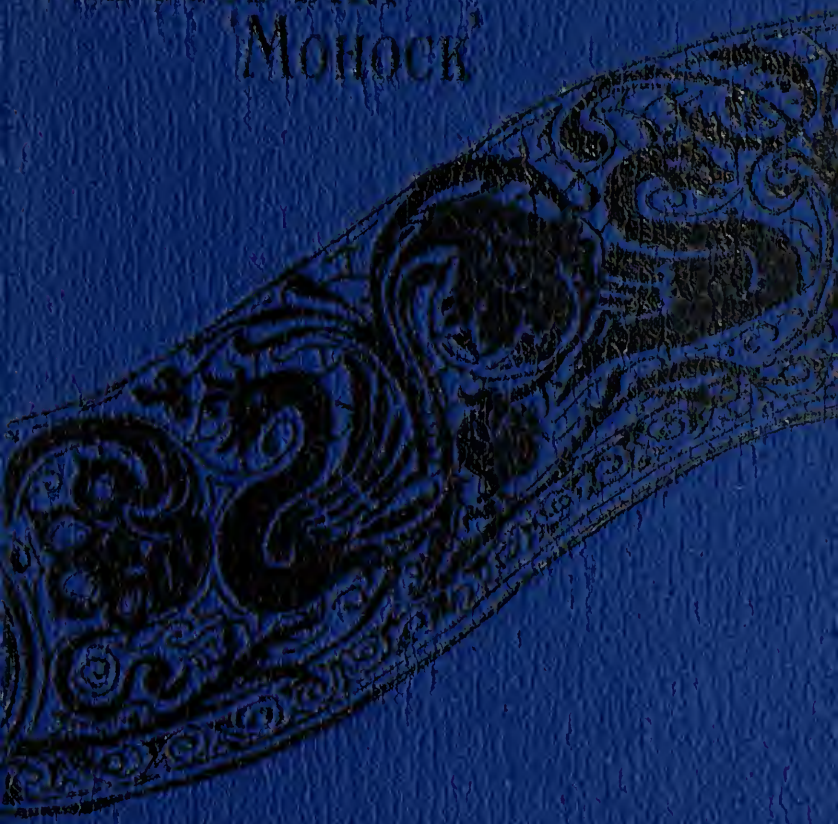

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THE GOOD SHIP "MOHOCK"

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ON

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THE

GOOD SHIP "MOHOCK"

BY

W. CLARK RUSSELL

AUTHOR OF

"THE WRECK OF THE GROSVENOR," "MY SHIPMATE LOUISE,"
"ALONE ON A WIDE WIDE SEA," ETC.

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THE

GOOD SHIP "MOHOCK"

CHAPTER I

CAPTAIN AMELIUS SINCLAIR

I WAS on a visit at my sister's, the widow of a clergyman, when I received a letter from my stepfather, Captain Sinclair, asking me to join him in London. Maria said "What can he want? You have not been here three weeks. When does the *Mohock* sail?"

"In about a fortnight."

"Can't he manage without you?" said Maria, who did not love her stepfather, not indeed because she disliked him as a man, but because he happened to be our father's successor.

But Captain Sinclair was a little urgent in his request, though he did not tell me what he wanted; so I left Canterbury early

next morning, and on my arrival in London drove to my stepfather's house just out of the East India Dock Road.

In that year of 1844, Captain Sinclair was about fifty years of age; a tall, erect, noticeably handsome man, with well-coloured regular features, white teeth, a steady dark grey penetrating eye; his hair a little grey. The habitual expression of his face in repose, even when sleeping, was a frown; it seemed a forbidding look till he smiled, when such was the grace of that expression, the frown seemed to explain itself away as a corrugation or contortion entirely natural, without reference to disposition or mood. Yet it prejudiced him with many—my sister, Maria Holford, amongst others. He was brown with sun and wind, and the easy motion of the sea was in his carriage; he had followed the ocean as a calling since he was twelve years of age, and was one of the most skilful seamen out of the port of London; yet he looked more like a soldier than a sailor, and needed but the mustache and side-whiskers of the army to pass for a colonel. He had married my mother ten years before this date, and in this house I had come to, she had died whilst he was at sea.

A cosy old house it was, with green shutters and black burnished windows, and

snug low-pitched rooms, the walls covered with marine canvases; in the dance of the firelight the ships under full sail seemed to spring to the brow of the surge. In my mother's room hung a picture of a schooner Captain Sinclair had commanded. When my mother lay dying, whilst I nursed her I'd look at that schooner by the firelight and the rushlight in the basin, till the blast of the wide ocean stretched her milky canvas, the white water flashed from her bow, and over the race of her wake the sea-birds drove like shadows of flying scud. I made many voyages in that sick-room in the painted schooner whilst my mother lay dying; and when I shut my eyes, I see the wan and hollow face on the pillow, and the dark canvas touched with the fire-glow, and the schooner in the midst of it white as light, growing with life upon the steadfast sight till it became reality itself, and I hear the wind seething betwixt her masts and the cry of the gulls.

"Well, Laura," said Captain Sinclair, giving me a kiss on the cheek, "I am glad you have come. You turn-to willingly. You ought to have been a sailor's child." He patted my face, then carelessly asked after Maria, as though he would not heed my answer anyhow, and told me to go upstairs and remove

my things, by which time dinner would be served, and he would then tell me why he had sent for me.

When we were at table, he said with a smile, "Now for the startling revelation. I'm going to give you a treat. I shall take you to New York with me this trip. The owners consent, and you shall have a cabin next mine. How do you like the idea?"

I was surprised, perhaps a little startled. In those days a voyage across the Atlantic was reckoned a more considerable undertaking than a journey round the world is now. I had never been to sea. Ever since Captain Sinclair married my mother he had held commands of importance, but had never offered to carry one of us on a voyage with him.

Observing me silent and surprised, staring at him, he exclaimed, "Oh, but you'll come. The voyage is fine enough at this season. You'll make friends—which you need; you're getting on. Two-and-twenty, is it? About time that a husband turned up, hey? You shall be berthed by some friends of mine at New York."

"I think I should enjoy the voyage after all," said I, suddenly taking a fancy to the offer. "But why now? Why not earlier —throughout the last ten years—or later?

You'll not retire for some time yet. Why this voyage?" said I.

"Because," he answered with one of his stern looks, "the master of a ship isn't her owner. I get you this passage as a favour. I should have thought you'd jump at it."

"Shall we be a crowd?"

"The average number."

"I daresay Maria would go if you asked her."

"I daresay she would," he answered sarcastically. "Come, I am offering you a fine treat. Be grateful and don't trouble me with Maria."

I had seen very little of him since he returned from his last voyage, and I thought, whilst we talked at dinner that day and afterwards, that he was depressed and worried. He looked careworn and anxious, and would again and again sink in deep thought, drumming upon the knuckles of his left hand. I attributed this to his "affairs," as they call it, being embarrassed. I had heard he was in debt, though to what extent I could not guess. In fact, though he had used the sea all his life, he was a poor man when he married my mother, who had brought him a few thousand pounds, all of which was gone, lost, he would tell us, in ill-judged speculations in shipping. My sister and I

were separately endowed, and I was as independent of my stepfather as a hundred and forty pounds a year could make me. But I am bound to say he never allowed me to spend a shilling of my own money on his home. Indeed, he made me presents, treated me with the free heart of a sailor. I was his companion when he was ashore and kept his home when he was at sea, so that whilst I cannot say that I had any particularly warm affection for him, yet I had a certain liking for, and was even attached to him, and was entirely without my sister's prejudice, whose views I laughed at; for why should not people marry twice, or as often as they can get rid of their mates who are called bone of their bone, who sacramentally are indissolubly one with them? The dead cannot be pained, and there is no disloyalty in the transference of passion from what death has made a memory of to a beating heart and a fine figure.

Next morning, after a good night's rest, I found myself willing and eager to make the voyage. He had given me a home-thrust when he spoke of my getting on in years, of my being twenty-two, in short. I had seen very little of the world. The company we kept was chiefly, indeed wholly, maritime—it had been so in my mother's life. I own I

never much enjoyed the society of captains and mates. One young fellow, a handsome, high-hearted boy of eighteen or nineteen, fell in love with me and proposed in a letter; independent as I was, I would do nothing without consulting Captain Sinclair. He was away when the letter reached me, and before he returned my young sweetheart sailed as third mate of an Indiaman, and was drowned by the capsizing of a boat off Madeira.

Captain Sinclair took me to view the ship this same morning after breakfast. Though I had dwelt long in the neighbourhood of the docks, I had never visited them; which is perfectly consistent with Cockney tradition, for I have heard of people who, though they lived within a bowshot of St. Paul's and Westminster Abbey, yet never in all their lives entered the door of either building. Well, it is true a girl need not plead for being ignorant of such a scene of commerce as the docks of the Thames. And still, when I looked round me from the deck of the *Mohock*, I could scarcely imagine that the life of a city offered a more stirring, inspiriting picture than this amazing show of lofty spars, brilliant bunting, trembling in the dim blue of the river sky; quay-sides covered with machinery, and the produce of the world lifting and sinking at the end of huge cranes.

Seamen sang songs as they wound round capstans; from time to time the shrill command of a boatswain's pipe sang from a tall forecastle; a large Indiaman was moving out of the dock; her drunken crew were sprawling and bawling about her bowsprit; a knot of passengers upon the poop waved handkerchiefs and kissed hands to a crowd upon the pier, many of them in tears. She was a noble ship, and sat as haughtily as an English frigate upon the waters.

"She is for Madras," said Captain Sinclair. "How do you like the *Mohock?*"

I had seen nothing then but the decks and rigging. It is difficult to judge of a ship's hull in dock, though as we approached to board her I had noticed that she was painted black, with a rope of gilt along the length of her on either side as an embellishment, also that she had sparkling stern windows, with much handsome flourishing of gilt round about them and upon her quarters; her "run," as it is called, came aft in a clipper-like sweep. Captain Sinclair had pointed this out to me, and said that when the wind filled her sails she shredded the sea with the grace and speed of a hare running through wet grass and flinging a mist to the sunshine.

I must ask you to look at this ship with

me if you mean to read my story; it is she, not I, that is the heroine of an extraordinary adventure related in these pages truthfully for the first time, with the help of another hand, but not without compunction, for I cannot forget that my mother loved the man.

In those days the American clipper did the work that is continued by the magnificent steamers of our own times. By American, I mean English ships trading to America. Most of them were sumptuously furnished. They were built to sail fast, and often made rapid passages; some of the best sailed from the Mersey, but the Thames also despatched a fine fleet.

The *Mohock* was one of the handsomest of her class. She was flush-decked, and you looked from her taffrail right along a platform of almond-white plank, rising with a dominant spring into the bows, unbroken throughout the length save by the galley, longboat, skylights, and huge windlass forward. I followed my stepfather into the cabin, and found myself in a drawing-room. The dock wall and the ships beyond darkened the cabin windows, and yet there was a light as of noon in the glance of the skylights in the fine mirrors, in globes of crystal, and panels of cream and gilt. I stood upon a thick, soft carpet. At the extremity was a handsome piano. On

either hand ran the cabins, rounding into two large berths under the wheel. The Captain opened the door of one next his, which was the left-hand cabin right aft. It was a snug sleeping-room, and furnished like a bedroom ashore.

"Does the taste for the trip grow with you?" said my stepfather, looking at me.

"I think it does," I answered; "it will be like yachting."

Some people came on board, and detained him in talk, and I hung about till I was tired. I found something in my stepfather's manner that kept puzzling me all the while I thought of it whilst I roamed here and there, looking down into the hold, into which cargo was being lowered, or watching the scene of ships from the rail. There was no elasticity in his manner of supposing that I should enjoy the journey. There was no glow of heartiness whatever in his manner of showing me around. His behaviour had the lifelessness of the mechanical hireling—of the ship's steward say, who does his duty woodenly. There can be no doubt his constant mood was hard through money troubles.

I did not mean to notice his manner, however. If he wanted my sympathy and help, he was welcome to both, at the slender expense of a confidential chat. We dined at

the Brunswick Hotel, and he sent me home in a cab. When he came home, I heard him ask the servant who let him in some question, but did not catch it. He entered the room looking at his watch, and whilst we sat at tea was absent and troubled. He would sometimes go to the window and peer out. Once or twice he viewed me so earnestly that I thought he was going to tell me the cause of his worry. Indeed he talked but little. What he said concerned the ship, and my requirements for the voyage to New York and back. In the midst of this the house-bell was pulled, and one blow struck with the knocker.

"Oh!" says Captain Sinclair, jumping up, "the man I am expecting. Step into the study. I must be private."

His manner was a little agitated: he had turned a shade pale when the bell rang, and was now somewhat flushed. I lingered for some reason I forget. This irritated him, and he said with impatience:

"You can do that when he's gone. Pray step out as I ask you."

When I opened the parlour door, the servant had answered the house-bell, and the man was coming in. I felt a curiosity, and glanced at him keenly as I stepped through the passage. He was a tall, thin,

sinewy man, dressed in a seafaring cap and monkey-jacket. He wore a shawl round his neck after the fashion of the 'longshoremen of the beach. I thought I caught the glint of earrings. His hair was long, curling, and shining as with oil: he had a small yellow moustache, but despite this I guessed him a sailor, at least of the coastal type. I saw what I have described to you in just one quick narrow look, then entered the Captain's little room which he called his study, and afterwards went to my bedroom, where I remained till I was summoned to supper. It was then half-past nine, and I guessed that the man had not long left by tasting the fumes of tobacco newly lighted: the Captain did not smoke. He said not a word about this visitor, nor did I ask any questions.

To-night his spirits appeared to have improved. He filled a tumbler with brandy and water and drank with a face of gaiety.

"How do you like the notion of removing from this part of London?" said he.

"There are more fashionable quarters," I answered.

"But none so convenient to the seaman. This furniture would stock us a comfortable little inland cottage," said he, looking round the room with reluctance in each remove of

his gaze as it travelled. "Much belonged to your mother. There is much of my finding too."

"Do you mean to break up house?"

"I don't think so. Whilst I remain a sailor I must be near ships. When I die, you'll live with your sister, I suppose?"

"No; we shouldn't get on. I might live near her."

"I'd like to see you mated before I go aloft," said he, lying back in his chair and smiling at me with an expression that sweetened the frown out of his face till I found a real beauty then in his manly looks. "I wish your sister were as good-humoured as you. She'll never forgive me for marrying your mother, and if I should prove a true father to you, find you a husband, settle you handsomely, how would it be with her then? Should I be justifying your mother and myself in her sight?"

His frown came back with the sarcasm in his speech. I looked at him suspiciously, and said:

"Am I to go to New York to be married?"

"Perhaps," he answered, lancing his teeth with a silver toothpick.

"I shall have a great deal to say in that matter."

"Let the man come along and you shall be heard," said he with a grin at my bridling figure and perhaps the general hot look of me, for I felt a heat in my cheeks, and I daresay my eyes weren't wanting in light.

They used to call me handsome, but at this time of day I can speak of that without emotion. My hair was very abundant, and of an extremely dark red. My eyes were large, a dark brown, soft, and eloquent. I was slightly above the middle height, and don't know that there was a fault in my shape if it were not for an over-moulded ripeness of bust. She whom I am describing lies dust in the grave of years: who describes her is another, bowed, wrinkled, deaf, and nearly blind.

Until the ship sailed I was full of the business of making ready to go. It was a half-formed fancy in my head that Captain Sinclair knew of a man in New York who would offer for me when he saw me; or perhaps such a worthy was to make one of the passengers. Now I was as willing to marry as any healthy young woman of twenty-two could well be; but I myself, of my own discernment and love, must choose the man I was to live with till death. That was certain. Nothing, therefore, that Captain Sinclair had in contemplation could render

me in the least uneasy. My will was of steel in this way: not the gods themselves could have strategied me into wedlock.

Two or three days before we sailed I picked up a maritime journal Captain Sinclair was in the habit of reading, and carelessly turning it about, lighted upon this item of news:

"The fine clipper ship *Mohock*, 1000 tons, Amelius Sinclair, commander, sails from the Thames on Thursday for New York. She carries a full cargo and £98,000 in gold. Amongst her passengers are Colonel Nathan P. Wills and lady, Monsignor Luard, the distinguished preacher, and Jonas R. Jackson, the well-known comedian, who is returning to his native country after fulfilling a series of successful engagements in Great Britain."

I clipped the paragraph and enclosed it to my sister in a letter of farewell.

My luggage was sent to the ship on Wednesday, and on Thursday, at about eleven o'clock in the morning, I went alone on board the *Mohock*. I found the vessel a grand scene of confusion. The main-deck was littered with boxes, coils of rope, chests and bales of stuff which yet remained to be stowed away somewhere. There was a great crowd of people. The *Mohock* was taking out some twenty steerage passengers, and some forty or fifty of their relations and

friends were on board seeing them off. It was odd that I should have found time to notice a boy with a mild, freckled, maternal face sitting on the edge of the hatch nursing a silent, staring baby—a strange image of mute, innocent forlornness! Blue Peter was rippling at the fore royal masthead, and a number of sailors were winding round a capstan singing a song of melancholy melody as they stamped. The sun shone brightly. It was a spacious, gay morning, the wind a steady breeze that trembled harp-like off the taut resonant rigging. The clouds were going down the breeze like birds, and through the shrouds of adjacent ships I spied the canvas—now white, now red, the full bosom of the square sail, the lean pinions of the schooner—of scores of vessels in motion upon the river.

I had been introduced to the mate of the ship at my stepfather's house. He was a man named Gordon, about forty years old, of an antique pattern in his seafaring looks and dress. His face was without hair, save two dim streaks of iron grey eyebrow, and the skin was burnt and troubled by weather to the look and surface of red morocco. Though the month was the beginning of September and a warm morning, this man standing in the gangway was dressed in stout pilot cloth,

heavy square-toed boots, which sheathed the legs with leather to the knees under the trousers, a red flannel shirt, and stick-up collar.

He saluted me with a flourish of his round hat, and asked for the Captain. I could give him no information. He said the ship waited for him, and he would be glad of the signal to start, "if only to clear the decks," he added with a sour look at the jumble and muddle of people talking and crying, again and again straining one another in farewells. It was easy to see his sensibilities were salted hard as the meat he had fed on for years.

He accompanied me to the companion hatch, down which he bawled with the notes of a gale of wind for the stewardess. When she showed herself he called out, "Here's Miss Sinclair arrived; see to her, Mrs. Yorrock," and left me.

After the noise and hurry of the main-deck, this cuddy or saloon seemed quiet as a theatre when all the people have left. And yet there were plenty of passengers about, a dozen, I daresay, out of the sixteen which I afterwards discovered formed our number. In those days of slow and tedious travelling, passengers starting on a voyage, if their ship sailed from the London river, found it convenient and cheap to go on board in the docks. More-

over, the *Mohock* did not call at Plymouth this time. People sat at the long table, writing letters or chatting, and two men were drinking champagne. I caught the drawl of the American, and also noticed a Roman Catholic priest reading in a little book. Mrs. Yorrock led me to my cabin, where I found the luggage I immediately needed, and I stayed below for about an hour, putting away my things and making the berth comfortable. When I went on deck, the first person I saw was Captain Sinclair. He talked near the wheel with one of the two Americans who had been drinking champagne in the cabin. I was surprised to find the ship in the middle of the river, towing down behind a little splashing tug, from whose lofty funnel, dog's eared at the top, broke such a long dark line of smoke that the leeward prospect was hidden by it. The voyage had begun.

The ship floated proudly under the red flag of England and the beautiful colours of America; the shores, gloomy with buildings and chimneys and complicate with shipping hugging the wharves, took a lofty romantic character merely from the stately slowness of their passing. The forecastle was full of passengers and sailors, and the quarter-deck was well covered with moving figures. Whatever there was of glass or brass burnt bravely

to the sun; the ruled shadows of the rigging crawled over the white planks with our passage: and the breast of the river was a wonder of life and colour, with its hundred sail of all sorts coming and going, walking the sliding measure of the minuet to the music of the wind.

My stepfather called me, and introduced his companion, Colonel Nathan P. Wills, a man with a forked beard and aquiline nose, and legs which began at the buttons above his coat-tails.

"A nice little stream this," said this gentleman. "Pity it hasn't got the breadth of some of our rivers."

"Even the breath would do," said I.

"Yes, I think the Isle of Dogs lasts all the way to Gravesend," said Captain Sinclair.

A young lady—I judged her a bride, not so much by her clothes as by the looks of her companion—came up to us with her arm in a young clergyman's.

"What is that ship," said she, with a pretty smile.

"A convict hulk," answered Captain Sinclair.

"How sad!" she exclaimed. "Are those things hanging up in strings shirts?"

"Prisoners' linen," answered my stepfather, looking darkly at the hulk.

"There may be eyes at those barred portholes watching us," said the clergyman. "What thoughts must visit them out of such a noble picture of liberty as this ship makes! There may be pure and honest fancies in some of the prisoners' minds, resolutions beautiful but hopeless, reminding one of the mournful wheeling of goldfish in a crystal bowl."

They gazed awhile in silence, then walked off.

"Bound west for the 'moon,' I reckon," said the Colonel. "The Falls, you bet, and a lecture and magic-lantern show for the people of the parish they are raising skywards."

"He's a poetical parson," said my stepfather. "'Give me a file afore all the Bibles in the world,' said Jack Sheppard to the Ordinary. That's the philosophy yonder."

A gentleman with a comic face, blue with the razor, deep black eyes, habited in a cloak and a sugar-loafed hat, approached us. He was Mr. Jonas R. Jackson, the celebrated American comedian.

"Captain," said he, "do you expect to make a good run to Gravesend?"

We all laughed.

"Jackson," cried the Colonel, "why didn't you take to the sea instead of the stage?

Those be the boards for a real man," and he stamped his foot.

"I never could have borne to give it up," answered Mr. Jackson. "The ship sticks to the barnacle, but the devotion is the barnacle's. So it would have been with me. It would have broken my heart to be torn by disease or age from this noble profession of salt horse, and cold wet nights, and the workhouse always within hail of the flying jib-boom end."

"I knew a man," continued Mr. Jackson, "who left the sea and started a school. He discovered that his house was three hundred and fifty feet above the level of the ocean, and he couldn't stand it. He took to his bed and died stone broke."

The luncheon-bell rang, and we descended to the saloon.

CHAPTER II

THE SCHOONER

THE *Mohock* arrived late in the evening off Gravesend, and slept all night abreast of that town at a mooring buoy. The remaining cabin passengers came on board, for we were to sail early in the morning. I walked the deck with Captain Sinclair and others, one of whom was Mrs. Wills, wife of the Colonel, an immensely stout, good-natured, rather vulgar woman, entirely shapeless in bulk, and crowned with a wig like a negro's head of hair, only that it was a sort of lilac. Her lips were like parings of tomato. I believe she had been on the stage, and I observed that at the dinner table she conversed with a certain off-hand frankness with Mr. Jackson, who looked a full perception of her past, whilst his manner and speech must have reassured her.

I was beginning to enjoy myself. This was a new scene of existence, and I liked it. There could be no more thorough change from the somewhat tedious insipid days of my

life ashore. Those first hours of night; the silence and the mystery and uncertainty of darkness upon the breast of the streaming waters are one of the clearest of my memories. The lights of Gravesend sparkle windily upon the dusky low loom of the land; here and there a light forlornly winks upon the flat, black level opposite; ships pass and repass—pale shapes of cloud; the spars of our own vessel soar star-high, and the brilliants of the sky trembling in the squares of the rigging and gleaming in jewels at the yardarms, measure to the vision the promise of a spread of wing that makes a miracle of the slender hull of the clipper.

When I awoke in the morning, Gravesend was far astern, and the wide river lay in a bed of glittering light under the bows, with the soaring sun flashing over large spaces of clouds like banks of snow. The tug was running us through smooth water, and the reflection of a brassy motionless cloud on the left went with us. A few pinions of canvas glanced like marble between the masts and to the jib-boom ends. It was a sweet air, and a glad picture to rise from one's bed to: a morning of silver clouds and sunshine on the sails.

And it was very well till the afternoon; then a breeze sprang up, the tug had let go

of us—the swell of the sea was to be felt like a pulse in the river's mouth. The ship was clothed to her trucks and leaned from the wind, and the white water from her bows rolled in a glittering race to her wake, dying out in a pale stream far astern in the diamond trembling of the wind-brushed waters.

I was suffering from headache and nausea, but hearing that the ship was royally clothed —the clergyman who had sighed at sight of the prison hulk came below with a face of delight to carry his wife on deck to view the picture—I stepped above, and stood beside the wheel; but I was too sick for sentiment. I felt the vessel's stern heave and fall, and heard the sob and laugh of spinning waters under the counter; so I immediately returned below and for two days lay miserably ill, in which time I was frequently visited by my stepfather, who saw that the stewardess failed me in nothing.

When eventually I crawled upon deck on the arm of the stewardess, I emerged into a scene as full of freshness and glory to me as the world of the poet's youth was to him. A strong wind blew, yet the ship sailed steadily on her side; no land was in sight; the sea was a dark blue everywhere, glancing in lines of melting heads of froth, and small white clouds were scaling off the sky, like a scatter-

ing of large blobs of foam up there. Close to was a black ship which we were slowly passing. She was sheathed with green metal, and plunged more than we did, and the water leapt in white flashes from her gaunt flanks and haunches. She heeled over till we could see her dark decks full of people, and the German flag flew at her gaff end. I watched her with delight; she was no beauty as a ship, yet she showed like a romance of nature in that setting of sea, with the full and milky bosoms of her canvas bowing to us, and the clouds of the horizon fanning betwixt the wings at her jib-boom.

Monsignor Luard came up and talked to me. He was a tall, gentlemanly man, with fine, dark speaking eyes, of French extraction; but he spoke English well, with an American accent. He was full of the old home, and he talked of the city of Canterbury with a countenance of ecstasy. The Rev. Mr. Macbride, the young married parson, drew near.

"I cannot behold such a cathedral without grudging it to you," says Monsignor, smiling. "There Becket was slain, and there those who are of Becket's faith should continue to worship."

"I don't quite see that," said Mr. Macbride, nervously.

Monsignor, looking down upon him, con-

tinued to smile. "The cathedral was built by the Papists, as you call us," said he.

"It was built by our forefathers," said Mr. Macbride, spunkily, "who reformed their faith and went on worshipping in the churches that belonged to them."

Monsignor Luard bowed and made no answer.

I thought whilst I listened to them, "I wonder if the husband my stepfather has in his eye for me is on board?" It was a silly thought. I had no earthly reason to conclude that the Captain was taking me this voyage with the idea of getting me married. Still I cast my eyes about the deck. We were but sixteen in the cabin, not counting the surgeon and mates. I knew them all, that is, by sight; half a score were visible whilst I stood talking with Monsignor. There was no man likely to make me a husband amongst us. Besides the people I have named, I recollect a German Jew named Bergheim, another who was a civil engineer—I forget his name, and two or three ladies of no moment here.

"Did you ever cross the equator, Monsignor?" says Colonel Nathan Wills, strolling up.

"Thrice," answered the other.

"What was the longest time a ship was ever becalmed on the line?" asked the Colonel.

Monsignor shrugged.

Mr. Macbride exclaimed, "Would you say a week?"

My stepfather hearing this, stepped from the binnacle and exclaimed, "The longest time I can't say. Twelve years ago I was becalmed for fifty days at one stretch."

"Fifty days!" burst out Mr. Macbride, shrivelling his lips as though whistling.

"Old Father Dominick was in the right," said Monsignor Luard. "He boasted of having cut the line five times, and that's enough, says he, in a wise man's opinion. He considered you mad to cross the equator, unless you went purely to serve God. He has these words: 'I never found any manner of alteration in myself or anything else, that is, through crossing the equator.'"

"We owe the Flying Dutchman and the mermaid to the early wondering wanderers," said the Colonel.

"I remember," exclaimed my stepfather, "a passenger, a person of average intelligence, after crossing the equator expressing his astonishment at finding rainbows the same as in England."

"We don't cross the equator to get to America, I think?" said Mr. Macbride, doubtfully.

Monsignor viewed him with silent surprise; my stepfather returned to the binnacle stand,

and I went a little way forward, leaving the parson to be answered by the Colonel.

I had now the spirits and the humour to enjoy the beauty of the ship, and walking up to the mate who stood in the swinging shadows of the main rigging with his hands behind him looking straight aloft, I pointed up and asked him what that sail was.

"The main royal," he answered, with an uneasy glance at the Captain, for at sea the mate in charge has no business to talk with the passengers.

I stepped back and took in the whole shining frame of canvas that dwindled on high into the little sail the man had named; it swelled cloud-like from the yard, as though rejoicing in its privacy of splendour. Oh! what is nobler than a ship in full sail clothed with the fire of the sun? I leaned over the side watching the passing frostwork of foam, more delicate and beautiful than the green lace of leaves against the sky. The ship carried studding sails, and the heeling canvas whitened the water as though it were the silver gleams cast by the wings of a swan. The life of the glorious day was in the vessel —not in her own foaming speeding only, nor in the spirit of vitality I seemed to find in every swollen cloth; it was in the passengers too; children were playing in the scuppers,

groups on the quarter-deck lounged in cosy talk, there was an alacrity in the motion of the sailors, a cheerful hoarseness in the crowing of the cocks, and the smoke from the galley chimney flew merrily down upon the sea over the bulwark rail.

This fine weather and still finer breeze lasted some days, and drove us eight hundred miles towards the heart of the North Atlantic. The voyage promised in sunshine and company to be as jolly as a yachting jaunt, and again and again I told Captain Sinclair that I had never enjoyed myself so much in my life. The passengers were exceedingly agreeable. Mr. Jackson was excellent company at table; never went louder laughter through a ship's skylight than ours through the *Mohock's*, and I peculiarly relished some quiet strolls and equally quiet arguments with Monsignor Luard. I speedily saw that, priest-like, he would be glad to convert me, and I was pleased to let him see by my opinions and views how well sunk were the foundations of my faith as an English Churchwoman.

But, unconsciously to themselves, the most diverting people on board were Mr. and Mrs. Macbride. They were fresh from a rural parish; the hayseed smelt strongly in their hair, as the sailor says, and this was a scene of wonder and enchantment. They smiled

arm in arm all day long, peered into everything, asked questions from morning till night. I see them now, always arm in arm, abreast of the galley, and smiling into the doorway past which the cook and his mate were at work. Captain Sinclair, standing beside me, said, "He's a good cook, but he's a sot, and swears terribly; I wish he mayn't scald himself or break anything whilst Adam and Eve yonder are looking on."

It was strange he should have said this; for a moment later the clergyman whipped his bride round, she still smiling, he with a face pale with disgust. Captain Sinclair, biting his lip, walked aft. But the clergyman soon rallied his spirits, whilst she clearly had heard nothing she understood, and presently they were at their old amusement of staring and prying again, smiling at the hencoops, peeping under the longboat at the old sow, stepping aft to examine the pumps, whose mechanism I overheard him explaining to her, then inspecting the quarter-deck capstan, whose use he with smiling civility called to the mate to explain, but old Gordon with a sour leer told him that he had the ship to look after, and that as he was a man born with but one head and two hands, he never undertook two jobs at once.

This day I noticed for the first time a

gloom and anxiety in the looks of my stepfather. He had been comparatively cheerful to this period. He now recalled the manner I had remarked in him when I met him on returning home from my sister's. He held aloof, walked the deck alone, spoke only when he was accosted, and then briefly.

They usually dined at three on board the American packets in those days, and at half-past seven a substantial meat-tea was served. Some time before we were summoned to this last meal I had been walking the deck with a lady, and I thought to myself that my stepfather seemed to be keeping a curiously vigilant look-out upon the sea. He would dart a falcon glance at the horizon from under a seemingly drowsy droop of lid, sweeping with those lightning quick looks the line of the deep on either hand. His handsome face was grim with its habitual frown. I wondered if he expected a shift of wind, or saw signs of a change of weather in the flight of the clouds and the ragged line of the sea-circle, defined as the edge of a saw against the hard, faint, distant blue of the afternoon.

When we went below to tea, I heard him at the head of the companion ladder call to the second mate, one Mr. Turnbull, to report anything that should heave in sight. He took his place in silence, merely giving a stiff bow

to one or two of the ladies. Sunset still threw a red glare over the green Atlantic, but down in this cabin the lamps were lighted, for the dusk of the night was inside the ship. Most of the gentlemen seemed in high spirits.

"Let me send you a slice of this pork, Captain," called out Colonel Wills.

"I do not digest pork," answered the Captain, distantly.

"Well, I am one of those clever people who do not trouble to digest," said the Colonel with a loud laugh, helping himself to a great slice.

"Mr. Jackson," exclaimed Mr. Bergheim, "what might be your opinion of Mr. Macready Fenton?"

"Why, that he's one of those clever men who can do everything but get a living," answered Mr. Jackson.

"Ain't he an imitator of yours, Jackson?" called Colonel Wills.

"So they say," answered the actor. "One of those chaps who pull the feathers from a brother's tail; but he can't stop me from flying."

"I had read that your mantle would fall upon him," said Mr. Bergheim earnestly.

"He'll be glad when he gets it," said Mr. Jackson, with a sarcastic glance at his own coat, which was a brand new garment of a very loud pattern.

"We shall have made a good run by to-morrow, Captain, if this wind lasts," said Monsignor Luard.

"Yes, sir; we are a fast ship."

"Do you know, I am of opinion that steam will never supersede sail," said Mr. Macbride, looking nervously around.

Mr. Jackson, leaning backwards to see me past the huge figure of Mrs. Wills, whom I sat next to, exclaimed, contorting his face, "Do you know why man is inferior to beasts? Because beasts have no opinions."

Mrs. Wills chuckled in her bust, and said in a deep voice, "One beast has, though."

"That is my opinion," said Mr. Macbride.

Nobody cared about the subject and it dropped.

The Colonel told a story of two men who went into partnership. Each wanted the other to die. One was consumptive, the other rheumatic. He amused us with his description of the pleasure the rheumatic man took in saying that he didn't think his partner looked so well, and the happiness of the other when, in answer to inquiries, he'd say, "You should have heard him a-hollering." Mr. Bergheim laughed heartily at this. In the midst of this gentleman's high notes of merriment my stepfather rose, bowed, and went on deck.

"Anything going to happen to the weather, Mr. Gordon?" said the Colonel to the mate, who was following the Captain.

"If I could answer that question, gentlemen," answered Mr. Gordon, halting at the foot of the steps, "I'd not be mate of a ship," and with that he went up the ladder, leaving us to guess his reason.

"He means, of course, that he would get his fortune ashore," said Monsignor Luard.

"The Captain doesn't seem very well," said Mr. Bergheim, looking at me.

"He is quite well, I believe," I answered.

"What says the barometer?" cried Mr. Jackson, with a theatrical start in his chair, and he walked on melodramatic legs to the shaft of the mizzenmast, where the weather-glass was hanging; but though he looked at it, first with his head on one side, then on t'other, it was clear he didn't understand it.

The ladies rose and I went to my cabin. When I stepped on deck it was dark, but I had not been long above when the moon shone: she streaked the line of the horizon under her with crystal that looked, with the play of the sea, like the flashing of bubbles under ice. She made a fair light presently, and the horizon opened to its recesses.

"What is more beautiful than a ship under sail lighted by the moon?" said Monsignor

Luard, approaching me. "Look at those heights of canvas: they stream into vapour to the stars."

It was blowing a fine sailing wind. I leaned with Monsignor over the side, and watched the water roaring off at each plunge of the bows in sheets of liquid ivory. The forecastle was covered with 'tween-decks passengers and sailors, who moved about in groups of ashy shapes; a fiddle and flute were making a concert in the fore part, and whilst I watched the foam with the priest, the musicians, along with a powerful, clear, manly voice, struck up "The Bay of Biscay." Mr. Jackson coming to me said, "What is the Captain looking at?"

I turned and saw my stepfather standing on the quarter-deck, not far from the wheel, with a binocular glass at his eyes. He let drop the glass presently, and shouted:

"Clew up the fore and mizzen royals and take in the flying jib."

The order was repeated by the second mate, and in a few moments we heard a noise of sailors' hoarse bawling forward and on the quarter-deck: the high light sails melted out, and I watched the figure of a young seaman spring into the mizzen shrouds.

"In main royal," presently cried out the Captain. "Get the mizzen topgallant sail clewed up and stowed," and when this was

done the great mainsail was taken in and rolled up by a crowd of men.

The ship then looked half-clad, and her appearance seemed to cast a menace of storm into the night. Yet it was fine weather, the moon and stars bright, the clouds fleecy and nimble of wing; the sea under the moon rolled in broken silver, and the horizon showed clearly to its confines, a dark girdle, like a belt silver-clasped.

"What's wrong with the weather?" exclaimed the actor at my side. "Why, split me if the ship isn't sitting upright!—there's nothing left for the wind to blow into."

"I will trust to the Captain's judgment," said Monsignor.

"He has been at sea all his life," I exclaimed. "There is no more experienced sailor out of London."

"But don't you know, Monsignor," said Mr. Jackson, looking aloft with a woe-begone expression in his moon-whitened face, "that discretion may be more licentious than art? Here is a noble breeze and a fine night."

"There is always a grumbler amongst passengers, Miss Hayes," said Monsignor, laughing. "Who would suppose that the very spirit of comedy itself could take a despondent view of a careful skipper who understands the barometer?"

"Seems a pity, though," said Mr. Jackson, looking down at the white passing water.

It was just then that, happening to glance from the throbbing edge of silver under the moon to a little distance along the defined line of the sea, I saw the pearl-like spire of a sail. Captain Sinclair was watching it through his night-glass. He suddenly called to the second mate:

"Jump below and see what further fall there is, if any."

Turnbull returned and said, "There's no further fall, sir."

"It's drop enough," exclaimed the Captain, as though he wished others than Turnbull to hear him, and then told the officer to haul down the standing jib and clew up the fore topgallant sail, and when these sails were stowed away to brail up the spanker.

There could be no doubt from this that he was expecting heavy weather. Monsignor, who had not looked at the barometer, stepped below after an uneasy glance around. He returned soon, and said that the fall, so far as he could judge, was about half an inch.

"Is that serious?" said Jackson.

"There's your answer," responded the priest, with a flourish of his hand at the masts.

"A ship!" shouted Mr. Bergheim, springing

with excitement off the grating abaft the wheel.

The sail I had seen was now under the moon, and on a sudden after some minutes, as though by magic, it swept out of the black curve it made upon the rolling river of silver into the lines and pale canvas of a schooner. She came along heading for us in a racing way, the white water throbbing to her figure-head, and rushing from her swiftly as foam runs to the cataract's steep.

"What an apparition!" shouted Mr. Jackson, flying across the deck.

We crowded to the side to look. She foamed to within pistol-shot, then put her helm down, and ranged abreast with rattling canvas, chopping into the long black tumbling seas, and showing a fabric of about a hundred tons, keen as a knife in the entry, and she whitened the night where she was by the breadth and the height of her moonlit sails. The moon-beams sparkled in her wet sides; you saw green stars of it in the bright stuff upon her decks. She was a phantom just now in the airy distance, and as she lay pitching close abreast, easily holding her own with a frequent shuddering of her sails, one thought of her as sprung from the deep or fallen from the heavens, so sudden the dusk and the wild flying lights of the night made it all.

Her white decks glanced as she rolled towards us, and I saw two or three figures near her long tiller. "Ship ahoy!" was shouted, "what ship's that?"

Captain Sinclair answered, and asked what schooner was that.

"The *Reindeer*, from New Orleans to Bristol," was the reply, delivered by a hoarse salt throat. Those notes from the sea sounded wildly through the noise of the wind aloft and the boiling hiss of the water alongside. "Our chronometer's stopped. We've lost our reckoning. Will you give us the longitude and your time?"

This was promptly done.

"Thank you, sir," was shouted. "Good night, and a prosperous voyage to you."

The schooner's helm was shifted, her head fell off, she rounded and swept away astern of us, and was swiftly showing as a star in mist in the distant gloom.

I observed that the second mate watched her. I was standing near the skylight at the time, not far from Captain Sinclair, who gazed fixedly seawards, as though conjecturing the weather. The second mate came up, touching his cap, and I heard him say, "If that schooner's bound for Bristol, sir, she's lost scent of it."

The Captain turned his head quickly and

looked at the distant film of light. "Well, she must be allowed to know her own business," said he after a short pause, and there was temper enough in his voice I thought to account for the second mate slinking away.

It was about half-past nine; grog and biscuits were upon the cabin-table, and the lamps shone upon the figures of some of the passengers playing at cribbage or chess.

"I guess, Captain, by the look of your ship, we're to smell hell before morning," said Colonel Wills, stepping into the moonlight with a cigar in his mouth out of the ebony shadow of the mizzenmast that swung on the white planks almost as a pendulum goes.

"There's a considerable fall in the glass," answered the Captain, "a sudden fall; there will be a sudden rise, no doubt, but I will not trust the weather in this sea with the mercury at that indication."

CHAPTER III

A SHIP'S BOAT OF TWELVE MEN

When I went to bed, I expected the night would prove sleepless with storm. The ship was under small canvas, and the water fell from her side sloppily and without life as she drove slowly, with floating lunges, over the long flowing lines of brine. I got into bed and put out the lamp, but had not been resting twenty minutes when I heard my stepfather's voice outside my door. You could hear plainly owing to the ventilating arrangement of venetian blinds over the doors of the berths.

"The glass remains steady."

The man who answered was the mate. "I don't understand it, sir; my glass shows a rise."

"Since when?"

"Since seven o'clock."

"The cabin glass and the glass in my berth tally. What sort of a glass is yours?"

They were moving when this was said, and I lost the answer. I fell asleep soon after-

wards, and when I awoke next morning my cabin was full of sunlight and the ship sailing along quietly. I dressed, and entering the saloon, met Monsignor coming down the companion-ladder. He saluted me and said it was a beautiful morning, and the sea was like a frozen lake under the sun, and at the edge of it was a little pinnacle of ice.

"Ice!" cried I.

"Yes," he answered, "and when you go on deck you'll taste its breath in the wind."

Just then Captain Sinclair came out of his cabin, gravely kissed me on the forehead, and shook hands with the priest.

"So we had a fine night after all, Captain?" exclaimed Monsignor.

"I have crossed the Atlantic many times, and this puzzles me," answered the Captain, making a step to the mizzenmast and looking at the barometer. "But the atmosphere is a mystery, full of stealthy qualities. They creep into those indications," said he, pointing to the mercury, "and perplex us. I looked for a gale last night, and prepared the ship for it."

I had heard so much about the barometer that my curiosity was excited, and I went to my stepfather's side to look at the thing. It consisted of a tube of glass, with a bulb full of mercury at the bottom of it; this was

sunk into a wooden backing, and the whole contained in a long narrow case with a glass door, of which the Captain had the key, though I will not be sure that the instrument had not hitherto been set day by day by the mate.

"There has been no rise," says Monsignor, peering at the mercury.

"Yes, there is a fine-weather convexity. It will keep fine, I believe," said the Captain, and he went on deck.

I followed, but did not join him, for, despite his kiss and his grave courteous manner to the priest, there was a subtle something in his manner that was as good as a hint to me to leave him alone.

The wind had shifted, was blowing on the port quarter, and had fallen somewhat light, and the ship floated slowly forwards in curtseys as regular as the rhymes of a song over the wide blue Atlantic heave. I never saw the sky look so high before. It was a pavement of delicate cloud, all rosy with the morning light, plume-shaped, enwreathed and motionless. The sun sparkled with a frosty whiteness, and there was in the air an edge that had been wanting yesterday. To the trucks soared the sails, the yards almost square, and on the left hung wide spaces of lustrous canvas called studding-sails; their light in the sea ran steady by the side of the

ship. The sun was behind us, and when I looked that way I could see nothing for the dazzle.

Mr. Jackson, however, stood staring through the ship's telescope which he had levelled directly into the heart of the bed of brilliance.

"What do you see?" said I.

"Ice," said he, turning his head: the eye he had been using showed as though he had caught a cold in it. "Look, Miss Hayes."

He held the glass, but when I looked I was blinded by the glory. Mr. Macbride and his wife came up arm in arm, and the clergyman asked us what we saw.

"There's an iceberg out there under the sun," said Mr. Jackson.

"An iceberg!" exclaimed Mr. Macbride. "Where? Dear me! Are we approaching it? No, it is astern. It is under the sun, and may melt before we can catch a clear view of it. An iceberg! Oh, Joanna, we must not think of returning without having beheld one of the greatest wonders of the deep."

"I cannot see it," whined his wife, crying with the blaze she was screwing up her pretty eyes at.

"Look!" exclaimed the comedian, pointing—"just over the end of my finger. Now you have it."

But now they hadn't it, nor could I catch

the least glimpse of the object, and wondered that the priest and the actor should both agree it was there. And yet it was there: the Captain called across the deck to tell us so, and after we had waited a little it stole out of the effulgence into the blue on the right. It might have been the sail of a cutter: it was a mere gleam upon the horizon. Yet it was ice, the topmost point of an island sunk beyond our sight, and I viewed it with silent wonder.

"Is it solid?" asked Mr. Macbride.

"As the floor of a ball-room, and as unsubstantial as a shadow on a fog," answered the actor.

A passenger who carried his elbows like a grasshopper—I forget his name—joined us in staring at the distant gleam.

"I wonder if I could get a slide representing an iceberg for a magic-lantern?" said Mr. Macbride.

Mr. Jackson smiled with one eye at me; it was like a wink.

"Were you ever cast ashore and left alone upon an iceberg?" asked the passenger with the grasshopper elbows, addressing Mr. Macbride.

"I? Oh, dear no! Oh, certainly not," answered the parson, looking at his wife, and laughing, and they laughed together.

"I was, then," said the passenger. "I went on a whaling cruise for my health, and they sent me in a boat to an ice island at my request. I climbed a bit, and looked about me, and when I returned the boat was gone. They found me again after two days."

"Alive?" asked Mr. Jackson.

"The worst part of it," continued the passenger, deepening and subduing his voice till I saw the parson straining at him with an open mouth, "was not the hunger, nor the cold, nor even the solitude. It was the midnight silence. A stillness unutterable, so deep, so awful, I vow to heaven I could hear my beard growing."

He turned his back upon us and walked away.

"There are as many lies in that little tale as a cat has hairs in hers," said Mr. Jackson. "He speaks of the silence of ice. Nothing is noisier than a berg. It is splitting ceaselessly in all parts, and roars through its own dismemberment like a line-of-battle-ship in action."

"The breakfast-bell, my dear!" said Mr. Macbride, who always hearkened with a doubting, suspicious face when the actor spoke, and presently we were all at table.

Nothing more was said about the fall of the glass on the previous evening, nor of the eight

hours' arrest of the ship through the deceit of the mercury. Captain Sinclair's manner was hard and reserved. He ate quickly, and was gone from the table before we were half-way through the meal. I guessed from the looks of the passengers that they would have talked about him had I been out of hearing.

The needle of ice on the far verge of the deep had vanished when I returned on deck, and the sea was a barren breast, but flashing like a silver shield under the springing light. The wind had freshened, shifted into a quarter that was good for the slide of our keel, and the ship was winging nimbly onwards, pointing her yardarms at the sky, and throwing the water in coloured fountains of foam from her shearing bows with every stoop into the blue hollow.

Captain Sinclair paced the weather side of the quarter-deck alone. I saw the Colonel go up to him as though for a chat; he drew off after a few minutes. Two ladies then went and addressed the commander. His manner gave them no encouragement, and he was soon walking alone again. From time to time he would dart a swift glance in my direction, and I seemed to know instinctively that he suspected I was watching him. It is true I should have done so, but his looks were like a warning,

topped as they were with the shadow of his habitual frown, and I crossed the deck to leeward out of his observation, and entertained myself for a long hour in looking at the ship, and studying the marvellous foam traceries which darted like tongues into the clear blue from the edge of the creaming whiteness that came boiling from the bows, and in watching the seamen at work aloft and on deck. It was still all wondrous strange and new to me. I thought I might never again have a chance to make a voyage, and I let the whole miracle of sails and sunshine and gleaming waters sink into me in all its glory and freshness. Nor did my eyes and sympathies fail me; the memory of it is a brilliant picture still.

This morning at about eleven o'clock a smoke sprang up right ahead. A great smoke it was, as though a ship lay burning there, but after a little while the telescope resolved the throat of it into the mouth of a red funnel, and in three-quarters of an hour a large paddle-steamer was on the bow. Our number flew in a string of bright colours at the mizzen gaff, and the steamer's name streamed in coloured bunting at her masthead. She was the *Britannia*, memorable as one of the earliest of the Cunard steamers. With my mind's eye I behold her distinctly. She had a tall red funnel and three masts,

and a frigate-like bow, with a row of gleaming square ports abaft. She was but a little bigger than our ship, yet looked a lump as she rolled by. She was from Boston for Liverpool. All her canvas was furled, and she was churning through the water at about eight knots, which was fast as speed then went in steam. She had met with a gale and looked wrecked. One paddle-box was gone, and the huge wheel whirled round naked, slinging the foam on high, and filling the air all about the black and plunging circle with fragments of flying rainbow. The face of her funnel was whitened as by snow with a crust of salt. Dense volumes of smoke poured from her chimney. How those old steamers smoked! The end of the stream of soot went out of sight past the horizon.

A large crowd of people surveyed us from her decks, but the two ships were too far apart for hailing. Broken as she appeared by storm, rolling heavily too, whilst our own ship took the rhythm of the sea with a dancing grace that never brought her spars erect, we viewed her with wonder, with almost breathless interest. You who are living in an age of huge steamers, whose accustomed eye finds something insipid in the proudest of the giantesses of the ocean processions, will not, unless you be old and of good memory,

realise the enthusiastic interest people took in those early experiments. Then you might sail the sea for months without seeing a steamer. When such a spectacle offered, the eye devoured it. It was a miracle, the lordliest of the achievements of human genius and invention. The seamen dropped their tasks to look: the 'tween-deck passengers crowded the bulwark rail: we saloon folks lined the bulwarks all staring. Yonder she walked, as independent of the wind of heaven as the seabird that followed her.

"In so many days," we said to one another, "her people will have arrived at home," and it was astounding to think a ship could be timed, as if she were a coach or a locomotive.

Her white wake made a wide path on the sea, and her windows shone like jewels over it.

"After that, who shall tell you man hasn't an immortal soul?" said Colonel Wills.

Monsignor Luard smiled his approval of the sentiment.

"I hope the weather that hammered her will have blown itself out before we arrive," said some one.

"Charles Dickens went out to Boston in that ship two years ago," said the Grasshopper passenger. "I made the passage with him."

"Is he funny in his conversation?" said

Mr. Macbride, catching at this remark with a literary sympathy.

"They laughed quite as much at me," answered the Grasshopper.

"Is she a comfortable vessel, sir?" inquired Mr. Gordon.

"Look at her rolling out yonder; and this is a fine morning," said the Grasshopper. "Comfortable! Given but a little piece of weather, and you don't know what's become of her. I'm an old sailor, yet could never stand upright on that ship in a seaway, and when I went ashore at Boston, my mother wouldn't have known me for sticking-plaister."

The comedian eyed him with a sneer. There could be no doubt the Grasshopper was a great liar.

Mr. Gordon brought his eyes away from the steamer and looked aloft, and though there was about as much sentiment in the man as there was in the harness-cask out of which the sailors picked their beef, yet I seemed to see the spirit of the seaman—of the old seaman—gleam in his eyes with an instant's pride as he gazed. He could not but contrast, he could not but delight in the beauty of this fabric of wing, alive with the spirit of the viewless winds, sentient with the intelligence of the ocean itself.

This was fine weather for the Atlantic. I had never dared dream of such continuity of blue sky and sparkling nights as had been granted us. Captain Sinclair would often talk of this sea at home; many a yarn of its ice and its hurricane, its surge taller than the Andean billow of the Horn, had he recited, and I had reckoned upon the excitement of half a dozen gales of wind at least—the ship stripped, the rigging raving, the hurricane of the midnight white with foam—before we arrived at New York.

A strange mysterious thing happened this day—a silent tragedy. It may have occurred when the *Britannia* was abreast of us, or when her smoke was as dim as a length of spider's silk above the horizon.

The *Mohock* carried a boat called the Captain's gig, a handsome little fabric that hung by irons over the stern. I had on more than one occasion observed the ship's doctor sitting in that boat looking down at the water boiling about the rudder, and heard him tell Monsignor at table that when the ship was moving swiftly through the sea, and the white yeast from the bows came roaring aft to the sternpost with a noise of thunder ere it swept in its white wrath to the wake, the breast and picture of reeling snow sheeting and twisting into a thousand

fantastic shapes was such a splendid revelation of shining and endless beauty that he could sit all day long looking.

He was in the gig when the *Britannia* was approaching us. I had observed him leaning over the seaward side of the boat, staring off at the line of light on the water, but by and bye, when he was inquired for, he was missing. The word went along "Where's the doctor? The doctor's wanted in the 'tween-decks." Those who had observed him in the boat of course supposed, as I had, that he had long before left her and gone below. But he was not below, nor was he in the ship. There could be no doubt he had overbalanced himself and fallen; if ever he rose in the roar of the reeling wash, the distance was already too great for his half-suffocated voice to measure. The man at the wheel had heard nothing; the people lounging about the decks had seen nothing, and yet, as we came afterwards to know for certain, he had fallen overboard out of the boat somewhile between the hour when the *Britannia* was abreast of us, and when her smoke was a shred on the sea-line.

Yet important as he was to the needs of the ship as doctor, his loss made little or no impression. We had not been long enough together to find death the significant, depress-

ing thing it is when it beckons out one with whom you have long been associated at sea. The Grasshopper hinted at suicide, and the Colonel looked as if that might be possible; but my stepfather and the rest of us thought differently. The doctor had been a very grave, quiet man, of middle age, well preserved, and, as we understood, going as surgeon to sea for the first time, mainly for his health. Of all the men in that ship, he was the least likely to commit suicide.

Throughout this day my stepfather was almost continuously on deck. He scarcely stayed at table to make a meal; when he went below to work out the sights, he did not linger in his cabin. His behaviour was vigilant rather than restless. He was very grave and formal, and kept himself apart as hitherto. He seemed subdued and distressed by the disappearance of the doctor. None of the passengers had crossed the Atlantic with him before, and though it was hard for me to guess what they thought—for of course in my presence they never spoke of him except with good taste—I guessed, and perhaps correctly on the whole, they reckoned him a prig, lacking in all the ancient qualities of the seafarer—such as swearing, drinking, smoking, and the like—yet a very capable sailor, to be treated with respect and exactly as he

wished, seeing that the lives of all hands were in his. I caught Gordon—I am still speaking of this day of the *Britannia*—glancing at him with a puzzled look on several occasions during the afternoon while the ship drove along under studding-sails, and while the purple-faced mate paced a little piece of the deck abreast of the main rigging. The incident of the barometer had doubtless perplexed the man, as of course it must have astonished my stepfather, though I had heard him make no further reference to it after his few words on the subject to Monsignor. What took the mate's eye was, I saw, the unconscious posture of vigilance Captain Sinclair carried. We all know the seaman's trick, as he steps the deck, of sending a look to windward and then aloft every time he swings round on his heel; but with my father there seemed a straining of the vision after something more than the weather.

I happened to cross the deck that afternoon where he walked, and on my coming close, he stopped to speak. He looked at me a little earnestly, and after talking a bit about the doctor, exclaimed—

"The breeze has driven the East End fog out of your complexion, Laura. I never saw you look so well. I believe if the Pope could be induced to sanction the joke,

that handsome priest you are so fond of walking with and arguing with would be glad to tuck your arm under his. He watches you now," he added, and his face relaxed.

"I'm to be married in New York, I believe," said I, laughing.

"Who says so?"

"I got some such meaning out of what you said at home."

He struggled to remember, then grew absent suddenly, and stared round the horizon.

"This seems an anxious command, father," said I, for so I would sometimes call him.

"What was that about your getting married at New York?" said he, with his face darkening as he brought his eyes from mine to the sea.

"Oh, no matter. The having charge of a ship seems a depressing business."

"Ah! a business it is," said he grimly; "and so you mind yours that I may mind mine." Then softening, he added, "Tell them, Laura, if they ask you why I'm reserved, that it's my custom at sea to look to my ship, and to the safety of the lives and property in her, and to heed little else. That's what they would wish, hey? Would the Colonel have me boozing in secret? Would that priest there have me too much

intent on the game to lift my head to a call from the mate?"

It was fine that evening, with a quiet, long roll of sea, and wind enough to slightly heel the ship. I found it cold on deck after supper, and returned to the saloon, where I was glad to kill the time by a game of draughts with Mrs. Wills. Two or three persons sat in conversation past the mizzen-mast—I forget who they were. Probably they did not know I was in the cabin, and they talked of my stepfather.

"He's not approachable. The man seems ill, to my mind."

"I don't think old Gordon understands him. But he'll say nothing about his captain. It's the way of the sea, I reckon."

"It would ruin discipline and demoralise the ship if the officers talked against one another. No, old Gordon's right, I allow, and of the two men the better sailor, you bet."

"This is not the full ship a popular captain's name would command. A skipper should qualify as host as well as master mariner before he takes charge of a passenger vessel. Old Figgins of the *Siberia* is my ideal: hearty as salt beef, lively and genial at table, would answer your question civilly, though in the midst of a sudden hurricane, with his masts going over the side."

The silence was abrupt, as though I had been suddenly spied, and they talked of other things.

Not long after this I heard a commotion overhead, a little hurry of footsteps, and a cry or two. The steward came down the companion steps at that moment, and the Grasshopper passenger, who was reading in a corner, called out to him to know what was up.

"A rocket, sir," answered the steward, "and they seem to think it was fired out of an open boat."

This, of course, started us all. I rushed for a warm jacket, and was on deck in a few moments. A bright sheet of light lay heaving in greenish silver under the moon. The stars were plentiful, and trembled low down to the sea-line, which stood firm as the edge of an ebony table against the scintillant dusk. The breasts of our ship's canvas swelled white as snow moonwards, and a noise of broken waters arose from alongside where it was black as a well with the ship's shadow. Every soul was on deck, and all were staring in one direction, and I could not but look the same way, too, the instant I arrived, for lo! out of the heart of the darkness upon the deep, well away to the left of the moon's wake, up leapt in that moment a

fireball: it vanished in a dust of fire, and a minute later I heard Captain Sinclair, who stood with a night-glass at his eyes near one of the quarter-boats, call out to the helmsman to port.

"Brace in the mainyards—the rest may stand," he exclaimed, addressing the second mate.

"What is it, Captain Sinclair?" said Monsignor.

"So far as I can distinguish, an open boat, sir."

"Must not that signify some disaster?" said the priest.

"Very like, very like," answered the Captain. "Many ships find this a dangerous sea."

Half-a-dozen passengers gathered about the commander, and vollied questions into him. He drew clear of them presently, with what civilities of answer I knew not, for I had walked off; he spied me standing aft in the moonlight near the wheel and came to my side.

"Some people," said he, "are such pestilent questioners, that if they were to ask a man the time, and he in the act of pulling out his watch fell dead, they would stir him about with their feet, saying 'What's the time? Why don't you answer?'"

This was a hint to me to be silent. He lifted his glass and looked in the direction where the fireball had sprung. I saw nothing, but in about ten minutes a boat shaped itself out of the liquid dusk and a distant voice hailed us. The Captain bawled to Mr. Gordon, who had come on deck, to tell the people in the boat to look out for a line; this the mate did in a voice that roared through the quiet night-wind like the explosion of a mortar.

Five minutes later the boat was alongside. The shadow was so thick I could make out no more than the outline of a large boat, apparently full of men, whose faces made a strange wavering glimmer in the darkness when they looked up.

The Captain called down, "Who are you and what boat's that?"

"We're the survivors of the crew of the barque *Demerara*, sir," replied a powerful but somewhat husky voice.

"How long have you been adrift?"

"Two days, sir."

"Have you your captain?"

"No, sir. The master, mates, and two of the crew, and some passengers got away in the quarter-boats."

"How many of you are there?"

"Twelve."

"Come aboard," said Captain Sinclair.

They got the boat to the main-chains, and I went some way forwards towards the gangway to see them come over the side. The moon made plenty of light; every shadow lay in lines and curves of jet. Passengers and crew formed groups with a lane for the men to pass through. The mate stood near to receive them, but my stepfather walked alone near the wheel.

I counted twelve hearty-looking fellows as they dropped on to our decks from the bulwark rail without any signs of exhaustion. They were variously clad in the ordinary garb of the merchant seaman of that period, woollen shirts, Scotch caps, here and there a round jacket, trousers ending in bluchers; most of them carried a sheath-knife strapped upon the hip.

I looked at one very hard; the face, that was of a peculiar greenish-white in the moonlight, seemed familiar. Where had I seen that man? I stared again eagerly, making a step, but on turning fully towards me he seemed another. I was extremely puzzled, and continued to stare until the man was taken aft by the mate to tell his story, whilst the rest trudged forward in charge of the boatswain of the ship.

We of the saloon went aft along with the

man, and the 'tween-decks folks elbowed after the others, tramping forward, leaving the maindeck empty. We stood about the Captain in the bright light of the moon; the seaman fronted him, a tall, sinewy, soldierly-looking chap. The boat alongside hissed through the ripples to the drag of her line.

"What was the name of your captain?"

"Ludlow, sir."

"What caused the loss of the ship?"

"Fire. She was full up with burnable stuffs, oil, spirits, coal tar, matches, gin, and the like. We was from London. When we smelt the smoke and saw the fire, all hands reckoned it was good-night with the vessel. She couldn't remain a ship with such a cargo."

"You all got away in safety."

"Ay, sir, leaving her a mass of fire. The sky was alight with her. We left her at ten o'clock at night. I was bo'sun of the ship, and chucked an armful of rockets into the boat before jumping in; but for them we shouldn't have made ourselves seen by you."

"That's so," said the Captain looking seaward.

We listened with breathless interest. It was not only the human and tragic excitement of falling in with a boat-load of men: all the rich poetry and deep significance of the wide

moonlit scene of ocean we were sailing in the midst of entered into the man's narrative of the fire, re-creating it to my vision, and I saw the glowing fabric and forking flames, and smoke like a thunderstorm, strange and savage with floating red stars of fire, and I beheld the people dropping into the boats and pushing off, and the little craft with stirless oars out like the feelers of insects resting in black spots within the yellow illumination of the sea, till the light went out, and the shadow of the earth slipped off the face of the deep, and exposed a sallow breast of water, and some blackened wreckage sliding on the swell.

"Were your boats well provisioned?"

"Amply, sir. There was plenty of time. The captain gave his orders. It was our lives, and not the ship that was to be saved."

"When did you part with the other boats?"

"At the grey of this morning we found that we was alone."

"The weather has been fine. Small doubt," said the Captain, addressing us generally, "that the other boats will be accounted for. What was yours?"

"The long-boat, sir, and a good new boat."

"I'll send you men home at the first opportunity that comes along. Go forward now and see to yourself."

The man civilly saluted and went towards the forecastle.

Now I seemed to think he slightly staggered, as though worn out. All the while he had talked I had watched him by the moonlight, and sometimes would have staked my right hand that I had before seen him, and sometimes was persuaded that I was mistaken.

The Captain called to the second mate, and both went to the rail and looked into the boat alongside. He then told the officer to get her cleared out and hoisted aboard, and as he came aft he exclaimed to Colonel Wills, "She's too good a boat to lose. She will help pay the cost of the men's keep."

The excitement was over. I took no interest in seeing the ship's way stopped and the big boat hoisted on the deck and stowed; I was sleepy and chilly and subtly bewildered, perplexed in a fashion that made me wonder I should be so. I sat for a little while in the cabin, sipping a glass of wine and munching at some biscuits, and listening to some of the passengers who talked of the rescue. As I passed to my berth the seamen broke into a song on deck; the vessel's motion had been arrested and they were lifting the boat out of the sea.

CHAPTER IV

THE "MOHOCK" IS SEIZED

I SOMETIMES think of presentiments as a sort of intellectual mirages; the truth is hove up, coast-like, beyond the boundaries of the mental vision, and you feel its presence though you may be unable to distinguish its character.

When I awoke this morning, I felt as gloomy as though I had been dreaming badly all night, or had gone to bed with a trouble. I found it hard to dress owing to the high sea and the steep and darting leapings of the deck. The ship seemed to hum with storm. Every other minute the cabin porthole vanished in the green gloom of a sea; the water roared in thunder, then up would flash the window with a brightness of racing foam upon the glass that dazzled the sight.

When I was dressed it was not yet breakfast-time, and I clothed myself for the deck. Just as I opened my cabin-door the door of the Captain's cabin opened also, and forth

stepped the wiry man with the little yellow mustache who had been brought aft on the preceding night to relate his story of shipwreck to the commander. As he passed me I had a good view of him by the daylight, and then it came to me in a sort of shock of surprise that he was the very same man the servant had let in that night at my stepfather's house when he was in a hurry to have me out of the way.

The fellow glanced at me carelessly, giving a half look at the saloon and the few people in it, as he turned to spring up the companion steps.

I went slowly up those steps, holding tight, my mind very busy. Was I sure he was the same man? Oh, yes; I had keen eyes and a good memory. I could not mistake. Well, he was a seafaring man anyway, and his making one of the people of the long-boat, and his being picked up by this ship, was just a coincidence of the ocean which a sailor at all events would accept very gravely and readily. His coming out of my stepfather's cabin would signify no more than that he had been sent for that his story might be made an official note of. Captains are provided, or they provide themselves, with log-books, in which they are compelled by the law, under penalties, to enter all such experiences as this of the long-boat.

I passed through the companion and held by it, and looked about me. This was the hardest wind we had yet met. It was blowing very strong indeed. The sea rolled in ashen mountains under a motionless sky of lead. The stoop of the sky seemed within a hand's-reach of the mastheads, and it was hideous and menacing with the sulphur-coloured stuff that fled across it, more like a scattering of yellow slime than vapour; every mountainous sea was freckled, and its head roared with froth. Far as the eye could reach the sea worked in pale ridges lined with foam, and from the summit of the surge I saw the horizon spitting all the way round, as though it leapt in flakes against a barrier.

About three miles off was a little ship heading eastwards. She had painted ports and a red bilge, and at first when I saw her vanish I thought she had gone, and when she emerged I thought she would disappear in the sky. I never could have imagine a vessel capable of such antics, and marvelled that men should get about their business in such a rolling barrel. Yet she ploughed on in yeast, whitening her bulk to her tops in snow-storms as she burst into the hollows, until, and quickly, she was so far off you couldn't tell her topsails from the flashes of the sea.

But our ship was the sight of that wild

scene of morning as she stormed along aslant with the roar of the blast splitting upon the rigging into a hellish orchestra of tempest. Two narrow bands of topsails waved on high. The hurl of the clipper bow bruised the sea into a rage of spume that boiled above the forecastle head at every stoop. The yeast, with the regular leeward reel, rose in a sparkling sweep to the rail; you could have grasped the flying foam there, and the waterways sobbed, and the holes in them flashed white spouts inwards like a whale's. The watch on deck were cased in oilskins; they were setting a fore-and-aft sail on the mainmast, and drove their rude chants into the very bowels of the gale as they dragged, and their wet clothes, yellow and black, took the sulky sallow light in dull gleams as they swayed together. A large boat was stowed beside the main-hatch. It was painted black and white, and was evidently a new and handsome boat, with smooth sides; it was in the way, however, but I supposed they could find no other place for it. Her stern was pointed aft, but I saw no name.

Very few people were on deck. Mr. Gordon had charge of the ship, and he told me that this weather had been blowing since midnight. He said it was a fair wind and the ship making fine way.

"Where are the sailors who came on board last night?"

"In the fok'sle, miss, at breakfast, I expect," he answered.

"Will they work with the others till another ship takes them away?"

"I don't know what the Captain's intentions are, I'm sure," he answered cautiously, and I thought a little suspiciously.

I never particularly cared for this man's conversation. He was without any sense of humour, and though he had seen much, he talked little of his life. He was a misfit, I think, as mate of that ship, too old, and wanting in that sort of training that qualifies a man to sit with comfort to himself and others at a table full of ladies and gentlemen. He had risen from before the mast, and no doubt when before the mast had cracked more than a single quarter-deck tooth as one of the toughest of forecastle nuts.

I walked aft, and stood on the quarter, and thought of the poor doctor whilst I watched the rushing stream of wake brilliant as summer light as it flashed from under the counter, sheathing the heads of the seas till they looked like rolling mountains of snow. Two men were at the helm, and they set their teeth, and I saw the muscles in their faces working whilst with iron grip they kept the

plunging and reeling fabric that had fallen wild with storm true to her course.

Whilst I thus stood the Captain arrived. He gave me a nod and a smile, and walked forward to Mr. Gordon, with whom he conversed very earnestly for some minutes. He then came aft, watched the compass for some minutes, and made a step to my side.

"This is a true Atlantic morning," said he, looking round. "You will remember it hereafter. How full of subdued colour it is. But the fine part to me is the noise and the constant flamings of foam over the face of the waters."

"Is it not extraordinary," said I, "that one of the men we picked up last night should prove the man who called at your house on the evening of the day of our visit to this ship?"

"What's that you said?" he shouted, but on my parting my lips to answer he snatched at my arm, and carried me to the skylight, which, standing close to the mizzen-mast, provided a comparative shelter.

"What do you say?" he cried.

I repeated my words.

He stared at me for some moments fixedly, as though he would screwdrive his gaze through my brain, whilst some passion or other in him worked in a veritable dye

in his complexion till his face was dark with it.

"What object can you have in telling such a lie as that?" he exclaimed.

"It's no lie. The man was coming in as I went out of the parlour."

"There is no man belonging to that boat who was ever in my house. It's an invention. What's your motive?"

Never had I seen his face more forbidding.

"Motive! Good gracious! What motive should I have? It may be a mistake, but it is no invention."

"You never saw that man in my house. He's a common seaman. Do I keep that sort of company ashore or afloat?"

"Very well."

"Ay, but it's not very well that you should come to me and say it's very extraordinary one of the men we rescued was a man you saw at my house. Suppose—suppose—but there's no truth in it. You are mistaken."

Fortunately at this moment Mr. Macbride in a clinging mackintosh and ear-lappets, watching his chance, came sliding down to ask the Captain the name of a large white bird that was poised on tremorless wings off our lee quarter, lancing the gale without visible beat of pinion.

I made my way to the companion and de-

scended to the saloon, sorry and astonished. Why should my reference to the seaman have angered him so? Had I mistaken the man? I was puzzled and grieved, and heartily hoped the thing would not cause a coolness on my stepfather's part; if so, then I should get him to tranship me with the seamen, for I had my pride and my feelings, and it would be intolerable to be locked up in the ship if he treated me coldly, or failed in the respect I had never missed in him.

Therefore I was glad when, on sitting down to breakfast and meeting his eyes as he took his place, I received a smile.

"Oh, Joanna, such a noble bird!" cried Mr. Macbride to his wife. "But the Captain is unable to give it a name."

"I have never seen that bird in these seas before," said the Captain, speaking in such a voice of good-humour as surprised me, and looking about him at the company more genially than I had ever before witnessed in his manner as host or chairman at that table. "He has been blown out of the South Atlantic."

"This is a good wind but an ugly sea," cried Colonel Wills, swerving as though bitten just in time to escape the contents of a cup of coffee over his legs.

"Will they never build a ship that shall keep still in the water?" said a lady.

"They might build a ship that would swing in a frame, just as that tray oscillates," said Monsignor Luard. "The tables, the passengers, the stewards running about, everything and everybody would sit as steadily or move as comfortably as though on dry land, though seas forty feet high should be running outside."

"A good idea," exclaimed Mr. Jackson, "and then there would be an end of sea-sickness."

"No, sir," exclaimed Captain Sinclair, "the motion that causes sea-sickness is the motion that you can't provide against. Figure that you are seated in that swinging tray," said he, pointing; "it is perfectly true that you shan't feel the ship roll or pitch, but what you *must* feel is the downward fall and upward launch; in fact, you *must* go with the ship, swing as you will, and it's the up and down, the drop from peak to base, the rise to the height again that does it."

This was received with deference by all, and with earnest attention by Mr. Macbride, as coming from the captain of the ship.

"It is lucky for those chaps that we fell in with them last night," said the Colonel. "They must have perished in such a sea as this."

"She's a fine boat," said Mr. Macbride, "a

sailor told me she was carvel-built and then walked off. What is carvel-built?"

"They make a pretty sturdy show as a shipwrecked lot, don't they?" said Mr. Jackson. "I doubt if a theatrical audience would accept such a make-up as genuine—as distressful enough by all the way from a good dinner to casting lots."

"What is carvel-built?" repeated Mr. Macbride.

"How do shipwrecked men look?" said the Captain.

"Oh, one gets hold of notions," answered the comedian. "After reading Byron, for instance, and the Mariner's Chronicle, you want bloodshot eyes, hair like seaweed, a cannibal pallor of countenance, and that sort of face which its mother wouldn't know."

"Those men had no time to give themselves such airs," said Mrs. Wills.

"They were adrift for a few hours only, comparatively speaking, in fine weather, in a large roomy boat, well stocked with drink and provisions, and they are sailors, used to hardships," said the Captain.

"What is carvel-built?" bothered the parson.

"When the sides of planking lie together instead of over-lapping," answered the Captain.

"I was observing some of the men just

now," said Monsignor. "They were helping the seamen to wash the decks. They seem a fine powerful body of fellows."

"One's infernally ugly," said the Colonel through his nose.

"So ugly that nothing but baptism could have made him a man," said Mr. Jackson with a loud laugh.

Monsignor put on a concerned face and cast down his eyes.

After breakfast my stepfather called me to his cabin. "Laura," said he, "I lost my temper, and am sorry. I was a little startled. I do not like to have a stranger, such a man, too, as that fellow of the long-boat, foisted upon me as an acquaintance, as one that I should receive at my house."

"Of course I was mistaken," said I.

"We'll say no more about it," he exclaimed, touching my forehead with his lips, and then he bade me sit down, and talked for half an hour about the voyage, and the passengers, and the fine times he intended I should have in New York.

That afternoon the gale broke, and in the evening it was blowing a fresh wind, with a quick black ridge of sea that put an uncomfortable jump into the ship's motions; but the weight of the gale was off the surge, and aloft its voice was a moaning instead

of the prolonged, soul-sickening yell of the morning.

I went on deck in the twilight, when the remains of the sunset lay in a rusty, dirty, stain like old gore amongst the scud that swept into it, and found the ship clothed again almost to her topmost yards. She was a gallant picture in that weak light. The darkness of the night was descending upon the froth of the sea and the spirit of desolation lay cold in that vast breast of waters. The ship seemed alive whilst she floated with proud fearlessness into the mystery of the night. I had never admired her so much before. You went below and sat in the radiant saloon; you played at cards, read, talked, did as you would in a hotel drawing-room ashore, and, seasoned to the movement of the fabric, forgot for a long hour or two where you were; then returning on deck, lo! the bleakness of the night suddenly encompassed you; dimly on high soar the spectral wings of the ship, the roar of the bow-wave slants off on the wind, and the sound of rushing waters in the blackness strikes a chill to the very marrow; but the gallant fabric has been heroically doing her work whilst you were gone; she does it whilst you watch—in your sleep she will be faithful to you. I could not but think of her as one thinks

of a beautiful horse, as something to love, something full of spirit, that knows what is expected of it, but whose patient dutifulness makes her more wonderful and touching as a creation than had she owed her life to nature.

I went to bed that night at ten, and remember that when I left the saloon my stepfather sat at the table with Monsignor Luard, who was describing a visit he had made to Rome. The lamps shone brightly, and the mirrors flashed back the radiance as the heave of the ship swung the illuminated globes; most of the passengers were in the saloon; the Grasshopper and Mr. Jackson played at double dummy at the bottom of the table; Mrs. Wills' fat hand sparkled whilst her fingers in deep meditation hovered over the draught-board; Macbride read aloud to his wife in a corner. It was a cheerful seapiece, and the meaning of the ocean was in it with the movement of the deck and the straining noises of bulkhead and cargo.

But the wind was certainly scanting and the sea flattening, and when I was in my bunk lying down I seemed to find the ship sailing along as quietly as a yacht off Southampton.

I was awakened by a noise of several voices. A number of people talked together, and there was excitement and terror in their tones. I

lay listening a minute, then looked at my watch; it was a quarter after seven. The sun was risen, and the atmosphere of my cabin was bright with the blue light of heaven, and white with the silver of rolling seas shone upon. The sound of voices in great tumult in the saloon continued, but my cabin was far aft, and the bulkhead stout, and I could not distinguish words.

I went to the door in my nightdress, opened it, and listened. I thought at first there was a violent quarrel amongst a number of the passengers. I could catch no more than disjointed sentences without meaning; Mr. Bergheim would begin to speak, then Mr. Jackson's voice would roll in; whilst they rattled together Colonel Wills would fall a-shouting, and then a woman screeched.

I closed the door and dressed myself as fast as ever I could ply my hands; then sallied forth and walked right among the people.

All the saloon passengers were now present. Mrs. Macbride lay in a swoon on the sofa, and her husband and a lady hung over her. She it was no doubt I had heard shriek. I never could have figured such looks of consternation as I beheld. Every man's face was white as paper, if I except Monsignor, who stood erect and dignified, holding by a stan-

chion, his expression one of mingled amazement and expectation. I saw the steward standing at the sideboard forward; he seemed fearfully woe-begone and frightened, and postured as a man who, having delivered a hideous message, devotes himself with horror to reconsidering the meaning of it.

"Here's Miss Hayes; tell her!" shrieked Mrs. Wills, on catching sight of me.

"We're prisoners," said the Grasshopper, who was very pale, pulling his hands out of his breeches' pockets and folding his arms.

"The ship's seized by them we rescued from drowning; and we're locked up and can't get out," shouted the little German Jew, Bergheim.

"Do they mean to cut our throats? How did they get possession of the small-arms?" yelled the Colonel, in a passion of alarm and wrath. "How the devil came the Captain and ship's officers to be so neglectful as to allow the ruffians to arm themselves with those very weapons with which we and the crew could have subdued them in a jiffy?"

"We are frightening Miss Hayes," exclaimed Monsignor. "The news is very sudden, and let us remember that the Captain is her stepfather."

"What is it? What has happened? I do not understand you," I cried. I was not only

bewildered by the shouts, I was likewise fresh from sleep, was a little thick, and this thing was a matter no girl's brain could instantly compass.

"Step this way and repeat the story to the lady, steward," cried Mr. Jackson.

The man came from the sideboard, looking completely crushed, and putting his hand upon the table, depressed his face, yet lifted his eyes to mine, so that his appearance was as if he were receiving sentence to be shot.

"What is this that has happened, steward?" said I. "Where is Captain Sinclair?"

The passengers fell silent as death, saving that just when the steward was about to speak, the parson and his lady friend lifted Mrs. Macbride off the sofa, and staggered with her into their cabin: I caught the noise of a fall when they had entered the berth, but nobody took any notice.

"The twelve men we rescued the other night," began the steward, "turn out to be a gang of pirates"—he sank his voice at the word "pirates" and glanced uneasily around and up at the skylight. "They ain't no shipwrecked men at all. They've waylaid us off some vessel that's been a watching of us. That's what I say."

"But what's happened?" I asked.

"Why, in the middle watch they got hold

of the arms-chest, and armed themselves to the teeth with pistols and cutlashes, clapped the hatches over those who were under deck, forced the watch on deck into the forecastle, along with the boatswain and carpenter; then a gang of them lays aft, and forces the Captain, who was on deck, and Mr. Gordon, who had charge, into the bo'sun's berth. This done, three of them seeks me and the second mate, and drives us with levelled pistols right forrards, where they thrusts us into the berth along with the Captain and mate. There's a fellow bristling with arms stationed at the forescuttle; there's another a-bristling just the same at the door where the Captain and t'others lies locked up, and a third's up there," said he, pointing to the companion, "and he threatens to blow the blistered brains out of the bloody head of the first person who attempts to look out."

Mrs. Wills squealed and fell back upon a sofa: her husband sank beside her.

"Beg him not to use such horrifying language," exclaimed a stout, stern-looking lady with curls gummed on her forehead: she had two children with her, both of whom were crying, but quietly.

"It's drawing on for breakfast-time," cried the Grasshopper; "are we to be fed?"

"Who has taken command of the ship?"

said I, who had been too astounded to speak until that moment.

"A thin feller, likewise armed—got a little bit of a mustache: it was him fetched me out and sent me along down here to tell the ladies and gents there's nothing to be afraid of, and that they'd be well treated if they gave no trouble. I left him walking the quarter-deck when the cove guarding the companion opened the doors to let me through."

"How many sailors go to this ship's crew?" bawled the Grasshopper.

"Eighteen, sir," answered the steward.

"Eighteen!" howled the other, "not to mention us men aft, every one of whom, so I take it, is willing to fight in defence of his life, liberty, and property! Why, we're an army compared to the twelve scoundrels who have seized the ship."

"And then you have the 'tween-deck passengers," said Mr. Jackson.

"Why, of course," roared the Grasshopper, rounding upon the steward as if he were the chief culprit in the affair, and responsible for the whole business.

"We're all under hatches, sir, them and us and the sailors," answered the steward, "and when a man's under hatches he may as well be under ground."

"What firearms can we muster amongst us?" said the Grasshopper. "I have a revolver."

The others seemed not to hear.

Monsignor said, "I should deprecate any resistance when perhaps we may expect good usage by remaining passive. Cut off as we are down here, the Captain and officers imprisoned in a cabin, the sailors locked up in the forecastle, and the rest of the people shut down in another part, the ship is helplessly in the rascals' hands. I counsel calmness and patience. Resistance must lead to bloodshed, which the fellows who have seized the ship may desire as little as we do."

"But see here," said Mr. Jackson, "I want to get to New York. I've star engagements to fulfil, and I am due"—and he named a date.

"Don't make a trouble of such slush as play-acting in the face of this," said the Grasshopper, with insolent irritability.

Mr. Jackson turned and played a furious scowl upon him; there was nothing comical whatever meant in *that* look.

I seated myself whilst this sort of talk went on. Yet even in that moment I seemed to find something humorous in our tragic situation. It was monstrous, but it was a ridiculous thing, too, that a number of ladies and

gentlemen and children, first-class passengers, should be locked up in a gay saloon, and sentinelled by a seaman armed to the teeth. Those were still early years in this century; yet I don't think the pirate as we read of him, the scoundrel of the Jolly Roger and the bloody flag, was still afloat. Now and again, perhaps, a corsair was to be heard of down among the West India Islands, but who, this side of Paul Jones's capers, would look for the piccaroon in the North Atlantic? The seizure of the *Mohock* was no piracy after the old pattern. It was clearly the result of some deep-laid plot, to which confederates belonging to the ship herself would be essential; and whilst I thus thought, my heart grew as lead, and horror trod upon the heels of dark suspicion.

Colonel Wills at this moment with a clenched fist fell to haranguing us. He told us that he was an American soldier, that he loved blood-letting as little as any one, but that, in spite of Monsignor's mild advice, it was not to be endured that they should all sit down and wait for their throats to be cut.

"Who's to tell me," he shouted, "that the villains, after plundering the ship, won't set her afire, and go away in the boats, leaving us battened down to be roasted alive?"

"Such talk is unreasonable, Colonel, in the presence of ladies," said Monsignor.

A child began to cry bitterly, yet the Colonel proceeded, despite the noise. He bawled, "There's no unreasonableness in facts. If we've fallen into the hands of pirates, I'm prepared for the worst. Are we to sit here, I say, whilst they gut the ship of booty and then scuttle her? There's that skylight," he yelled, jumping up from his wife's side. "With fire-arms——"

At that instant the companion doors were opened, and the Colonel fell back by his wife's side, mute as a rat, as though lightning-withered.

The stewardess came down the ladder, and against the sky past her in the square of the companion I caught sight of the figure of a man, who, as the woman descended, closed the doors. Till now there had been something dreamlike in these wild terrifying moments, but the sight of that sentinel, and the rapid closing of the companion doors, put a significance into the whole thing that had the terror of death itself in it. I turned cold and felt sick. Monsignor's eye was upon me. He withdrew, but in a few moments returned with a little brandy.

As the stewardess approached us every voice saving mine and the priest's was lifted

high, hoarse, shrill in question. She was dressed in a bonnet and shawl, and looked as though, having missed the ship, she had just stepped on board after a long chase in an open boat.

"You're wanted on deck, steward," said she, paying no heed to the passengers' questions.

"What am I wanted for?" said the steward, turning if possible paler than he was.

"I think it's to see about the saloon breakfast," she answered, and then, pulling off her bonnet, she cried, "What an awful business, to be sure! They are mad with terror in the 'tween-decks, where the beasts have kept me locked up since four o'clock."

The steward carried the figure of a man going to his doom as he walked to the companion steps and mounted them. He knocked upon the closed doors, but got no reply. He knocked again, and a voice delivered by a hurricane lung thundered:

"My orders are to shoot down any man who tries to break through; so keep back."

The steward fell half-way down the flight of steps. I caught at that instant the dull light of a ship's musket barrel in the grip of the sentry. Suddenly another man came into the companion, and the same hoarse voice I remembered as having answered

Captain Sinclair's hail bawled down, "Was that the steward knocking?"

"Ay, sir," answered the terrified man.

"Then come up and bear a hand. No need to keep the passengers waiting breakfast."

The steward passed out, but the doors were left open, and a minute later, after a short rumble of talk, one of the two fellows came below.

CHAPTER V

UNDER HATCHES

The man that came into the saloon was the thin, wiry, soldierly rogue with the yellow mustache. He stepped to the head of the table, close under the skylight, and on looking at him again I was as convinced that he was the man I had seen at my stepfather's as that my eyes were those I had viewed him with. He had made some change of apparel; wore a cloth cap, a monkey-jacket, trousers stuffed into sea-boots, which gave him a theatrical, swaggering look; a cutlass was strapped to his waist, and the butt of a pistol showed under either pocket flap. He grasped no weapon, but then at the head of the saloon staircase stood the seaman with the musket; we could see him clearly: he held the musket by the barrel, the butt end resting on the deck, and lounged in a posture that hinted at plenty of savage alertness when a call should come.

"Me and my mates," said the man, speak-

ing in a steady, hoarse voice, and looking about him fiercely, even to the suggestion of a squint under the wrinkles of his scowling frown, "have got possession of this ship, and we mean to keep her. No harm's intended to you here."

"But is that so?" cried Mrs. Wills.

He surveyed her figure, and answered, insolently, "Ay, or I shouldn't have said it."

"Pray let us hear what is to be done with us?" exclaimed Monsignor.

"There'll be no change," continued the man, talking in his throat as though he supposed that hoarseness lent a fresh terror to his aspect. "You'll fare the same as you've been doing. You'll be allowed to take the air in small companies."

"Are our lives in peril?" cried the Grasshopper, leaning forward and breaking into the question with spasmodic vehemence. The sound of his voice and the posture of his elbow was like a leap in the air.

"That'll be your business, master, not ourn!" answered the fellow. "Keep you quiet, that's all."

"But," exclaimed Monsignor, "how do you intend to dispose of us?"

"You'll be put ashore," was his reply.

"But where, sir, but where?" shouted Mr. Jackson, staring with greedy, fearful eager-

ness at the figure of the fellow. "I booked to New York. My wish is simply to get there. I have many important engagements to fulfil, and their forfeiture must signify so serious a loss, that sooner—in short, if you will name any reasonable sum"—the comedian began to stammer.

"I don't think it will be New York with yer this voyage," interrupted the man. "But keep quiet. That's all you've got to do. You'll come to no hurt any of you, only you must give no trouble."

Thus speaking, he cast another angry look around, and his eye lighting upon me, his face I thought relaxed for an instant, but the villain was quick with his wits, and was coolly mounting the steps before I could have sworn he saw me.

We sat or stood staring at one another. Then said Colonel Wills:

"What in flames is meant? Did any man ever meet the like of so all-fired a fiend? They mean to alter the ship's course, anyhow."

The actor lifted up his fist and let it fall. Monsignor went to the head of the table, where my stepfather sat at meals, and looked at a tell-tale compass secured to a beam immediately overhead. He looked and looked again. His face fell. A new tinge of pale-

ness entered his tranquil handsome features, and he said in a low but clear voice:

"The course is already changed."

"Where are they steering us to?" cried a lady.

"The ship's course is now," exclaimed the priest, upturning his eyes to the tell-tale once more, "almost directly south."

This announcement was followed by a prolonged silence of consternation.

"Is there no remedy?" blubbered the hard-faced woman with the children. "Won't they transfer us to another ship? What can they intend by sailing us south?" and the poor thing's red eyes rolled about in their sockets, glaring and wild with fright.

"Can't you comfort us?" cried Mrs. Wills to the stewardess. "You've been to sea for years and years. Have you never had any experience of this sort before?"

"God forbid!" answered Mrs. Yorrock. "Who indeed ever heard of the like happening in an American liner?"

"The Captain may break out with the mates, and recover the ship," said somebody, at which everybody looked at me.

I had nothing to say. What did it matter that the commander was my stepfather? I sat silent and sick with fear and black suspicion. My memory preserves but little of the hurry,

rage, confusion of talk that followed. The stewardess said it was a piratical plot arranged in London before the ship sailed: she knew it by this token—there were no cutlasses in the vessel's arms-chest.

"Did they bring them in the long-boat?" shouted the Colonel. "If so, their intention was plain, and 'll convict the Captain and mates," he snarled through his nose, "as confederates."

"Hush! I beg of you, Colonel!" cried Monsignor, tossing his hands towards the skylight and looking at me.

"Parcels of small arms may have been secretly shipped at the docks," exclaimed the stewardess. "But it's shocking, ladies and gentlemen, I'm sure, even to mention Captain Sinclair, the most respected of commanders, and Mr. Gordon and Mr. Turnbull, as confederates."

Thus ran the talk: it mouldered quickly, however, by cause of most of the passengers being but half-dressed and going to their berths.

At nine o'clock by the saloon dial the companion doors were opened, and the steward descended. The fellow on deck sentinelling the hatch let us see that he was on guard by crossing and recrossing the space of blue weather that shone in the doorway, and bring-

ing the musket-end down with a thud when he halted. The steward was alone. The stewardess asked if his understrappers were to be allowed to help him: he answered surlily, "No, they was locked up along with the crew."

He and the stewardess prepared the table for breakfast. There were but three or four of us in the saloon at this time, and we worried the man with questions.

"Who's looking after the ship?" says the Grasshopper.

"The beast in the mustache, sir."

"Are any of the ship's company helping?" inquired Monsignor.

"Nary man. Only the shipwrecked crew's on deck, barring me and the cook."

"There are twelve men," said Monsignor, "and four guard the hatches, and one is at the wheel, whilst one is in charge; that leaves but six to trim the yards and work the sails of this big ship," and he shrugged his shoulders.

"Is the door of the berth the Captain and the mates are in guarded?" I asked.

"Yes, miss."

"What will the Captain do?" cried the Grasshopper. "I allow by the looks of him that he's not the man to allow his ship and her cargo, and a crowd of people more or less

important, to be walked off with and made away with by the dozen scabs we picked off the sea."

"Once men are under hatches they are powerless," said Monsignor. "I have read of a ship that was seized by two Malays; they ran amuck, the crew rushed below, the Malays battened them down, and held undisputed possession for a week. Nothing saved the people but her appearance aloft; an inquisitive man-of-war approached, and the Malays sprang overboard."

"Steward, open that skylight," said the Colonel. "Its growing durned rammish down here."

"They'll shoot me if I show my head there," answered the steward.

Monsignor, spreading a large yellow handkerchief upon the table, got on to it, and ran one of the frames up by its rack, calmly screwing it afterwards. No notice was paid to this on deck, though he said that the wiry man who stood at the weather mizzen rigging watched him.

"What have they pirated this ship for? What's in her, anyhow?" asked the Colonel.

The steward, turning his pale face upon his shoulder, answered, "Ninety-eight thousand pounds in gold, sir."

The Grasshopper and the Colonel whistled

low and long together, and the Colonel, springing up, began to walk, whilst he shouted, "By thunder! If I haven't always thought that money was a more dangerous cargo than gunpowder."

The breakfast was long in serving. The steward had to work alone; the fellow guarding the companion would not let the stewardess through. Never did a more forlorn company sit down to a meal at sea. Conversation was restrained, perhaps fortunately, by the wiry fellow giving us an occasional view of his figure as he slowly walked past the open skylight, keeping a look-out. It was soon whispered round that the ship had ninety-eight thousand pounds in her, and every face darkened at the intelligence; the capture was a rich prize in a word, and God alone could tell how it was to go with us, armed to the teeth as the twelve determined devils were, and every soul aboard secured under hatches.

I never could have imagined so dejected a countenance as Mr. Jackson's; scarcely the tremendous character of the thing that had wrought it saved me from bursting into a laugh at him. His dark eyes were rooted to the tablecloth; he ate but little. Monsignor Luard spoke soothingly to the ladies and tried to comfort them.

"I am pleased," he said, "to hear of the money. I do not agree with Colonel Wills and the other gentlemen that it deepens the significance of our peril. My conviction is that the robbers will bring the ship to a stand off some coast with which they are acquainted, where, after carrying the money ashore, they will abandon us. It will prove a true romance of the sea, which might be of great professional use to Mr. Jackson, for what could form a more thrilling subject for a nautical drama than this experience?"

The comedian spat a curse at the deck.

I could not guess what sort of a wind blew. I saw fine weather in the mottled azure through the skylight. Through that glass, too, the mizzenmast was visible; the yards were braced square, and the marble-white cloths sank and swelled languidly with the regular curtseying of the ship on the long heave of brine that followed her. All remained wonderfully quiet on deck for a long while. From time to time one or another of the gentlemen, finding heart, would spring upon the table and cautiously apply his eye to the skylight glass, and report softly what he saw; but what he saw was never more than this—a fellow armed with a musket leaning against the com-

panion, a second at the wheel, and from time to time a third walking a look-out.

The sight of the steward was a godsend when they let him down to get us some lunch. But Master Milk-liver had never any news to tell us. I think that steward, whose real name I'd publish if I remembered it, was the greatest coward that ever shipped to serve at table. It was degrading to hear him thank the armed ruffian above for opening the door and letting him down. All that he could tell us was that the Captain and mates were still locked up and the crew under hatches. Some of the steerage passengers had been allowed on deck to cook a mid-day meal for all of them; the main-hatch, under which the rest lay, was guarded, just as was the companion.

I have said there were sixteen cabin passengers, including children, and at four o'clock that afternoon the whole of us were assembled in the saloon, seldom speaking, and staring idly; for all had been said; it was only now and again that somebody would break out; but speculation was exhausted, and there was nothing else to base our talk upon.

On a sudden we heard the voices of men chorusing the familiar sea-chant of "Cheerily, men!" this was accompanied by

a grinding and scraping of feet on deck. One or two got upon the table, but the commotion was forward, and it was impossible to see that way. The stewardess, coming out of Mrs. Macbride's cabin, cocked her head a moment or two, and lifted her eyebrows.

"What do you think it is?" asked some one.

She listened again and then answered—

"I believe they are hoisting out the big boat they came in."

"They may have got the money and mean to leave the ship," said the Colonel.

"What! carry off ninety-eight thousand pounds in an open boat?" cried the Grasshopper with a sarcastic sneer. "How much d'ye think ninety-eight thousand pounds weighs? Not to mention twelve stout men to sink her farther yet, along with all the provisions and water they need; for aren't we in the middle of the Atlantic, hey?"

"What can they mean to do?" cried Mrs. Wills in a thrilling voice.

We had not long to wait to discover. Loud shouts of "Slacken away! Ease off handsomely!" and the like reached us, and shortly afterwards we heard the splash of a large body lowered quickly and water-borne "with a run." Had the side of the ship been depressed we might have caught a sight of

the boat through an open porthole; but the *Mohock* floated upright under square wings, and you could see nothing but the horizon and the sky above it through the windows.

Whatever was happening, however, was being carried on with great activity; men sprang about, cries sharp as with temper and urgency reached us through the open skylight, under which some of the gentlemen stood, straining their ears with all their might to gather from the noise the least import of what was intended. Mr. Macbride had terrified us by suggesting in a trembling voice that the boat was meant for us saloon passengers, who were to be sent adrift as a sort of beginning. Occasionally this poor man would whine most dolefully.

"Oh!" he cried out once, breaking into a long silence and addressing himself to Monsignor, "how is our little excursion—the trip that my wife and I have been looking forward to for months and months—saving up and praying for—how is it to end? She lies in her bed motionless, and almost dead with headache. Surely there must be some error—if representatives of the twelve men were invited into this saloon in a kindly, gentlemanly way, and the facts of our situation submitted to them with moderation—appealingly——"

"Ask the sentry to let you pass and see what you can do for us," the Grasshopper growled out.

The clergyman, in fact, had been silenced by finding no response to his twaddling lamentations in the looks of us.

Two of the saloon cabin windows on the starboard side were open, and we knew by a fountain-like noise of rippling waters that a large boat was towing alongside. We stood or moved about, hearkening with passionate eagerness: if ever any one spoke he was silenced by grimaces or gestures. All this while I was wondering what part Captain Sinclair was going to play in this audacious drama of the sea. I was surprised also that, saving Colonel Wills' remark, no reference was made by any of the people to what surely suggested itself as a deep-laid conspiracy. But then, of course, I had reason to be shockingly suspicious, and to carry conjecture beyond anything the most imaginative could depicture. It was not only the presence of the wiry man on board; I had noticed the anxious, secret look-out the Captain had kept —for what, if not for the boat whose twelve men had been brought aboard as shipwrecked people? Again, I thought I saw plenty to raise suspicion in that strange freak of the barometer. Nor could I forget the queer,

wary, steadfast look I caught that sullen, straight-headed old seaman Gordon directing at my stepfather.

"Hark!" suddenly cries Monsignor, lifting his hand in a priestly way. "What is happening?"

It was a sound of trudging in the waist, accompanied by a continuous growl of voices of men, raging, but helpless; occasionally a clear sentence would leap out of that brute-like clamour.

"Over you go. By God! you'll not be spared more than another if you hang back!"

It was strange we did not hear more, seeing that the cabin windows were open and the weather quiet, and no noises in the ship saving an occasional light musketry of canvas when the swell launched her, along with the ticking of doors on hooks and creakings of bulkheads.

Mr. Jackson got upon the table, and, peering aft through the skylight, reported that the companion door was unguarded.

"Depend upon it," said Monsignor, "they're doing something that requires all their strength."

"I've a good mind to force my way on deck," exclaimed Colonel Wills. "This is a ship, and I'm no rat."

"You'll do nothing of the sort," half

shrieked his wife. "They'd think no more of shooting you than if you were a rat."

Colonel Wills appeared to take the same view: he remained motionless; evidently he had no intention to attempt anything rash. He got out of the thing quite gallantly by exclaiming, with a scowl at the steps and in a grumbling voice, "I'd step out and take my chance, by thunder, if I didn't know those doors were secured outside."

Thus some time passed, when all of a sudden a starboard cabin window was whitened by the passing of a large sail close by, and I heard Mr. Gordon's hurricane voice roar out from the surface of the sea, "You'll be lagged for it, every man of you. You're dogs and devils to send a boatful of men adrift with night coming on——"

This was subdued into a dim, indistinguishable roaring till the white sail of the boat slided abreast of the next open window, and then we heard the fellows in her shouting at the people on deck: 'twas a mere gibberish of curses, oaths, insults, and the boat slipped aft, and I heard nothing save an occasional insolent inhuman roar of laughter above.

A thought came into my head and I went to the Captain's cabin; I was free of it, and had used it when the Captain himself was

present, lying down or writing. It was a large airy cabin, with a big stern window after the old pattern. The hour was about five; the sun hung a good bit above the sea, and as the ship's stern faced north, the splendour of the afternoon was on the left in the water: the atmosphere trembled with the rich lights of the ocean, and hung in a blue glimmering transparency across the cabin window, making the distance a little misty with its radiance.

Yet I instantly saw on going to the window the white, needle-like heights of a couple of ships, apparently standing to the westward, just under the bronzed round of a large, faint, swollen heap of yellow cloud, riding clear of the sea-edge. The next thing my sight caught was the boat that had left us. She was the boat the twelve men had been taken out of, a fine large craft, sitting buoyantly, though crowded, and in that instant of watching I saw them trim the large lugsail, and, with an inverted Union Jack flying from the masthead, slant away with spitting stem and foaming rudder for the ships in the distance.

I snatched up a binocular glass, and looked whilst the boat was clearly framed in the square of the window. The lenses instantly gave me the faces of our old ship's

company. I could scarcely credit my sight; Mr. Gordon sat in the sternsheets of the boat, steering her. Next him was Mr. Turnbull. I also saw the boatswain of the ship, a man named Vigors, with many a face that had grown familiar. There looked above twenty. My pulse went quickly, whilst I searched that crowd for my stepfather; and when I saw nothing of him I thought to myself, "Does not his remaining on board prove my suspicions? What will those poor fellows out there think of him? Was it ever before told of a shipmaster that he turned his whole ship's company adrift in an open boat, with the darkness coming on, themselves guiltless of any wrong?"

The breeze that blew languidly for us floating before it, was a fresh air for the little craft, and she seethed through the brine nimbly, marking the swiftness of her flight upon the sea by the arrow-straight riband of foam she seemed to trail; there could be no doubt of her coming up with, or at all events of her being seen by, one or the other of the ships whose spires were red in the air. I watched through the glass till the boat had passed out of the compass of the window, and then re-entered the saloon.

The steward was preparing the table for dinner, which had been delayed two hours

beyond the usual time, but nobody appeared to have noticed this. He was answering questions when I passed out of my step-father's cabin, and I stood still to hear him, being almost as private and withdrawn there as in a berth.

"The whole of the crew, do you say?" exclaimed Mr. Bergheim.

"Barring me and the cook," was the answer.

"Then we are completely in the power of the fellows who have seized the ship!" said Mr. Macbride.

"Bin so all along," answered the steward, proceeding in his business of dressing the table with agitated gestures, and frequent upheavals of his pale face at the skylight.

"But it's like murdering men to send them adrift in an open boat in this wide ocean," said Monsignor Luard.

"There's two ships in sight," said the steward, "and the boat's got a distress colour a-flying. They've got wittles and sperrits, and there's two hours of daylight left. I don't fear, gentlemen, of their not being seen and taken aboard."

"They'll report this piracy—but what then?" says Colonel Wills, sticking out his legs. "If the ship that picks them up is westward bound it may take them a month or

six weeks to arrive at an American port. Then, or some time afterwards, I reckon a British cruiser will be sent in search. But where'll she look for us, and where'll we be by that time?"

Mrs. Macbride, who no longer lay motionless in her cabin, clapped her handkerchief to her milk-white face and rocked herself.

"The only grain of comfort in this dreadful business," exclaimed the hard-faced lady, "is that Captain Sinclair is still on board."

"What's he going to do for us, all alone as he is?" answered Mr. Jackson, scowling at her. "If he couldn't help us with his army of men in the ship, of what use can he be single-handed?"

I stepped forward at this point and exclaimed, "Has any news of my stepfather reached the cabin?"

The steward answered, "They've kept him aboard, miss, but he's still locked up."

"What do they mean to do with him?" I asked.

"I expect," said Monsignor, "that they have kept him to help them to navigate the ship. None of the fellows I saw looked educated and qualified as navigators."

"You'll find that's it," said the Grasshopper. "But will he navigate the ship?" he proceeded with excitement. "Ought he to lift

his sextant, or take a single peep at his chronometer, unless under assurances which will provide for our safety and arrival in a reasonable time in America?"

"Trust him to know his business," said Monsignor gently. "You are right, madam. It is comforting to know that he is on board. Yet what must be his feelings? His crew sent adrift, his ship captured, her course altered, himself a prisoner!" He uprolled his eyes till nothing showed but the whites, and Mr. Macbride groaned in sympathy with that fine expressive face of misery.

At this moment the wiry man thrust his head into the skylight, and called in his hoarse note—

"Below there! Is Miss Hayes amongst ye?"

I started and felt myself turn ashen, yet I went at once to the table and looked up and said, "What do you want?"

"The Captain wishes to have a talk along with you, miss," answered the fellow, persevering in his voice of studied hoarseness. "In plain words, we've given him his choice, and he wants you to help him to decide. I'll open the doors if you'll come up."

He withdrew his head.

"This is no roose, I hope," cried the Colonel. "Miss Hayes is a fine young

woman, and by thunder the ladies must be respected and protected, first and foremost," and now he seemed in earnest, for he sprang to his legs with his face full of blood, and a wild look at the frame where the man's head had been.

"I don't think Miss Hayes has any need to be afraid," said the hard-faced lady. "Pray consider," said she, addressing the others, "it's her stepfather who sends for her."

I went to my cabin without more ado and put on my hat and jacket, then mounted the companion steps and knocked upon the doors. They were immediately opened by the wiry man, who, on my stepping on deck, securely closed them afresh, by some arrangement of staple and padlock. I felt exceedingly frightened when the doors were closed and I found myself alone, that is, the only woman. The western light was a blaze of splendour, and the ship bowed stately before the breeze in the royal dress of crimson the sunset draped her with. Seven or eight fellows stood about the decks in twos or threes. One grasping a musket guarded the main-hatch. I saw no other sentry. I sent one quick look seaward in search of the boat, but out in the direction she had been heading for it was all melting dark blue water, flashful with red gleams slipping from one crest to another, with the

two sail on the verge of the deep showing full breasted, and as large again as from the cabin window.

The wiry man said roughly, "It'll be all right with them. One of those ships has shifted her helm to pick the boat up. Now you'd better come along and see the Captain. Us men are impatient, and want him to decide quickly."

Thus speaking, he led the way into the fore part of the ship.

CHAPTER VI

THE CAPTAIN VISITS THE PASSENGERS

The range of the ship's deck looked strange with the fresh crew of sauntering burly rogues; the 'tween-deck folk were under hatches, and the fellow who guarded them glanced grimly at me as I passed. Possibly he was the hideous man the Colonel had spoken of. He squinted, and had a hare-lip and red hair, and a huge knob of tumour doubled the girth of the neck under his right ear. His face, almost to the concealment of his eyes, was covered with small crawling red whiskers.

The others seemed of the average type of seamen, or rather of boatmen; you may see such men leaning alongshore against capstans, anchor-flukes, public-house fronts. They were variously attired, one in a moleskin cap, another in a rusty wideawake, here a pea-jacket, there a thick jersey. They trudged in short walks, their hands for the most part deep buried in their breeches' pockets, their

backs humped. A big deck-house stood behind or abaft the foremast. The after part was the ship's galley, and the fore division contained the boatswain's, sailmaker's, and carpenter's berths. The wiry man went to a door on the starboard side of this house, and, smartly rapping upon it, slided it open, roaring in its grooves—

"Here's the lady, and let's have your decision quick, if you please," said he.

I cannot express the brutal insolence of his tone and manner. I looked at him with disgust and terror.

"Step in," said he, with a rough angry gesture, and when I had entered he ran the door to with ruffianly violence.

The house had windows, and the light of the sunset was upon them, and I saw clearly. The compartment was rather bigger than an average saloon cabin. It contained a couple of bunks, a locker, and a table. My stepfather sat upon the locker, stiff, and staring in front of him like a blind man. His familiar frown blackened the expression of his face as he looked at me. He seemed haggard in features somewhat, and disordered in apparel. Afterwards, in thinking how this might be, seeing that his sea-clothes were not of a sort to be easily "disordered," I found in the photographic memories of my sight that the

impression was produced by his collar and cravat. He made no sign, and I felt afraid. Presently combing down his face with his fingers, as though he would tighten the slack stays of his wits behind his eyes, he said—

"I want to consult you. My mind is unhinged. This is the most dreadful situation that ever the master of a ship was placed in."

I sat down, but answered nothing.

"I suppose you know," said he, "that they have driven all the original ship's company, saving myself, into the boat we took the scoundrels out of. They would not send me away. No. The devils must keep me to navigate the vessel, though I begged them to choose one of the mates and despatch me with my men."

"What are their plans?" I asked.

"How do I know," he answered, speaking with a sudden passion. "This is the alternative they give me: carry this ship to a place which we shall name to you, or quit her in an open boat."

"Which will you do?"

"I don't understand the slovenly coolness of that question," said he. "I may set a value upon my life, I hope, without regard to your opinion of its worth."

"I would give anything," said I, "that

they had chosen one of the mates and sent you away with the old ship's company."

"Yes, I entreated them to do so."

"Father," said I, "this seizure is the result of a conspiracy that must have been arranged before the ship sailed."

"How can I tell?" he answered, frowning and folding his arms and leaning back.

"They are saying in the cabin that there are no pirates in these seas. That boatload of men hanging in the path of the vessel was a ruse to capture her. The ship they belonged to was not likely to be very far off. Was it that schooner that spoke us a night or two ago, do you think?"

"Is that thought in the saloon?"

"It's my own suspicion."

"What do the passengers say about the business?"

"We are horribly frightened. We are locked up, and an armed man guards us. We are in fear of our lives, and we can talk of nothing but what is to become of us."

"But what is said?" he exclaimed, searching my eyes with his keen gaze as though he would constrain me by the passion and grief of his looks to be brief and frank.

"The hardest thing, the only thing, perhaps, worth noting in all the talk, was the exclamation of one of them, that you and

the officers must be confederates in this piracy."

"Who said that?" he demanded, stiffening himself erect into his former blind man's posture.

"I forget."

"Recall the name."

"I forget."

"Was it the priest?—was it the Colonel?—was it Mr. Jackson?"

"I forget."

He did not believe me, but then he knew for all my good-humour I had the spirit of a mule.

"What led to that remark?"

"Why," said I, "I think it was owing to the stewardess saying that as the rogues had armed themselves with cutlasses, and there were no cutlasses in the arms-chest, parcels of weapons must have been secretly laid in for them in dock."

"How did she know what the arms-chest held?" he replied, looking as though what I said relieved his mind. "The arms-chest was handsomely equipped for this voyage. I saw to it myself at the request of the owners. Do you know that there are ninety-eight thousand pounds in gold in this ship?"

"Yes, it has been talked of in the cabin."

"They must have read the statement of

her freight in the newspapers." he exclaimed. "It was swiftly planned—a diabolical plan; it will ruin me."

"How did the people in the boat know exactly where to find this ship?"

"The track of the liners is constant. They took their chance, I suppose. Besides, what do I know about it?" he shouted. "You talk to me suspiciously. I don't like your airs and looks. You have declared you met one of the villains at my house before we sailed. Do you still insist upon that?"

"No. You have told me I am wrong. There's a man on board very much like the man I saw."

"And that's about it," said he. "But I called you here to consult with you. What shall I do? If I decline to navigate the vessel, they'll send me adrift. Why should they force me to sacrifice my life? They have ruined me. Shall I allow them to destroy me also?"

"Is there no hope of repossessing ourselves of the vessel?"

"What do you advise?" he exclaimed impatiently. "Repossess!" he went on, with much irritating sarcasm in his manner. "I stand alone. What help am I to expect from the heroes of the saloon? The men have seized the ship, and the money's theirs

whilst they have hold of her. They are armed, every man, a merciless, devilish lot, as may be judged by their turning adrift a whole company of men in an open boat at nightfall. Repossess! That would mean a bloody business, bad for the saloon heroes and the gutter fencibles of the 'tween-decks, but worse for you women."

It was almost dark now; I could scarcely see his face. The shadow had come on a sudden in a long moan of wet blast over the rail. A hoarse voice shouted sharply from the quarter-deck. A minute later I was listening to the yowling of men pulling at ropes: it was a song of the blue-water sailor, but not sung as the old company used to sing it. The air in their mouths wanted the waltzing, deep-sea roll it takes when chanted by real seamen. My stepfather went to one of the little windows and looked forth; he carried his hands behind him, and whilst he stared I watched his fingers working as though he ground tobacco into snuff.

"What do you advise?" he exclaimed.

"If they send you in an open boat they'll take care there's a ship in the neighbourhood, I suppose?" said I.

"They'll not wait for a ship to be in the neighbourhood, as you call it," he answered. "Let me tell them now I refuse to navigate

the ship, and they'll send me adrift out of hand in the gig that hangs astern, to live, if I can, through the night. What do you advise?" he repeated.

"If I were in your place, I should consult my honour first of all."

"What has my honour got to do with it?" he shouted. "We pick up a boatload of ruffians in good faith, believing them shipwrecked men. They rise, arm themselves, and seize the ship. How is my honour concerned?"

I made no reply.

"You can return to the saloon," said he, after a pause, "and explain to the passengers the situation I am placed in. Perhaps they'll agree with me that the commander of a ship should never desert his post."

"When is your answer expected?" said I, with a faint smile.

"When I have made up my mind," he replied.

Saying which, he took the door in his hands as though he would slide it open, and then recollecting himself, beat upon it. It was thrust along its grooves from outside by a fellow who held a musket in a posture of readiness: yet the house had not been sentinelled when I entered it! I passed through the door filled with wonder, shame,

and temper, and the moment I was out the man rushed the door to with an unnecessary show of savage energy.

The sun was gone, and the sea glanced bleakly in froth under a patch of crimson haze, but it was dark in the east, with a sky full of stars. The wind had shifted and freshened, and the ship was lying over under reduced canvas, washing white through the dusk of the early night, and the stars over the sweeping mastheads seemed to listen up in the silence there to the music in the shrouds.

I was terribly depressed and frightened, and whilst I went along the deck I tried to understand why I had been brought into this mysterious astonishing business?—why, in other words, he should have carried me along with him this voyage? Some object he had, but I could find none.

When I reached the quarter-deck a figure stepped from the mizzen rigging; it was the wiry man; so far the gentry were nameless. He said gruffly and hoarsely:

"What does the Captain mean to do? We can't keep all on waiting."

"Have you no navigator amongst you?" said I, stopping and looking at his face by the starshine and faint twilight.

"Never you mind," he answered.

"If he declines to navigate this ship and you send him adrift, what will you do?"

He laughed. "Do?" he exclaimed. "Without him any way. How've ye counselled him?"

"He needs no advice," said I, and I left him swaying on his heels against the western rusty scar that slipped to and fro past the squares in the shrouds and stepped to the companion hatch, which the fellow on guard there at once opened.

The lamps were alight and the people at supper. I took my accustomed place, clad as I was for the deck, and was instantly and officiously waited upon by the steward, whose hovering air and pale anxious looks marked him as eager as any to get the news.

"Well," cried Colonel Wills, "have you seen the Captain, Miss Hayes? And if so, how does he? Have the scoundrels ill-used him? Will he come amongst us once more?"

"He has had this offer," said I, "either to command this ship to some destination which they won't name, or be sent adrift in an open boat, and take his chance of living or dying."

"Great God!" cried Mr. Jackson, and one of the ladies uttered a scream of horror.

"He'll take command, of course?" said Monsignor.

"I hope so," I answered.

"It's his business to stick to the ship any how," said the Colonel. "If he goes, who's left? There's never a navigator amongst us, bet yer. The fellows will make off with the money and leave us to wash about to our eternal destruction."

"That's much how Captain Sinclair reasons," said I, eating and drinking with all the calmness I could summon.

"There's no fear, I suppose," said Mr. Jackson, "of his deciding to be sent adrift?"

"She thinks not," replied Monsignor, observing I did not answer.

"An Irish sentry," said Mr. Jackson, "seeing another cutting his throat, shot him to save his life. That's how the Captain would be serving us by allowing himself to be sent adrift."

"But where are we to be steered to?" asked Mr. Macbride, who on my seating myself had dropped his knife and fork to stare at me aghast, with his under jaw a little fallen.

"The Captain doesn't know," I answered.

"What is a likely place?" he cried.

A good many eyes were directed at the steward as the only seafaring authority in the saloon. The challenge was direct, and he answered :

"I allow it'll be for the West Coast of Africa."

"That'll be back Europe way," said the Colonel.

"Why the West Coast of Africa?" inquired the comedian, looking at the steward with his dusky glance lifting under a lowering brow.

"'Cause it's a easy coast to wreck ships on, and there's never anything to speak of a-keeping a look-out there," answered the steward.

"Is home easily reached from the West Coast of Africa?" inquired somebody.

"It'll be more like our being made slaves of than going 'ome," answered the steward, with a hollow, frightful laugh. "Them sands is coated with wandering Arabs, who strips all Christians which falls into their 'ands, and marches them off naked into slavery."

"It's true," exclaimed the Colonel, with a wild nod and an oath.

"We merely frighten ourselves," said Monsignor. "The men may not have the coast of Africa in their minds at all."

"What views does your stepfather hold, miss?" exclaimed Mr. Bergheim. "Has he no message to send that's likely to keep up our spirits?"

"He ought to take command," cried the

hard-faced lady. "If they send him out of the ship our case will be hopeless."

"He cannot make up his mind," said I. "He naturally shrinks from the idea of an open boat, yet holds that his honour might be concerned, that he might be suspected of complicity were he to take charge of a ship manned as the *Mohock* now is."

A silence followed this speech. I continued, "It might help him, perhaps determine him, if one of you gentlemen would draw up a paper, signed by the saloon passengers, urging upon him to retain command in the interest of the general safety, that he might see this ship and ourselves through the business, be the end what it may."

"You are a clever young woman," cried the Colonel, looking at me with unmixed admiration, "and the paper you recommend shall be drawn up. By whom? By you, Monsignor?"

"I will write an appeal to the Captain with pleasure," answered the priest. "It is an excellent idea of Miss Hayes."

A part of the table was cleared, pen and paper procured, Monsignor squared his elbows, and, after a glance for inspiration at the lamp, wrote.

We were all silent as the tomb whilst the

priest's pen scratched. It was hard to say whether we were observed or not from above: the skylight windows gleamed blackly and reflected the image of the draped table as brilliantly as a mirror. Presently Monsignor rose, and, after looking around him whilst he said, "This, I think, will do," held his draft to the light.

"To Captain Amelius Sinclair, commanding the American clipper *Mohock:* We, the undersigned saloon passengers in this ship, petition you earnestly and respectfully to continue in command of the vessel. Your interests are identical with ours. If you leave us by resolution of your own, we shall be without a head to look up to. Whatever may be the issue in store for us in this ship, we entreat you to abide with us, that, should a moment of extremity arrive, we may have you with us to counsel and encourage us."

I bit my lip when this was read. The Colonel called out:

"A 1, all but 'a moment of extremity,' Monsignor. That's putting it a bit fiendishly, I guess?"

"I'll correct anything that's amiss," said the priest.

"Nothing could be more beautifully expressed," said the hard-faced lady.

"Let's sign it and send it and make an end," cried Mr. Jackson.

Monsignor was requested to attach his name. Colonel and Mrs. Wills followed, and then the rest. I did not offer to sign, nor was it proposed that I should do so. I could not forbear a smile at the several characters the people expressed in their mode of signing. Colonel Wills squared at the paper, made a difficulty of his pen, and then flourished it; he scrawled as though it were a name not to be lightly communicated, and when done he fell back with a little lingering gaze as of admiration of the signature. Mr. Jackson humped his back, scrawled, and folded his arms over the paper whilst he wrote; you saw he believed every eye was upon him. The elbows of the Grasshopper rose high as he sat; he wrote with incredible swiftness, dashed the pen down, jumped up—everything was done in a leaping way by this gentleman, whose name I have forgotten, if I ever heard it.

When everybody had signed, the steward was requested to go on deck and tell the wiry man he was wanted below. He went up the steps and knocked. The companion doors were opened, and after a short growling hum of talk that came wordless to our ears through the seething of the night-wind in the open

hatch, the wiry man came below. If he was armed, he kept his weapons well concealed. He frowned as he stared about him, but, as I thought, watching him from a corner, he acted a part. His looks seemed forced. Or perhaps, when it came to a pinch, most of his spirit would be found in his scowl.

"Why am I sent for?" says he, coming to the table and showing himself clearly under the light.

"Will you kindly tell us your name?" says Monsignor.

"Owen—William Owen."

"Miss Hayes has had an interview with her stepfather," continued the priest, half turning his face in my direction, "and we understand that you give him the option of navigating this ship to an unnamed destination, or of being sent adrift in an open boat."

"Well?" said Owen, preserving his frowning stare and speaking with brutal bluntness.

The Grasshopper's elbows twitched, and the Colonel gazed blankly at the wiry man.

"We saloon passengers," said the priest, holding up the paper, "have petitioned the Captain to retain command, and our desire is that this document may be placed without loss of time in his hands. Will you give it to him?"

"Yes," answered the other, taking it;

"and I hope it'll settle his meaning one way or t'other. If he don't arrive at a decision afore dawn he leaves the ship."

"But unless we are to go too, why not keep him whether he decides or not?" said I. "His being in the vessel can't matter to you. You may as well throw him over the side and drown him at once as send him adrift in an open boat."

The man bent his gaze at me with an expression of attention, but made no answer.

"But, for goodness sake," shrieked the hard-faced lady, bursting out with an hysterical violence one would never have suspected from so set and determined a countenance, "can't you tell us, since you've seized the ship, what you mean to do with us?"

He answered her with an ugly look, then saying in his hoarse voice to Monsignor, "I'll hand this to the Captain at once," he left the cabin.

The Colonel extended his hand, and writhed it as though he throttled something invisible. Mr. Jackson quitted the table and came to the sofa I was seated upon. He folded his arms upon his breast, and leaning back exclaimed, "That fellow Owen is an actor."

"There's something strained about him," I answered.

"He's got himself up as a pirate," con-

tinued the comedian, "in throat and scowl. The chink of the metal's not real. When the bishop asked the savage how he could go unclothed, he answered, 'He was all face.' So is that Owen. I see too much. I ought to know my trade. But it's well played, seeing that extravagance wouldn't do even at sea in these days, when the real thing's dead and gone, and the blue light's burnt out."

"He frightens us all the same."

"Has your stepfather any notion of what's going to happen?"

"None."

"Was it pre-arranged, does he think? Or were the scoundrels really shipwrecked men, who, as others did before them, have risen upon their succourers?"

"He is in great distress, but will himself appear soon, I hope, and give you his views. I am sure the petition will decide him."

A more melancholy array of figures than we saloon passengers of the *Mohock* presented that night the ocean wave probably never lifted and sank. We could not divert ourselves. We did nothing but wonder and listen. Every face expressed consternation and alarmed expectation. There was a universal fidgetiness, moreover. Nobody sat still. It was a ceaseless coming and going with us, under one pretence or another.

Meanwhile, silent and lost in thought up in a corner, out of the way of the light and the observation of the passengers, I took note that the wind freshened, that a sharp sea was beginning to run, and that the weather was finding work for the men. I heard the noise of ropes flung down, an occasional hoarse bawling, sometimes the low muffled groans of canvas slowly strangling in the grip of its gear. The rudder worked in shocks and harsh tremors, and a frequent wash of water made white moons of the lee port-holes.

I heard Mr. Jackson say it was nine o'clock whilst he stood at the table gazing about him; habit with him associated the hour with the steward and glasses: the companion doors were opened, a salt, shrill edge as of a boatswain's pipe sang in the wind as it screeched athwart the opening, and my stepfather came slowly down the ladder.

It was raining on deck, or if not raining the blast was full of spray; his coat sparkled and his face ran with wet. He lifted his cap and came to the table. The moment the passengers saw him they made a rush and he was surrounded in a breath. I sat still up in my corner. Had he been all ear, with brains enough behind for the reception of as many meanings as he was plied with, still he

could have done nothing but gaze hopelessly and darkly around.

Then seeing how it was, Monsignor Luard cried out loudly, "We are defeating our own anxiety by deafening the Captain. Let us have a little patience. He will tell us everything," and he put his hand upon one, and then with a kindly smile upon another, and the good sense of the rest helping, the people returned to their seats.

My stepfather took a table-chair that gave him a command of his audience. I thought he looked very handsome. His gloom, deepened by the wrinkles of his frown, suited the cast of his face. His eyes were bright, despite an ashen hue of skin, and a drawn countenance that came near to haggardness.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he exclaimed, in a voice a little broken, though sufficiently clear, "I have to thank you for your petition. It is considerate. Possibly my gratitude may be peculiarly due to you, Monsignor?"

"No; the suggestion was your stepdaughter's," answered the priest, with a fine hopeful smile and a cordial flourish of his hand towards me.

The Captain did not glance my way.

"It has helped me to arrive at a decision," he continued. "Could anything occur more dreadful or unexpected than this seizure?

We are absolutely at the mercy of twelve villains. They have heavily armed themselves, and are clearly a devilish, audacious gang. You have heard that they cleared the ship of her original company. And why did they keep me?" said he, clasping his hands upon his knees as though he wrung his fingers. "That I may navigate the vessel to a place where they can securely plunder and then abandon her."

"Then how shall we manage?" said the hard-faced lady, whose starting eyes and advanced head was like a screaming fit to the eye.

"I cannot answer you until the men tell me where they intend I should steer for," answered the Captain.

"But let us understand," exclaimed Monsignor. "You are to carry this ship to a part of some coast where the men will be able to land their plunder. When this is done?"

"Gentlemen and ladies," cried the Captain a little wildly, "let me hear first of all the intentions of the men: I will then talk with you."

"You are now in command, Captain?" said Mr. Jackson.

"Yes, sir. When your petition reached me I deliberated, then called to the man whose name I find is Owen, and I told him I would

take charge of the ship in the interests of the common safety."

"Without any stipulations?" demanded the Grasshopper.

"It came either to my consenting, or being sent adrift—and feel this weather, sir," rounding with something of fierceness upon the passenger.

"I beg pardon—I meant didn't you inquire, before you consented to continue in command, where you would be expected to carry the ship to?" said the Grasshopper.

"No, sir," answered the Captain; "that I have yet to learn."

I perceived that some of the passengers exchanged glances, at though resenting the Grasshopper's tone, that took perhaps a character of insolence from being high-pitched and urgent with elbow.

"You'll not tell us, Captain," called out Mr. Macbride from the side of his wife, "that they expect you to wreck this ship?"

"What's been said about that?" roared the Colonel. "Isn't this time all-fired enough that Mr. Macbride should sit there working up imagination into a very hell for our solace by questions heaping horror upon horror?"

"I have my wife with me. I have a right to know our probable fate," exclaimed Mr. Macbride faintly.

"And I have my wife with me," shouted the Colonel, looking at the huge bulk who was seated a few chairs from him.

"Who doesn't want to know her probable fate on any account whatever," Mrs. Wills whipped out, nodding hard and continuously at the clergyman.

I watched my stepfather secretly and closely all this time, but never once caught a look from him.

"It would be as well," said Mr. Bergheim, "to reason out our chances upon a business-like footing—by which I should say let us be practical. I take it that all of us who are assembled here desire to get to America. Let us once know that we are proceeding to America, with our baggage and personal effects quite safe, and I take it we are all content. We have no interest in the ship, none in the gold which we are to believe, Captain, is the cause of this piracy. Now, I should be pleased if the men could be made to understand that we care not for the ship nor her contents, but for our lives and baggage only: they should be glad to get rid of us easily by transferring us to a vessel that is bound to the west."

"Chaw!" cried the comedian; "here's a rich clipper ship piratically seized: are the villains going to haul alongside the first

vessel they encounter and send us aboard with the full story of the outrage?"

"Why not?" responded Mr. Bergheim, with arms advanced and a shrug that sank his head. "Fifty to one the original crew was picked up and the story is therefore known."

"Are our lives in danger, Captain?" exclaimed a lady.

"The safety of you all is one of the conditions under which I reassume command," he answered.

"But how is that to be provided for when the ship's arrived off the place where they mean to carry the gold ashore?" exclaimed the Grasshopper.

At that instant the wind howled in the companion, and down along with the breath of the wet, cold night-blast came a hoarse cry:

"Captain Sinclair, will you step on deck? The ship's in want of you."

My father upturned his eyes at the tell-tale compass, rose with the air of one whose spirit is broken, then, buttoning up his coat without a syllable of speech, bowed to us, and went up the steps.

CHAPTER VII

WE TAKE THE AIR IN GANGS

THE rain thrashed the decks; at intervals the glass paled to a dim violet glare of distant storm; this perhaps reconciled most of us to our imprisonment. The steward bustled about with glasses and drink, and (the ladies consenting) the Colonel and Mr. Jackson smoked cigars. Sharp tempestuous noises of strainings and groanings ran through the fabric as she took the seas; from time to time you heard the sullen thunder of a fall of water forward. It was a black night. Monsignor stepped to the barometer and said to the hard-faced lady that there was a fall.

"Small wonder," said he, "that the fellows who are on deck should be glad to have Captain Sinclair to take charge."

"Hark! What's that?" cried Mr. Macbride.

It reached the ear in a hollow echoing rumble, and was accompanied by the hoarse yowling of pulling and dragging sailors.

"They have let go the maintopsail hal-

liards," said Colonel Wills, who had made the passage often enough to know the ropes, "and they are going to reef the sail, I suppose."

"Surely they never would have sent the Captain adrift in an open boat on such a night as this," exclaimed Mr. Macbride, whose face looked as white as his clerical tie, as he and his wife sat swaying to the swings of the ship, whose leeward fetches were growing sharper and sharper.

It was all so unreal to me from that sort of incredulity which awaits at first upon tragic surprise, that I sat idly looking, idly listening, idly thinking, like one dim of vision and a little hard of hearing in a theatre where the show is complex and without narrative in movement. It was hard upon ten o'clock. I felt weary without being sleepy, and reeled over the tumbling deck to the table to get me a little drop of wine from a decanter in a swinging tray. The Grasshopper, pipe in mouth, with active, unexpected civility, leapt to my side, watched, dodged, and caught the decanter as it swung to him, and handed me a glass of wine. I thanked him, and looking about me with a faint smile and a little bow of good-night to this one and then that, I went to my berth.

It was long before I could sleep for wondering what they meant to do with the

passengers. All this while the ship was rushing south: to what part of the world had they agreed to steer her?

I lay feverish with the hurry of my thoughts, miserable with amazement and anxiety. My berth was to leeward, and my bunk just under the cabin port-hole, and every minute the ship, as she swept along the slant of the roaring ridges, plunged her side into the seething cataract that swelled about my head with the thunder of a hurricane. It blew a black, wet, hard gale. The creaking and rending noises in the ship drowned all other sounds, yet I knew by the motion, not more than by the flashing of white brine, that they held her throughout the wild hours ceaselessly rushing through it.

In the morning so great a sea ran that it was scarcely possible to walk. By clinging and clawing I reached a seat in the saloon. A few passengers sat here and there; they were the picture of dejection: the comedian of a grimy blue for want of the razor, and Mrs. Wills scarcely recognisable through her hair having floated out of curl. The steward was making some show of preparing breakfast, but he moved in a manner that gave us no promise of a meal for another hour at least. The cabin was sunk in gloom: nothing better than a wet dim twilight sifted through

the windows when the ship lifted the weeping glass to the grey sky.

"This wind will carry us very far south: we shall be crossing the equator in a little while," exclaimed Monsignor in a melancholy voice.

The steward informed us that the sea was running mountains high; nevertheless, the ship was sweeping before it under a foresail and reefed maintopsail: the gale was on the quarter, and you felt the weight and volume of the mighty ocean surge in each swift, giddy, launching upheaval. I asked after my stepfather.

"He's been keeping the deck more or less all night, miss," said the steward. "He's on deck now. Who's he a-going to trust to keep a look-out? That there Owen ain't no sailor."

The passengers emerged by degrees, and a little before ten the steward came down the companion steps with some hot breakfast. We drew to the table, melancholy, uneasy, alarmed, darting looks fitfully, staring oddly, speaking in low voices. The height of the sea frightened many of us, the subduing influence of the storm was upon us, and there was nobody at table to say a reassuring thing.

In the middle of breakfast Captain Sinclair came below. He pulled off his streaming sou'wester and oilskin coat, and let them

drop on the deck by the side of his chair, making a bow to right and left before seating himself. His face had hardened into an iron mask. I met his glance—it was a distortion of the lips, no smile certainly, that he returned my nod with.

"What news can you give us, Captain?" howled Colonel Wills.

"None that you'll thank me for."

"Have the men decided upon a destination?" inquired Mr. Jackson.

"Yes, sir."

Every face seemed to turn wild and white with eagerness at this—every neck was stretched. Monsignor put his hand to his ear. The Captain remained silent.

"Will you name the place to us, Captain?" shouted the Grasshopper.

"The Great Salvage Island," answered my stepfather.

"Where was that?"

"It's a rock between Madeira and the Canaries," the Captain said, chewing his food slowly, and speaking as though he forced himself to an effort he abhorred, and looking at those who questioned him full and straight under his dark brow.

Questions crackled like discharges of musketry, and the distracting motions of the ship, the dartings and leapings of lamps and swing

trays, were in that confusion of tongues to heighten it to sheer sick dizziness. How far was the Salvage Island from England? What was going to happen after the ship arrived there?

"Say!" sings out the Colonel, "are they going to bury the gold buccaneer fashion? If Madeira isn't far off from that rock, what's to stop us from sighting it, and privately signalling for a man-of-war to follow us?"

"Or couldn't you put into Madeira by mistake, as it were?" said Mr. Jackson. "There's nearly always a British ship of war lying there."

"Who says so?" said the Captain.

"Well, sir, I don't know," answered the comedian, who looked ferocious with a nervous attack; "but I must have read of it, and it's in my head that it is so."

The Captain slowly masticated his food, looking fixedly at Mr. Jackson.

"After all," continued the comedian, "since there's no navigator amongst the twelve scoundrels who've seized us, which of them's to know you're heading for Madeira till we're close enough to the island for distress signals to be seen?"

"Were you ever off Madeira?" demanded the Captain.

"Not to my knowledge."

"It's a large lump of land, and looms in a big shadow many miles distant," said the Captain. "There's scarce a man of the twelve who wouldn't know it as we approached when miles off, long before we should be in sight from Funchal; and perceiving that I meant foul play, there's not a man of the twelve who'd grant me a minute for prayer before sending a bullet through my head."

"O God, Captain, don't talk so!" cried Mrs. Wills, upheaving her shapeless mass in a start of horror upon the chair as she dried her great face on her handkerchief.

"What I am doing I am forced to do," continued the Captain, closing his knife and fork and addressing Monsignor. "It's a horrible obligation. Yet should I be serving you by being sent adrift? Could I be of use to you by so acting as to place myself at the mercy of men whose instant gift of grace would be the yardarm or the knife? I tell you straight, ladies and gentlemen, that were I to sulk, shut myself up in my cabin, decline to come to any sort of terms with them, they'd toss me over the side to perish in an open boat with no more compunction than I feel in breaking this;" he snapped a biscuit, whilst his eyes seemed on fire as he talked. "I may be of service to you and the ship whilst I am on board—there are no certain-

ties at sea—a few hours might easily find all well with us."

Mr. Macbride clasped his hands and looked up.

"But I tell you, as things stand, we are helpless. The men have possession of the decks, and they are armed. I have no fears for your safety, nor for your personal property. I have stipulated for that. If they leave the vessel at the Salvage Island, we shall have to work her to the Canaries or to Madeira amongst ourselves." He stood up, and said, "I ask your sympathy for my situation—no, your forbearance will suffice. I have lost my ship. I am miserable enough to be obliged to see women and children, both here and in the 'tween-decks, placed in my charge, distracted some of them, wretched all of them, by the feeling of insecurity, by the tragic uncertainty of their position, by the fears that their lives are endangered. More—I know by this stroke (unless I save the ship) that I am professionally ruined."

His voice broke. It seemed as though he would speak on; bowing hurriedly he withdrew to his cabin.

I thought he would wish to talk with me presently, and watched his cabin door, thinking to see it open and himself beckon. He came out indeed after half an hour, but merely

to pick up his oilskins, put them on, and stalk up the steps.

The gale hummed fiercely throughout the morning, but shortly before mid-day a flash of wet sunshine slipped in white splendour from one reeling cabin window to another, and shortly afterwards the tarpaulins were removed from the skylights, the companion doors were opened, and the steward descended. I think we were nearly all of us then assembled in the saloon.

"Ladies and gentlemen," said the man, "any half-dozen of you, three ladies and three gents, who would feel disposed to take the air are at liberty to go on deck for their entertainment."

"Who sent that message?" called out the Colonel savagely.

"I was stopped as I came along by the man called Owen; he sent it, sir."

After some talk it was arranged that the three men to go on deck should be Monsignor, Colonel Wills, and the actor; and the ladies were the hard-faced lady, another, and myself. I know not how it was with the rest, but my own heart burned with the humiliation of being let out like Newgate prisoners in a little gang "to take the air." I was the first ready, and passed on deck. The companion doors were opened on my

knocking. I stooped low and gained the deck, staggering and nearly falling to a sudden giddiness raised by the whirling, roaring, brilliant life of the day after the gloom of the saloon. The sentry caught me by the arm. I shuddered, instantly rallied, and went a little way to look about me.

My stepfather stood upon the ship's quarter with a sextant in his hand. He saw me, but made no other sign than glancing. The man at the hatch was armed with a cutlass; he was draped midway to the heels in pilot cloth, and wore jack-boots and a yellow sou'-wester. Others about the deck were clothed in apparel which they certainly had not worn nor brought with them in their long-boat. Monsignor came to my side and begged me to take his arm, and together we stood looking. It was a marvellous fine scene of ocean. Nothing grander ever rolled under the heavens. The sky close to the horizon was painted a delicate dusk with cloud, and the sea flashed like sunbeams against that soft darkness. A vast green noble surge swelled with us as we ran. It foamed to our bulwark rails, and lifted us high, and our wake was a highway of yeast that topped the lift of the billow and died out in the dim liquid flickering distance. The sky was a race of large torn cloud, white as milk; the sun of a windy whiteness sprang

off their edges, and at each leap the whole surface of the pouring sea flashed into hills of dazzling light. In the midst rushed the ship; she stormed along under a few breasts of canvas; her spars looked naked, her rigging yelled, every slack rope arched forwards with her course, and her lofty mastheads bowed to the sovereign height of their white trucks.

I observed that a man with a cutlass dangling at his hip lurked about the main-hatchway; no steerage passengers were visible; of the twelve of a crew, eight were to be counted, including the helmsman and a sturdy, broad, red-headed fellow, who trudged in that part of the deck which they call the gangway as though he were in charge of the ship. Colonel Wills and the comedian stood staring along the decks and up at the sails; the two ladies hung together at the companion, unable to walk.

"If this wind lasts," said the priest, "it will put an end to uncertainty. Madeira is not far off; the Great Salvage is close to that island."

"Can you imagine what the men intend?"

"I believe they will disembark with the money, then bury it, and sail away, keeping us in the ship, but what they will do afterwards I can't conceive."

"Is this the result," said I, "of a prearranged conspiracy, or were the men really shipwrecked wretches, who have been taken on board, risen, and seized the vessel?"

His French blood spoke in the shrug he gave.

"I should hold that it had been prearranged but for this," said he. "What confederates could they have had in the ship? They sent the original crew, mates and all, out of her."

"Might not that have been part of the conspiracy?"

"How could it serve them, Miss Hayes?"

"Supposing—for argument's sake—that Mr. Gordon was in the plot. He contrives without suspicion of my stepfather to place the ship on a given day in a position settled upon."

The priest shook his head.

"He secretly helps the men by telling them where the arms-chest is, or perhaps by taking them to it in some black hour of the middle watch. Nevertheless, Mr. Gordon is put into the boat and sent away with the rest of the people——"

"Why? He would want a share of the booty. It is not likely he would leave the ship had he betrayed her into the hands of these pirates."

"Perhaps not," said I.

Colonel Wills and Mr. Jackson came up to us.

"It seems to me," said the Colonel, gasping hoarsely in his efforts to make us hear him above the wind, but with a voice that should not reach the companion sentry, "that it ought to be no difficult matter to recapture this vessel. There may be eight or ten men in the steerage: then there are ourselves. It's to be done."

"It's to be done," exclaimed the comedian sarcastically, "if they'll let us all out and allow us to arm ourselves, and give us a fair chance, as man to man. But put me into that hole again," said he, pointing to the companion hatch, "and let that chap there be ready with his cutlass to job me over the nut on my showing myself, and what sort of a draw am I going to make of this ship's recapture?"

Just as he said this my stepfather passed us. "Laura, I want you," said he.

The sentry threw open the doors, and I followed the Captain, who seemed to be reading the brass arch of his sextant. I was at his heels, and closed the door of his berth when we were in it. He put down his sextant, seated himself, and so postured that my breath left me: I thought he would sink

in a fit. He laid one hand upon his breast, the other upon the table, and strangely and slowly clenched his fingers till the veins showed like whipcord upon his fist; meanwhile he looked down upon the table with an expression of grief full of wildness and anger.

"Do you remember," said he presently, "what Christian said to Bligh when that captain was getting into the boat. 'I am in hell. I am in hell.' 'Tis so with me."

"Colonel Wills just now on deck said that he thought this ship might be recaptured."

"By whom?"

"By Wills and the other men in the saloon; and then there are eight or ten males in the 'tween-decks who would fight for their lives and their liberty, surely."

"Wills is a Yankee bouncing braggart: full of fine possibilities—for other men. He married that huge woman as something to get behind in time of danger. I would advise him to be careful in his talk. If his words reach the ears of the men who hold the ship, I'll not answer for his life. None of you seem aware of the frightful significance of what has happened."

"How do you mean?" said I. "You should have sat with us and heard us."

"Ay, but they don't know what's before

them," said he, pointing to a locker that I should sit. I watched him, feeling frightened on a sudden. "The man Owen and some others came to me on the quarter-deck about an hour ago, and their plan's this: the whole of the passengers, bag and baggage, are to be put ashore on the Great Salvage Island. I am then to carry this ship to a certain Bahama Cay."

He stopped, eyeing me intently.

"Why," said I, fetching my breath, "I don't think the passengers will object to being set ashore. Anything better than being imprisoned, living in a constant state of uncertainty and terror, never knowing but that we may all be butchered if it should suit the ruffians to change their plans."

"Yet they'll not like to be put ashore on the Great Salvage Island. It's a bare rock, not much bigger than half-a-dozen ships of this size. Did you think there was a town and hotels on it?"

"The people will be glad to get out of this ship anyhow," I said. "Madeira is not far distant?"

"Nor the Canaries," said he.

"And I suppose," said I, "that ships frequently pass within sight of the island?"

He nodded inattentively, and said, "They'll not like it. I hate the idea of assenting to

it. Why do I do so? Because I am a ruined man," he cried, again clenching his fist in the former odd slow way, as though he did it in his sleep, or was catching at dry sand. "And not only ruined: if I oppose them they'll take my life."

"Ruined! This capture is no fault of yours," said I, meeting his gaze steadily. "It is not like some vile blunder of seamanship. Your explanation, supported by the evidence of the passengers, must set you right with the owners——"

"I am ruined," he blazed out. "Don't talk rubbish to me. What do you know about the sea? I am prejudiced for ever in this trade, and now if I want a berth I must be willing to hang about until I can pick up a job as first or second of something this ship could make a long-boat of."

"What's to become of me?"

"You'll stop on board. I stipulated for that."

"I would rather take my chance with the passengers," I exclaimed, not liking the look that was in his face.

"You'll stop on board," he repeated, with cold, deliberate emphasis.

"Shall I ever get home?"

"Perhaps you'll not want to," said he. "This is to be a voyage of adventures, and

if it must ruin me on one side, by God, Laura, it shall equip me on the other!" He jumped up as if to stop my mouth. "You can go," said he. "Leave me to tell the passengers what the men intend to do. I have my observations to work out."

Just as the features of a picture creep out to the stealthy light of the dawn, so the whole meaning of this voyage was beginning to steal in upon my mind. His acting was clumsy; it seemed half-hearted in its general expression to me; and still I could not yet be sure that he was the master-spirit of this audacious, unparalleled plot; all I had to build on was, first, my having heard through my sister and others that he was in debt and in great difficulties, and next my having seen the man Owen at his house.

I walked through the saloon, and when passing the companion steps the doors were opened, and the Colonel and Mr. Jackson, Monsignor Luard, and the two ladies came down; they were yet on their way when the fellow above roared out:

"Any other three gents and three ladies can come up for half an hour. Let them knock when so be they're ready."

The Colonel was in an agony of rage, but he held his tongue until after the man had shouted down and the doors were shut. He then let fly.

"Of all the blistered insults ever offered to ladies and gentlemen who've paid their good money, and plenty of it too, for cabins to New York, smother me if this ain't way-down the unholiest sunk out of conception right out of sight of all other insults, by God, as fur low as the spirits of the damned be yelling! To turn ladies and gentlemen off the deck they've paid for the use of! To allow 'em half an hour to walk and breathe for their entertainment, as that blistered cuckoo atop there calls it! Rats alive! If it's to come to this, and to go on at this, better set fire to the bucket, says I, and bonfire ourselves out of it."

Whilst he talked he flourished his arms as though he cut with a sword, and seemed mad with his starting eyes and high-pitched voice.

Mr. Jackson, who had wrapped a cloak about him, fixed his dark eyes upon the Grasshopper and said, "Are you going on deck?"

"I am not," answered the other, with a smooth smile; "I am going to eat my dinner down here when it comes."

"But heavenly angels!" cried the comedian, "if we should devise some scheme of recapturing the vessel, how in Joseph are you, as one of us, to know what to do unless you go on deck and look about you?"

The elbows rose high as the Grasshopper answered with an arch diabolical sneer, "As one of you! But who's you?"

"Will you tell us, sir," cried Mr. Jackson, colouring with temper, "that if we agree to break out and rise upon the villains who have seized the ship, you will not fight?"

"I'll fight when you break out."

"Gentlemen," cried Mr. Macbride, who stood with a face pale with consternation swinging at a stanchion, "I hope nothing will be attempted that's likely to jeopardise the safety of the ladies."

"I am of Mr. Macbride's opinion," said Mr. Bergheim.

The Grasshopper uttered another hollow laugh.

The dinner that day was a very shabby affair; no soup, no preliminaries; just a round of corned beef, a ham, and some pieces of boiled fowl. When it was served we waited for the Captain. The Colonel reeled to the table and called out, "Is this all?" The steward from the foot of the companion steps answered "All."

"No matter," said the Colonel. "Still they shall fork me over every cent of my passage-money, if I have to sue 'em for it to my bottom dollar."

Just then the Captain arrived. He took

his seat at the head of the table, and the passengers placed themselves. Sunshine was on the ship, and the radiance leapt in stars from the cabin mirrors, and the atmosphere was bright and warm with a throbbing in it of foam-white gleams from the cabin windows. The comedian began to grumble about the poverty of the dinner.

"Should we not consider ourselves fortunate to be fed so well," said the priest, "considering the hands we have fallen into?"

"There is enough for all," said Mr. Macbride.

"But not enough for my money," cried the Colonel, who, rounding upon the Captain, shrieked in a spasm of rage, "This is a hellish situation, sir."

The Captain carved the beef like a machine; his mind was locked up behind his iron hard face; there was no interpretable intelligence in his countenance, not even in his glance as he'd dart a look here and there. I observed the influence of his grim and gloomy demeanour upon those who sat near him; few spoke; his own speech was seldom more than yes or no.

At my end, however, the conversation was brisk with threats and temper. The Colonel went on with his braggart noisy talk of recapturing the ship. He did not tell us how

it was to be done, merely that it must be done.

"What would your wife think," said Mr. Bergheim, "if you was to be shot as you sit eating there by her side?"

"Be our ideas what they may, we shall be fools to let the lawless villains above hear of them," said the comedian, rolling his dark eyes somewhat significantly towards the steward.

At this instant I saw my stepfather close his knife and fork; he seemed to steady himself by grasping the table, then spoke:

"Ladies and gentlemen, I have waited until this meal was nearly done to give you news of the men's intentions."

"Ha!" exclaimed the comedian, and there was a general start.

"I am completely in the men's power, as you know," continued the Captain. "They have commanded me with threats to steer the ship to a certain place, and though they may be ignorant of navigation, they'd know by the compass course if I was acting honestly by them. The ship is now heading direct for a cluster of rocks that lies between Madeira and the Canaries, called the Salvages. The men intend to bring up off the Great Salvage Island, and there disembark all the passengers along with their baggage."

"Good God!" shouted the Grasshopper, springing out of his chair and standing. The others did not realise so rapidly. After a pause Mr. Macbride said faintly, "I hope there will be no difficulty in getting home?"

"I think not," said the Captain.

"Is it a naked rock?" said the hard-faced lady.

The Captain let his head sink.

"What are they going to do with you, sir?" shouted the Grasshopper, standing erect.

"They intend to keep me on board to carry the ship to another place which they have not yet named," answered the Captain, looking at him with a scowl.

"And we're all to be put upon a naked rock where there are no houses, nor shelter, and where nothing's likely to come and take us off?" here screamed out a lady passenger.

"They mean to let you have one of the ship's boats," said the Captain, addressing the Colonel. "The distance to Madeira is short. You will easily procure assistance to take you all off. No threats," he cried, with a sort of fierceness, that did not fit him to my eye, "could have driven me into helping them in any measure likely to endanger your lives. I hesitated long, and then imposed certain conditions before agreeing. Supplies of food will be landed, conveniences of shelter

for the time. There is plenty of fresh water, and the climate is that of Madeira. I could not make better terms. Naturally they would not permit me to bring this ship to off a port. I have no fears whatever for your ultimate safety."

The conversation was at this moment arrested by the hard-faced lady going into hysterics.

CHAPTER VIII

THE PASSENGERS ARE SET ASHORE

The squeals of a pig dragged to the slaughter yard might have been thought music beside the din the hard-faced lady filled the saloon with. In the midst of it Mrs. Macbride fainted, and was borne to her cabin by her husband, whose face looked swollen as though he had the mumps. Presently the hard-faced lady was bundled along with her children by the stewardess into her berth, and the talk began again about the island and the intention of the piratic crew.

I looked askant but suspiciously at my stepfather. How went his sympathies as a man with all this? I might as well have walked on to the forecastle, and searched the chocolate countenance of the figure-head under the bowsprit for soul and poetry.

I will not attempt any further report of the conversation. Mr. Bergheim, who had managed to black his eye, looked sick with the thought of being set ashore on a desolate

rock. The others quieted down somewhat when in the course of the discussion they grew to realise what was to happen. Monsignor, clasping his hands upon the table, asked mildly how the occupants of the boat, when they were sent for help, should know in what direction to steer for Madeira?

"You shall have a compass and full directions," answered the Captain; "the men dare not deny me."

Many questions were asked about the supply of food; the passengers in all would make a large number of souls; unless plenty to eat was left with them, then if help was delayed they might starve. The Captain assured them he would see they were amply provisioned.

"You may be taken off," said he, "soon after the ship's departure. From Madeira you'll easily make your way to Europe or America. It is a horrible experience, yet—yet—it might be worse."

Mr. Jackson blazed out about the loss the delay would cause him.

"You are not the only loser, sir," exclaimed the Captain, viewing him sternly.

Then they broadsided him with questions as to how they were to sleep, if food was to be found supposing the supplies gave out before help arrived, and the like. The Cap-

tain in answer to this went to his berth and returned with a volume. It was an ocean directory. He handed the book to Monsignor Luard with his finger upon a page, and went on deck, the doors opening after he had knocked hard several times. The priest put on his spectacles and read aloud a description of the island. The book said it contained a spring of cold water, was covered with a peculiar herbage much sought after by the Portuguese, and was piebald with birds, so tame or spiritless you kicked them as you walked. Good fish was to be had, and a vast variety of crabs. But it was a dangerous rock, and ships gave it a wide berth. When the priest had ended, the Colonel snatched up the book and read aloud again the whole description at the top of his voice.

After this, things fell into a sort of quiet that did not want a quality of numbness. The distance to the Salvage Island from the place of the ship's seizure was about thirteen hundred miles, and as the vessel had been driven with much constancy by strong winds, it was reckoned amongst us in the saloon that the *Mohock* would make the island by Saturday. What they thought of matters in the 'tween-decks I could not get to hear. All the steward could tell us was, that little knots of the handful of emigrants we carried were

released from time to time to take the air: a couple or three of them were likewise allowed to visit the galley, and use it for the dressing of the victuals of the whole.

My stepfather had now little or nothing to say to me; I might have been a stranger on board, a maid or servant to one of the passengers. I had no doubt he knew I had guessed the truth, and was afraid of me. He might think he had blundered also in opening himself so unwarily as on that occasion when he exclaimed with an oath if this thing was to ruin him on one side it should equip him on the other. Yet he played his part with the passengers extraordinarily well. He would sit at table with the face of a spirit-broken man who seeks to veil the weakness of grieving by stern looks and sullen short answers. He'd stay but a very short time, and talk as little as possible, and then chiefly to the women, whom he sought to hearten by promising them that their imprisonment on the island would be brief.

"These are travelled seas," he would tell them. "The rock lies between two much-frequented places. Granted that big ships, as the book says, give the shoal a wide berth, many small boats visit the island to cut the herbage. Portuguese fishing-smacks bring up off it. The men amongst you will be able

to collect materials to make a great smoke, and when that is seen help is sure."

Thus would he talk, and I'd see Monsignor listening with his hand to his ear. But the Captain rarely addressed the Colonel and the others, and would be gone long before the meal was finished.

They let us out as before in gangs, three of a sex, but never allowed us to be longer than an hour on deck at a time. It was now warm weather, the sea a divinely rich blue, and the ship's yellow forefoot sparkled with flying-fish as she drove through the clear and heavenly dye of brine under the summer impulse of her cathedral heights. My step-father was constantly on deck, but always alone. I guessed in the few quick observations I was able to make when I went above that the rogues had chosen a couple of mates out of their body. At one time I'd see the man Owen striding in the gangway as though keeping a look-out; at another a fellow named Harris, who'd walk the deck as though watching the ship. It was always these two men alternately.

The Captain hung alone right aft, and his behaviour was so cold, so hard, so withdrawn, that none of the passengers ever spoke to him.

I awoke early on Saturday morning. My

cabin was filled with the blue-white light of the sea, tingling off the burnished knolls of blue water as the ship floated forwards with scarce more life in her than she got from the swell. Whilst I dressed, I wondered if we should sight the island that day. All sorts of bitter thoughts buzzed in my head: my brain was like a nest of wasps. Suppose my stepfather was the arch-conspirator in this devilish business; where did he mean to live to escape the law? What was the punishment for such a crime as this? It was piracy of course in the first degree, piracy in its most infamous, villainous expression, seeing the high trust reposed in the man, and for that crime they used to hang in irons; but without looking into books I cannot say that it was a hanging villainy in 1844. Did ever one hear of such a piracy as this—a captain to steal his own ship! If any of the passengers perished through fear or exposure on the island, they'd make a murder charge of it. How would his scheme go when the island job was ended? An odd sort of heat or flush of romance glowed in me whilst I thought. It was an amazing piece of human life, quite unlike anything else that had ever been. I was here, and able to watch the startling play, and a romantic curiosity did so much fire me this morning that I recalled with surprise my

wish to share the lot of the passengers. I wanted to see the mask fall, and wind with the villains through their maze of plot to its issue. It was all one whether I went to New York or another place, and what had I to fear from the law?

It was about a quarter to seven. I stepped into the saloon and saw nobody but the steward. He stopped his work of dusting and said:

"The land's in sight, miss."

"What land?"

"The what d'ye call ums—where they're to be landed."

"Is it close?"

"About three miles off."

"Where's the Captain?"

"On deck, miss."

The companion doors were closed. I felt wild to see the land, yet would accept no privileges which were denied the other passengers, though, had I knocked, the sentry, knowing me as the Captain's stepdaughter, would have let me through. We had been at sea for some time now, and there was a magic in the very name of land to quicken the heart and brighten the eyes and run a hurry of pleasurable expectations into the mind. I went to all the port-holes and slanted my sight—to no purpose; the land

was on the bow, the steward said, a blue shadow; it looked like a big lizard. There was nothing else in sight. I saw through the ports that it was a morning of serene and even splendour; the large blue swell ran lazily, barely wrinkled by the light air. Through the open skylight came the small summer thunder of sails beating the masts as the ship bowed. The passengers made their appearance in ones and twos, and in a little while all were assembled. Those in the berths had hurried out when they heard them in the saloon shouting that the island was in sight. The excitement was incredible; it was as though a cry of fire had been raised. They ran from window to window as I had, to catch a view; the Colonel leapt upon the table, but his heroic resolve went to pieces when he got his head into the skylight; he durst not show his nose above the line of the deck, and sprang back, having seen nothing.

At eight o'clock the steward and stewardess arrived to prepare the table for breakfast. They told us that the island was now within easy eyeshot, and described it as bleak and barren, with a slope of green stuff running out of the sea to the foreland point. Calm as the ocean was, they said the surf lifted and flashed in heaps of dazzle round about the land. The noise of the combers as they

smote the strand could be heard on the ship's forecastle.

"Aren't we to be allowed on deck to see the place where we're to be marooned?" said the Colonel.

"There'll be nobody allowed on deck," answered the steward, "till the boats are ready alongside. The passengers then 'll go straight from the cabin to the boats and ashore."

"Who told you that?" said Mr. Jackson, with the growl of a mastiff in his fat throat.

"The cook," answered the steward.

"And why the bleeding comfort couldn't he have told you something to cheer us?" said the comedian, forgetting in his wrath that he was in the company of ladies, and he flung himself into a chair, folding his arms, and scowling right up at the ceiling.

It was a cold breakfast that morning, saving that the steward put a pot or two of hot coffee and tea upon the table; yet there was plenty—ham, biscuit, delicate meat in tins, and so forth. The Captain did not join us. Monsignor, whose calm face, nevertheless, showed a mind oppressed with questions, asked the steward if the Commander did not intend to come to breakfast, and was answered that the meal had been served to him on the quarter-deck.

Whilst they talked, something green and

white floated into the disc of an open port-hole. I sprang to my feet and rushed to view the island. Others saw it, and in a breath the windows on the port side were blocked with faces. Barren it no doubt was, bleak and inhospitable; yet it looked fairy-like in that frame of ship-window, a delicate miracle of lights and shadows, sweet to my sight, wearied by the sea, as a draught from a foaming spring to the parched throat. Every now and again the spray rose at points in quivering shafts of splendour. Some way beyond, to the right, was a long black heap of rock, with a plentiful sporting of white water about it. The sea, floating in long-drawn respirations past the island to the horizon, was of a deep and heavenly blue.

"Isn't that white sand?" sang out Colonel Wills.

"I see holes to sleep in," exclaimed the Grasshopper.

"And I see many large crabs, who'll let your friends know by the morning what sort of bones your skins have hidden all your lives!" drawled Mr. Jackson.

"Horrible!" cried Mrs. Macbride, putting her fingers to her ears.

"I sleep in no hole, for one," said Mr. Bergheim, who was looking at the island through a pocket-telescope. "They will allow

us cloth for tents, I hope, and when we are ashore our first business shall be to make up a great fire that will smoke like a volcano."

"Do you smoke with grass in your country?" sneered the Colonel.

Thus they went on bawling to each other from the several port-holes. I tried to gather by listening what was passing on deck. All was silent.

The island remained stationary in the port-hole: it was clear, then, that the ship had been brought to a stand, and a sparkling diamond dance of water where the light rode in blue and green told of a soft flowing breeze, of weight enough to hold the canvas steady.

The passengers paced about the saloon, bitterly restless and anxious. They had taken in a heartload of the island with their eyes, and began to understand that it was a wild and cruel lump of land to abandon people on, and that help must come quickly if something far blacker than what they had reckoned on was not to befall them. This I collected by quietly listening to their talk.

Monsignor dwelt in particular upon the Captain having spoken of one boat only for them. "They'll give us a compass, no doubt," said the priest, "and the Captain will see that we have a chart and bearings for the Madeira or the Canaries; yet she must needs

be a small boat; four or five only will be able to go in her. If she should founder, the rest of us," said he, looking around, "will be left helpless, expectant, not knowing whether they have reached land, or whether they have betrayed us by neglecting us."

"That's it," said the Colonel. "It's the durned expectation when a man's in such a situation as that," said he, pointing to the island through the port-hole, "that takes the curl out of his heart, and leaves his spirit slack as a skinned eel. It's a brimstone sort of a joke this, surely!—a most unnatural, uncalled-for, hellish position for us ladies and gentlemen to be in," and he whacked the table with a red face of raving.

At ten o'clock there was a tramp and hurry of footsteps overhead; this was followed by a creaking noise. The cabin windows were darkened by the passage of a body or two, and we heard the splash of the quarter-boats as they soused to their bilges. A man then appeared at the skylight. He grasped a musket, and stood looking down at us, clearly with the intention that we should observe him. His breast was bulged and knobby with the butt-ends of pistols, and a cutlass was at his hip; he seemed a formidable villain, and stared with a determined face, running his eyes here and there as though he

numbered us as far as the frame of the skylight permitted him to see.

Mr. Bergheim said to me, "Who is to know but that he may have received instructions to shoot us down one by one, by Gott? Does he not look as if he meant to take aim?" and the timid little Jew, with a shudder, went away to a seat near the sideboard at the fore-end, where no musket could sight him from the skylight.

Some time went by, perhaps two hours; we then heard the lift and dip of oars, and Monsignor called from one of the windows that a string of three boats was making for the island. I looked and saw two boats towed by a third. They floated deep, and no doubt contained provisions and necessaries for the temporary support of the passengers. Four men rowed. They pulled with long oars, and their strokes were the long clumsy motions of the fishermen or 'longshoremen.

The Colonel, after counting them, exclaimed in a low voice, with a glance at the skylight, "Eight remain in the ship. Aren't they to be mastered if we could break out?"

"Don't let us talk so," cried Mr. Bergheim from his corner. "They are peaceable, and will set us ashore in safety, and after a little discomfort we shall arrive home. Will not that be better than being shot through the head?"

"There's nothing to be done, Colonel," said Mr. Jackson, restlessly pacing the cabin floor. "Every man will be armed and doubly on the alert. We must take it as it comes; but as an experience!"

He was interrupted by the armed fellow above hoarsely shouting down:

"Ladies and gents, the sooner you get your traps together the better. When the boats return you must be ready, and what ye haven't got packed to take yer'll have to leave behind you."

"How long are we to be allowed?" exclaimed the priest.

"All an hour," answered the fellow, in a voice as gruff as a sailor in a stage play: in truth, the brutal hoarseness of those who had occasion to address us seemed needless and forced; saving the ugly monster, their looks expressed them as men very capable of civil speech and decent behaviour.

The passengers ran to their cabins and thrust their belongings into their boxes and valises as fast as they could handle the things. Their heavy luggage was in the hold. Monsignor, who was the first to make an end, found me looking through a cabin window.

"Have you packed up, Miss Hayes?" said he.

"I am to stop in the ship."

"Ay, with your stepfather, to be sure. Yet does not he subject you to great perils? I think you would be safer with us on that rock. We are sure to make our existence known—I have no fear of all being safely rescued quickly."

"I would gladly make one of you, but my stepfather's wish is that I should stop in the ship with him."

He bowed his head and said no more.

Through a port I saw the boats coming to the ship from the island. Those towed had been discharged and floated light. The oars sank and rose in fibres of gold that flashed in beauty upon the blue of the sea, whose hue was deepened into a sweet richness by the light of the great white crescent of sand that yawned as a background for the boats. Before the hour was out the passengers had finished packing, and were in the saloon with their baggage in heaps about the deck. All were dressed in readiness for leaving the ship. I had clothed myself for the deck, and this perhaps prevented them from noticing that I had not packed: 'tis certain that none but the priest questioned me.

Soon there was a noise of boats alongside, attended by cries of men hailing the deck from the water's edge. Certain orders I could not catch were stormed down from overhead.

The companion doors were flung open, the hood thrust back, and the fellow who had looked down at us through the skylight howled out:

"The male passengers are to step up two at a time; the ladies 'll follow."

"Let me keep with my husband," shrieked Mrs. Macbride.

"You'd better do as you're told," called down the man.

Mr. Macbride looked at his wife with a ghastly face. The priest in a voice of pity exclaimed, "I am certain there is no cause for fear. No mischief's intended. They intend to secure us men in the boats first of all. You'll remain with the other ladies, Mrs. Macbride, and will very shortly be with your husband."

"Now, then, step up, step up," shouted the fellow, thrusting his head into the hatch. "Not more than one at a time, please."

Mrs. Macbride screamed and sank upon a sofa. I went to her side and tried to reassure her, but she was a poor timid creature, and the parson was the weaker of the two. He preached the Gospel at home, yet managed to get no spirit out of it for the experiences of foreign travel.

The Colonel and Mr. Jackson went on deck and disappeared. Mrs. Wills' white face looked more loathsome than a dead

woman's with the vivid scarlet of her lips. She sat motionless with straining eyes; the shapeless bulk of her was stiff with fright. Mr. Bergheim, dreaming that a sense of courage might be born of a swinging carriage, went with heroic lunges to the foot of the steps.

"Stand back," thundered the man a-top, "till you're called up;" a command which the little Hebrew obeyed too literally; he not only stood back—he fell back, and stretched his length upon the deck; but nobody laughed. Then presently, "Two more," and up went Mr. Bergheim and the Grasshopper. They were followed by Mr. Macbride and Monsignor. The parson's wife clung to her husband's arm till the foot of the ladder was reached; there they kissed and sobbed.

"Bear a hand," shouted the sentry, bringing the butt of his musket down with a thump.

A lady passenger handed Mrs. Macbride to a chair, and the two gentlemen disappeared.

When all the males were out of the saloon, the women were told to come up. I was one of the first to reach the deck, and looked round for my stepfather, but he was nowhere to be seen. Four armed men stood at the gangway. Two others, unarmed, waited to help the ladies into the boats alongside. One

was at the wheel, another seemed to guard the main-hatch whilst keeping an eye on the ship. It was a morning of wide splendour; the sky was delicately enamelled with feathery clouds in the east, the wind was a warm faint air, and the ship, with her main-topsail to the mast, lay quietly breathing upon the long gleaming lines of ocean swell flowing out of the glory under the sun. When all the ladies were on deck, the seaman who had guarded the hatch said, "This way for the boats," and they went towards the gangway. There were some children, and one of them was crying bitterly; the women went eagerly.

One of the unarmed men in the gangway was the wiry fellow Owen. He comported himself as though he was the chief of the gang, and looked at the ladies and then at the boats alongside, and then round about him, all with an air of command. I wondered where my stepfather lay hidden. Doubtless in the berth forward of the galley, where they had made a show of locking him up and sentinelling him. Good God! What a huge atrocious scheme of plunder was this! I could scarcely realise the character of what was happening when I looked at the stately ship clothed in sunshine, rocking softly, at the island within a mile, at the breast of beautiful blue ocean of a summer serenity,

unbroken anywhere by so much as a needle-point of sail. How would the passengers fare upon that rock? What sort of sleeping quarters was a delicate young woman like Mrs. Macbride to find there? How would the good-natured, shapeless Mrs. Wills relish a bed of sand a-stir with crabs, or grass and bush stubbly with live birds sharp of bill?

The island looked a melancholy, desolate place from the deck. The fairy gleams and diminishing beauty it got from the circular frame of the port-hole were wanting. To the right was a little rock, where much foam was spouting in a wonderful white glory; it was a delightful picture of fountains: you would have thought the rock a shoal of whales motionless and playing their plumes of water to the sun.

The ladies quickly passed through the gangway, and when the last of them had left the deck I went to the rail and peeped over. I saw two boats; one was the ship's long-boat, and in her were at this time seated all the saloon passengers. While I looked, some men ran below and passed up the baggage, and when everything was in her she sat pretty deep. The passengers spoke not a word. I so held myself they could not see me, though I had them clear. I felt ashamed to be left behind. My suspicion or know-

ledge of the monstrous plot made me feel a sort of partaker of the crime. The poor people were too full of their own wretchedness and the horrors and perils of the situation to heed my absence. When the last bag was flung into the boat, Owen cried out, "Is that all?" On being answered, he sung down to the four men who hung on their oars in the quarter-boat, "Give way now, lads. Tow with a will."

The painter was cast adrift, the oars dipped, and away went the two boats for the island. I stood behind the interlacery of the main shrouds watching them. Presently I was sensible that the man Owen stared at me. I turned and he smiled, on which, with a shudder of disgust that my face may have betrayed, I walked some distance aft, careless then whether the passengers in the boat saw me or not. The man followed me, but came to a stand at a respectful distance, and exclaimed :

"I'm sorry, miss, that we should have been obliged to worrit you by this here caper-cutting, but the piece was planned out to include you. They'd have smelt a rat had you been allowed your liberty when all the rest was under hatches."

I steadied myself by grasping what they call a belaying-pin, and running my eyes over

him, and then looking him full in the face, said:

"You're the man I saw at Captain Sinclair's house in London?"

"Ay," he answered cheerfully, "you're the young lady that passed out of the parlour into a back-room as I was a-going in."

All the theatrical hoarseness was gone out of his throat: he talked in a clear voice a little deep and broken.

"Where is the Captain?"

"He don't think proper to show himself till all the 'tween-deck people are out of the ship."

"Did you men belong to that schooner that hailed us one evening?"

"Ay."

But when he had said this he looked at me with a queer grin of doubt, and added, projecting his head and speaking as though startled, "But you're along of us, ain't you, miss?"

I suppose my face was answer enough, for touching his cap with a civil air of embarrassment, he abruptly rounded on his heel and returned to the gangway.

I stood lost in thought, watching the two boats. They made for a point on the left and vanished behind it. They were out of sight about twenty minutes, after which they

emerged, and I saw some of the people walking about the island, that is to say, down upon the flat white shore and upon a broad green slope. I called to Owen:

"Can I see my stepfather?"

He shook his head in a sort of deaf way, as though it was a question he wished me to know he could not heed. I then walked to the gangway, where he stood with the others; I was fearless of their firearms and their looks, for I was beginning to see that their brutality did not go much deeper than the clothes of it: in fact, the comedian had been quick to witness the truth in Owen.

"If I can't see Captain Sinclair," said I, "one of you should remind him that those poor people were promised a boat, a compass, a chart, and full instructions for communicating with the Canaries or Madeira."

"That'll be seen to, miss," answered the man, with a look of familiarity that caused another shudder of disgust to run through me again. "Yonder's everything that's wanted." He pointed to a canvas parcel. "And I'm going ashore with the 'tween-decks folks to explain to the passengers how to steer for Madeira."

"Do you understand navigation?" said I.

"I can box the compass," he answered, with a glance at the others, "and make a straight

line with a pencil and ruler on a chart. That's all the navigation they'll want," he added, with a toss of his head at the island that flung a fall of yellow hair off his forehead straight out.

I walked about the quarter-deck, watching the people moving upon the island. They had broken up into little parties, and seemed to be searching, no doubt for water, and for the materials to make a smoke. In a short while the boats came alongside, and Owen bawled out certain orders. Six men, including Owen, stationed themselves in the gangway. Four were armed with muskets as before. Owen and the other I had noticed had strapped cutlasses to their hips. One man continued to grasp the wheel: he was the ugly man with the hare-lip. The fellow at the hatch was helped by another to lift the grating. He then roared down:

"Step up and bring your bundles along with ye." After a few moments the first of our unhappy handful of emigrants arose. He was a stumpy, red-headed man, in a moleskin cap and leather leggings, and blinked furiously as he looked about him. He was followed by a woman in a shawl and bonnet, and two children.

"Be the varth of me oath, ye'll pay for this," said the man. "I'd not have your

necks, by Jasus, if the hangman's stretching should send me to heaven. Where's the island, ye divils?"

"Pass on now," cried Owen, and he was thumped, cursing and blaspheming, over the gangway into the boat, the woman wailing to the men not to hurt her poor husband. The rest came in a little procession. One was that boy with the motherly face I had noticed nursing a baby when I joined the ship. They looked a poor, starved, half-clothed lot—six or seven men, and as many women, and the rest children. They dragged up their baggage along with them, and very quickly, and amidst a silence that made their passage ghastly, as though they were going to their death, they descended into the boats. Owen then picked up the canvas parcel, and with a screw of his beery blue eyes to see if I observed him, swung himself over the side. A minute later both boats were making for the island.

CHAPTER IX

I GET AT THE TRUTH

As my stepfather continued hidden, I did not choose to remain alone with the piratic company who lounged in the gangway or loafed, pipe in mouth, about the galley. I thought to find the stewardess in the saloon, till on descending I recollected I had noticed her face amongst the emigrants in the boat. I cannot express the extraordinary deep sense of solitude inspired by this interior. Its life, its memory to me, was that of people moving here and there, sitting at table, chatting and laughing; it now looked empty as a cave, and the spirit of loneliness carried chill to the spirits in its atmosphere. Through the open port-holes came the soft feathery rush of wind as the vessel rolled. I felt as if I was alone in a deserted ship, and my heart sank.

Some of the doors of the berth were open, and swung as the ship swayed; nothing was left but tossed bedding and the furniture of the vessel. It was after two o'clock. I had not eaten since breakfast; the remains of

that meal lay upon the table in a confusion of broken victuals and tumbled napkins. I found some wine on a swing tray, and cut a plate of ham and some sort of pleasant spiced meat. Whilst I ate and drank I was wondering what in the name of life was to become of me, and despite that romantic heat of curiosity I lately wrote of, I was now longing with a real passion of fear to be safe at home. I felt sick when I thought of the familiar looks of the fellow Owen. What did they mean to do with this ship? What was their destination, and how long would it take them to arrive at it? and when there, how did my stepfather intend to dispose of me? These and the like considerations so terrified me that I could have cried my eyes out.

By-and-bye I caught a noise of oars, and going to a port, heard voices. The boats had returned from the island. The breeze was now a bit fresh. It may have shifted; the island was no longer visible in the windows. The sea streamed in splendour under the high sun, and the dance of white fires was on both hands. After a little I heard a tramp of feet, a song of seamen, and the port-holes were darkened by the boats as they mounted to the davits. Then clear in the open skylight rang a stern sharp cry. I started: it was my stepfather's voice.

"Fill on her briskly, my lads! Round in on those starboard mainbraces."

Along with the echo of stamping feet on the decks entered a new sense of buoyancy in the heel of the vessel. She lifted with the light long heave of the flashing swell, with a floating launch that was life itself, and I heard the brook-like murmur of broken waters. We were away! But to what part of the world, and with what intent?

The door of an after-cabin stood open, and the island swung suddenly into a stern window. I hastily ran into the berth to look; then, to obtain a good last view of the people, stepped into the Captain s cabin and adjusted his telescope to my vision, and kneeling on the transom or locker, or whatever it is called, steadied the telescope in the port and looked. A group of three sprang life-like into the lenses. They were emigrants down on the white beach of the bay, stooping and peering and prodding like children shell-hunting. I swept with the glass and caught another figure; this was Monsignor. He stood alone, his hands were folded in front of him, and he watched our departing ship. His black hat shadowed his face, which showed like marble under it, and on the instant of my covering him his dusky gaze sank deep into mine. I started as though he

spoke to me. The figure of Mr. Bergheim now stepped into the disc; it gesticulated and pointed at the ship; then a little shift of helm launched the island out of the square of the casement, and the vision of white beach and green heights, and the giant line of glass-clear comber smoking towards the land, passed into a heap of black rock brilliant with spouting foam, and then into the dark blue open sea.

I put down the glass and went into the saloon and paced the deck. The motion of the ship was soft and gliding. It would have been sweet to me at another time. The pure wind gushed through many openings: through the skylight one could see the sails of the mizzen swelling in alabaster, sharp-edged with light against the blue. Just then I saw a leg in the companion-way, and my stepfather descended. On perceiving me, he called out, in a level, quiet voice, not wanting in a certain ring of heart, as though his spirits were good:

"What, ho, Laura! The last of them, are ye? But it looks more deserted than ever I saw it in dock."

After saying this he stood awhile in silence, turning his eyes about. He then came to the table, and helping himself to some remains of cold fowl and a piece of tongue, he asked

me to find him a bottle of brandy in the steward's pantry and sit beside him. I did as he bid me, and when he had asked me to eat, our talk went thus:

"Where's this ship being steered to now?" said I.

"To a Bahama Cay," he answered.

"Where's that?"

"No matter. It's within reach of a week, anyway."

"What will follow?"

"I don't mind talking to you now," he answered, eating with a good appetite, and speaking with a note of briskness, whilst I took notice that the heavy expression which had blackened his countenance during the voyage had passed out of his face, though to be sure his frown stayed, that is, in its coming and going way. "I have cast in my lot with the men. They can't do without me, and why shouldn't I get money out of the professional ruin the seizure of the ship has brought upon me? They offered me a large proportion of the gold, and I want the money," said he, dropping these words slowly, but with an accent brutal with resolution. "Did you know before we sailed that I was bankrupt?"

"Maria told me she believed you were in difficulties."

"How should she know anything about

my affairs?" he exclaimed with heat. Then controlling himself, he continued, "I should not be able to show my face in London again. They'd lock me up for debt. Owners will never want for captains, and I should not be missed. Fortune has here played a trump card. No debtor's gaol for me? I shall not even go to sea again, but pass my old age in comfort and quiet in some glorious climate where a man careful of his health may live for ever."

"Your share will be stolen money," I said.

"I steal nothing," said he, showing his teeth, after half-draining his tumbler. "It was not I who ran away with the gold. If I am to salve it for the crew, I have a right to the share they offer; the owners would never get a penny from them, nor, supposing I was to hand the money over, would I ever receive a cent in acknowledgment of my services. At sea we never do more than our duty."

I knew he lied, and it was shocking to hear him. I listened, nevertheless, with a motionless face; in truth, I could act as well as he. He waited for me to speak.

"What's to become of me?" I asked.

"You shall be sent home."

"Why did you bring me this voyage?" I asked.

"Why? You know! To please you, to

divert you. You can ask ungrateful questions with a curst hard look."

"The man you call Owen——"

"It's his name."

"Says he remembers seeing me in your house."

"He's a liar," he shouted, flushing scarlet. Then jumping up, he went to the foot of the steps and bawled in a roaring note for Owen. The man instantly appeared in the hatch and came down.

"Were you ever in my house in London?" exclaimed Captain Sinclair, straightening his military figure to its topmost inches, and overwhelming the man he accosted with his sudden large imperious posture of look and command.

The fellow's countenance changed, a sparkle of cunning sharpened his gaze.

"No, sir," said the dog.

"You told me you saw me there," said I quietly.

"Miss, you said you had seen me, and it wasn't for me to contradict so beautiful a lady," answered the creature, grinning.

I looked down and drummed with my fingers, wondering if the Captain would openly notice the fellow's sauciness. Instead he gave him certain directions touching the course, and Owen went on deck.

My stepfather returned to his plate, looked at me steadily, and said, "Are you convinced?"

"He has an offensive familiar way with him. He must not speak to me."

"He belongs to Deal, where they have no manners," he exclaimed, putting more food upon his plate. "Don't notice him. He means nothing. In fact, we must be civil to these fellows, Laura," says he, softening. "They have put a noble estate in my way, and what do I care about their manners? Owen is to be the chief mate, and will sit at this table. The second mate 'll live aft too, but you'll see nothing of him."

"Father," said I, softening too, "surely you'll take no portion of this plundered money?"

He motioned as if he would strike me, and silenced me with a look of fire.

I felt afraid of him, and went to a cabin window and stared out. I did not like to reflect how wholly I was alone in that ship. He was my stepfather, and ashore had professed a sort of tenderness for me, but we were not bound by ties of flesh and blood. He was now a criminal, and therefore a desperate man, and by that face he turned on me I guessed I was to act with a fine vigilance if ever I was to return home in safety. What most terrified me was his easy

way of referring to Owen's behaviour. I sighed, I grieved, again I could have wept for the comparative safety of the island that was now far astern. Why, since it was certain that he had planned, that he alone had planned, this enormous piracy, had he brought me on this voyage with him? And what was his motive in keeping me on board?

He did not again address me. When he had finished eating, he went the round of the cabins, examining them one after another, then entered his own and shut the door. Our imprisonment in the saloon had made a sickness of the scene of it to me. I felt a craving for the spacious freedom of the ocean, and went on deck. Owen had charge of the ship; he walked the weather side. When he saw me he touched his cap, and an odd dry smirk of cunning twisted his lips. I quite knew the beast wanted to say he had lied and couldn't help it. In a minute he darted below and brought a chair. I gave him a faint nod, but made no use of his civility.

My thoughts were with the island, and I went right aft past the wheel, and saw it hanging in a little cloud of gold low down upon the sea. I thought I caught a delicate film feathering over it, and believed it might be smoke, but I could not imagine they would

be senseless enough to waste fuel in signals to an empty horizon.

The ship swam in three lordly pyramids of canvas: the sun made cloths of gold of their breasts, and the shadows in the hollows were prismatic as the glancing gleams in the lining of the mussel-shell. She lay slightly over, and sheared through the water quietly. Only at intervals would you hear a frothing fall from the weather bow, when some slightly heavier lift of the summer swell stiffened the helmsman's grasp of the spokes. But along the lee side the water shaled away into the wake, and made marble of the blue of the brine, with its white streaks and cloudy turns.

When I considered that this noble ship, with a hold full of valuable commodities and £98,000 in gold, had been seized by Captain Sinclair for plunder, the surprise in me was so great, that the thing might have happened at that instant: I was thunderstruck. I was turned motionless by the amazing, incredible character of this colossal ocean robbery, and stood on the lee quarter staring forward as if I were a statue.

Our ship's company of rogues were all on deck at this hour. They idled and loafed, smoked and talked in various parts. The only member of the original crew I saw was the cook. He leaned half in, half out of his

galley door, and seemed on very easy terms with the two fishermen-like figures that, with hands buried deep in their breeches' pockets, trudged up and down abreast of him. I had not noticed the steward go ashore, but he was certainly out of the ship, and must have been sent away with the saloon passengers.

The afternoon was already advanced, and the air was already crimsoning as the earth slowly lifted its evening horizon. I felt weary and heart-sick, and extraordinarily depressed with loneliness. I took care whilst I was on deck that Owen should not have an opportunity to address me, but I never turned my eyes in his direction without finding that he stared at me with looks of admiration as unconcealed as the expression of a dog in its wants.

This evening, some time about six o'clock, I sat in the saloon trying to read, but I could not fix my attention. The book was "The Pirate." It was one of a few hundred volumes that formed the ship's library. The title took my fancy. I thought it would be in keeping with my extraordinary situation, but after I had turned a page or two I found my curiosity flag. The tale and style were heavy. I could not make out what the book was about. Suddenly I heard voices, a sharp shout of "Lay aft, all hands," and presently

Owen, in dull mechanical accents, like a vestry clerk nosing "Amen," went through the men's names: "Dick Slack, Tom Swivel, Henry Gorm, Sandy May," and more—but I forget them. This was followed by a sort of conversation. The Captain then said—he stood close beside the skylight:

"Very well. William Owen is chief mate, and James Harris acts as second. That, my lads, is to the general satisfaction?"

I caught a rumble of assent. More talk followed. I could not, however, hear what was said. There was a bright scarlet light of sunset spreading from the bow to over our mastheads: it met the soft violet gloom of the evening dusk sifting up astern, and the sails on the mizzen rounding to a star-like truck, showed like an exquisite painting. A man came below and stood at the foot of the steps looking about him awkwardly.

"What do you want?" said I.

"Oi've been told off as steward, mum," he answered. "Oi'm to loight the lamps. Where's there a lucifer?"

"There's the pantry," said I, pointing, "and I expect you'll find all you want in it," and with that I went to my own berth.

I took off my hat and lay down in my bunk and fell asleep. I could not, however, have slept long. When I awoke, stars slided

in the port-hole, but the light of day yet hung pale in the air. I refreshed myself with a wash and went out, supposing that by this hour I should find the evening meal on the table. Aft, where my cabin was, the shadows hung thick: between these bulkheads and the lamps were the shaft of the mizzenmast and the broad saloon stairs. I was advancing, but the Captain's voice at that instant pronounced some words: immediately I fell back softly and recoiled into my cabin, where, grasping the handle of the door, I could hear and see.

My stepfather and Owen sat at table. The cloth was laid, plenty of food was upon it. I could not get a view of the Captain because of the mizzenmast. Owen, sitting on the left in Monsignor's place, was in full sight.

"If the schooner should fail us I shall be at a loss," said the Captain.

"There's no fear of Jim a-failing of us," said Owen. "He's not a man to shift his helm over a job like this."

"We shall be off the Cay in seven or eight days," said the Captain. "The schooner must be there. We're no ship to be seen hanging about these waters. We've got to transfer the money as fast as we can sling the cases over the side, and then away with us. And still—and still——"

He fell silent for half a minute, then exclaimed: "I cannot make up my mind to sink this fine vessel."

"What's to be done with her?" said the other, who did not "sir" him, and I wondered the Captain bore without visible impatience the fellow's note of familiarity.

"I'm for giving her a chance—furling everything, letting go the anchor, and leaving her to be boarded by whatever may come along."

The other was silent as though the thing was a matter of indifference.

"There is no good," continued the Captain, "in heaping up this sort of business. We planned to seize the ship, to turn the passengers out of her, and transfer the money to a schooner. All this has been done with little trouble, and, thank God! without bloodshed. Why deliberately, why mercilessly sink this beautiful vessel then? It would be murder, man. I'll not have it on my conscience."

"Well, she can be left a-riding as you say. Some wrecking craft's bound to fall in with her. But the men want to know, Cap'n, if you han't got no better scheme for securing the money? It's all gold. My breeches' pockets 'll hold a tidy lot, but not my share of the ninety-eight thousand pounds."

"It must be carried from port to port, exchanged, dealt with by banks, manœuvred as I have told you, until the last man's share is out of her."

"Why can't the cases be run?"

"Where?"

"In the Downs."

The silence that followed this was strongly expressive of contempt or passion.

"Are you in your right mind that you talk of the Downs?" said the Captain presently. "Why, man, before we fetched the Channel the passengers will have been rescued and sent home by steam, or the original crew will have arrived in England, and the whole country will be ringing with this piracy, for that's what it amounts to."

"You may be right," said Owen; "but if one could be sure that them parties hadn't returned—if we'd only been allowed a single dark night for the job—the Downs 'ud be the place, and 'ud save a vast of trouble. Plenty of caves and secret hiding-places for the snugging of the sovereigns, and the money could be dealt with by the handsfull."

"Are you prepared to take your trial with the certainty of transportation for life? But," continued the Captain, with a faint note of scoffing in his voice, "you're all anxious to return to Deal with your booty. I'll show

you how you may do it after you've put me ashore in the place I decide on with my share."

"No, no, Cap'n, we can't do without you," said Owen gruffly. "You've bossed this job, and it's for you to work the traverse through to the blooming end. 'Sides, if you go ashore you'll take Miss Hayes along with ye," and here I saw him grinning like a mask.

"You'll not trouble her, Owen, unless she shows herself willing to listen to you? She's a high-spirited young woman, and might think herself a touch above you."

"It was agreed that she was to make a part of my share, on the understanding that she was willing," said the man. "My share 'll come to more'n four thousand pound, and that should help me with her, if you'll put in a word now and again."

"I undertook that you should capture this vessel, and that you men should find your account in the job, but not that I should woo a young woman for you."

"You might say a word for me, sir. Doan't let her think I'm the common chap I look. If my father was a Deal boatman, my mother was a farmer's daughter, and farmers be gentlemen, ha? When you told me who she was that night I called, you said you was taking her with you, and that if things worked out

as schemed, I might court her with your sanction."

The Captain made some answer. I did not catch it.

"All I ask is that you'll give me a chance," continued Owen. "I doan't doubt but she'll cozen if she finds that you're agreeable."

He plucked at his bit of mustache, which looked of a silver white in the lamplight.

My blood boiled. Every instinct warned me to listen to no more, lest I should shriek or rush out upon them. I softly shut the door and stood beside my bunk with my face, hot as blood with shame, rage, madness, buried in my arm. Had he brought me this voyage to find me a husband in Owen? No, I could not believe *that*, because the invitation was in his mind when he wrote to me whilst I was at my sister's, and before Owen had seen me. But did it not look as though he had kept me in the ship that he might keep the beast Owen in countenance with some sort of promise he had made to him about me that night at his house?

What a liar he was! what a dark-hearted villain to show himself so utterly insensible to my feelings and pride as to keep me in this ship to humour such a poor low dog as Owen! I wept some scalding tears, and whilst I sobbed with my wet eyes vacantly

watching a dance of stars upon the glass of the window, some one knocked and the door was opened.

"Are you here, Laura?" said the Captain.

I saw his figure by the sheen of the outer light bending forward in a probing, peering way.

"Yes," I answered, speaking low, that the grief and rage in my throat should not be distinguishable. "What do you want?"

"To see if you are awake: supper's been a long while laid. You were asleep when I looked in half an hour ago."

"Who's at table?" said I, still speaking very low.

"No one," he answered. "I am going to my cabin. Owen has charge of the ship."

"I'll get some supper presently," said I.

I waited about ten minutes, again and again plunging my face in water to rid it of the redness of temper and tears, and then went to the table and cut a small meal; but I was without appetite, and toyed with my food. I was sick, disgusted, degraded. Yet I felt safe then from Owen, though he might from time to time look at me through the skylight: having charge, he durst not leave the deck.

I had not been seated many minutes when Captain Sinclair came from his cabin. He

wore a cap, and was making for the deck; but on looking at me paused, observed me with attention, came to the table, and took a chair beside me.

"What are you fretting about?" he asked.

I shot a glance at him, but made no answer. He looked aft, and suspicion arched his brow. He said quietly, but with an unpleasant frown:

"If you've been listening, you've heard more than I wanted you to know, or than you yourself would care to know. But you have been listening! I see it in your looks. Don't show your teeth like that. You've caught me in a lie—and what then? We've all got to lie to make money. Widows and orphans are lied into paupers' graves by people who put handsomely every Sunday into the plate, and are called by purple parsons, swelled with the rogues' 20-port and comet vintages, their Christian friends. The lie is the spirit of trade. All tradesmen are liars. Under heaven is there such a liar as the grocer? I lied to save your feelings. It's nothing to me now that you know Owen called at my house, nor that this scheme of seizure originated with myself. Nothing. What's made you cry is not my lie, but Owen's talk, hey? Now listen. You shall humour this man. Be civil, I advise; let

him think, hope, flatter himself as he may. But take you my word that I will shoot the hound if he sniffs an inch beyond the bounds I have in my mind. Pluck up—pluck up! I am a villain and in hell, but you shan't suffer."

He smote me twice lightly on the back, and giving me one of those smiles that lighted up his face with beauty, he went on deck.

There was no comfort, however, to be got out of his strong words. He might threaten bullets and halters and flames, but it was a villain who talked. And yet I don't know that I ever once recollect wondering what had made him so. He was the son of a clergyman, and had been sent to sea in good ships, and in other ways, I understood, had been well cared for in his youth. But even parsons' sons will turn out rascals now and again. There is no caper human nature can cut which should surprise you. I was told of a man who returned to England after a long absence abroad. He went to a gaol—Pentonville, I think it was—on a visit of curiosity, and in one of the cells he saw a man with whom he had dined in splendour in his house in a great West End square over and over again; a well-bred, handsome, courteous, gentlemanly man had been, and perhaps still was, that felon—an incompar-

able host. The visitor started, turned white and sick, and walked off. Good God! Did he suppose there was any virtue in handsome looks, gentlemanly bearing, and plenty of good early education to keep out of gaol a man who could not keep his hand out of other people's pockets?

I had been amazed by the audacity of the seizure of this ship. But I was not the least bit surprised that my stepfather should have acted first rogue's part in the piece. I was shocked, but not astonished that he should have lied like sin throughout. And if he escaped the law, who was to say he would not make a good end? Age pales conscience, which after awhile strikes work like a drunkard's liver, and so we hear parsons and doctors talking with wonder of the edifying deathbeds of people whose ending, according to the moralists, should have been a miserable scene of shrieks, struggles, and groans to God.

This sort of thoughts ran in my head whilst I sat in the cabin. I would not again go on deck. If Owen came below, I would withdraw to my berth. I had not the least intention to profit from the Captain's advice to be civil to the man—quite the contrary; a fit of passion shook me, and I looked at a knife upon the table. Then a feeling of

cold horror corrected my wrath, which had been born of an affrighting imagination. I shuddered and paced the deck.

The awkward lout who had been told off to act as steward came below to clear the table. He sprawled and tumbled and lurched, often stopping to admire the things he picked up. His red and whiskered face was good-natured with desire to talk, and at last catching my eye he said:

"I allow we're a-going to 'ave a breeze, miss."

This interested me. "Is a fair wind looked for?"

"Whoy, yes. There's a deal of lightning." His eye caught the barometer against the mizzenmast, and he exclaimed, "What's the glass say, I wonders?" He looked at it. "I suppose they'd call this a drop," said he.

I walked to the shaft of the mizzenmast and said, "Do you understand this thing?"

"Whoy, yes."

"That white stuff is quicksilver?"

"That's roight," said he; "and if it rises or falls below that mark upon the glass, good or bad weather's to be expected."

"Suppose the quicksilver rises above the mark; it may have risen the eighth of an inch; you look again, and it may have risen another one-sixteenth. But how can you

tell? It's impossible to guess at such rises and falls by the measurement of the eye."

"Whoy, don't yer see," he exclaimed, "that that there mark is meant to be shifted; you slide him up or down at a given time, keeping the top of the mercury on a line with it, and so you're bound to see if there's been a rise or a drop."

"Then," said I, "if you kept the key of this case, you could easily threaten bad weather to the ship by sliding the mark above the line of the mercury?"

"It 'ud look as if there'd been a drop, certainly," he answered, squinting into the glass with much earnestness. "But there's no sailor, I allow, as understands a glass who could be fooled by such larking."

"I warrant passengers could be fooled, though?"

"Whoy, I doan't doubt they could."

CHAPTER X

THE FRIGATE

That night, whilst I lay in bed listening to the deepening guns of the gale, and the roaring thunder of seas rolling into troughs under the counter, I pieced my stepfather's plot, and understood it all as clearly as though it had been of mine own contrivance.

He had arranged for a schooner full of men to intercept the *Mohock* at a given place: he manœuvred with the weather and humbugged with the barometer to give the schooner the chance of time his bright look-out for her proved she stood in need of. He it was who had placed the arms-chest in the way of the men, and equipped them with other weapons secretly brought aboard in the docks.

And now I began to think that his chief reason in bringing me with him was to rescue him from the special suspicion of the passengers when the ship had been seized; he would hope they might reason thus: This has been worked out through some sort of con-

federacy: the rogue of the *Mohock* may be one of the mates; he may be one or more of the men forward: had the Captain meditated so outrageous a project, he would not have brought his stepdaughter along with him. He is fond of her in his grim, hard-weather way—too fond to subject her to the risks of this enormous act of piracy.

Thus I reasoned, and no doubt I was right. I had a very keen intelligence in those days, and quickly blew any little spark into a flame piercing enough to show me the truth on all sides.

It blew hard all that night and all next day. The weather kept Owen out of the saloon: not that that signified; had he shown himself, I should have instantly withdrawn to my cabin. Little could I guess, however, how soon this side of my degradation and suffering was to end!

I have said it blew hard for a night and a day, and now I cannot recollect what morning of the week it was that broke when, finding plenty of sunlight in the ship, no signs of breakfast being prepared, and the hour about a quarter before nine, I put on my hat and went on deck. It was very hot. Clouds with bluish bellies, as though laden with electric matter, floated stately and slow under a fine white-blue sky. Early as it was,

the sunshine stung. A pleasant wind was blowing. The ocean had forgotten the trouble of the gale, and came lifting in a peaceful, long, dark blue swell out of the north.

My stepfather and Owen stood together at the lee rail, each with a telescope: a half-dozen of fellows on the forecastle stared ahead with symptoms of uneasiness in their postures and motions. I walked to the lee side to look, and saw the canvas of a large ship glittering like sifted snow. My stepfather turned as though to observe the wheel, and gave me a nod, an abrupt, short, convulsive gesture; he seemed half distraught. He levelled the glass again, and Owen looked, and together they stared in silence.

Captain Sinclair then said—

"She's a frigate, and an Englishman. You may swear to her by her square yards. What foreigner cuts his sails so?"

"Shouldn't we shift our helm, sir?"

"No, you fool."

You will please remember I am writing of the year 1844, and in those times steam was rare in the navies of the States. Our Colonial seaboards and home waters were navigated by ships which differed in nothing to a landsman's eye from the vessels which had flown the flags of Collingwood, Nelson, and Exmouth. Three-deckers under whole breasts

of topsails roared down the Atlantic from the Chops to the Strait. The waters of the West Indies were whitened by the canvas of frigates, corvettes, and schooners with long pennants blowing from their mastheads. Line-of-battle ships protected our interests in the Eastern seas. The vessel now approaching was apparently a frigate of forty-four or fifty guns, and might be making a straight course home from the West Indies. I leaned over the rail and watched her, drinking in her beauty, for I found no other significance in her then than the majesty of her lofty wings, the slow and stately swaying of her mastheads, the white foam reeling from her stem under a line as white, chequered by the black teeth of guns, and topped by the glancing lustrous stream of her stowed hammocks.

She was the only ship in sight. Often as I had admired the *Mohock*, she seemed mean as a barge beside that frigate, haughtily rising out of the blue waters, white as the light she was sailing through, and gleaming like silk when shone upon, from the proud arches of her lower canvas to where the topmost cloths rounding above the line of the yards trembled off into the faintness and vagueness of snow.

Owen and my stepfather constantly lifted

their glasses with feverish swift movements: they crossed and recrossed each other in short excursions of athwartship walk, talking with excitement, but in low accents. All the fellows who had seized the ship were on deck at this time, regardless of their watches. They, too, showed themselves extraordinarily perturbed. They trudged in couples, now stopping to look ahead, now halting to stare aft. I could not imagine, girl as I was, what there might be in yonder ship to excite all this uneasiness.

When the frigate was within a mile of us, up floated a string of flags to her mizzen royal masthead. It was clearly the code of the Merchant Service, something that Captain Sinclair understood, though he would be unable to spell messages without the help of a book; he violently struck the glass under his arm and exclaimed loudly:

"How shall I be able to give her the go-bye?" He then cried to Owen, "Hoist the ensign—there's the flag-locker under the grating yonder; peak-end it and belay it, for that's all the talk they shall get out of me."

Whilst the ensign was floating to our mizzen gaff-end, the stately ship was "luffed," as it is called, which brought her head a little more towards us; it was clear she had some-

thing to communicate. I heard Captain Sinclair exclaim:

"They'll wonder to find an Atlantic liner down here. She's suspicious. What's to be done?"

He flung his glass down on the skylight and came aft, his fingers working and his face dark as a thunder-cloud.

"Get about some work, men," he roared on a sudden. "Don't loaf about like that. Your sogering airs would damn us if we were as honest as she. Get to jobs—get to jobs—anything that shall make you look busy before their glasses sweep our decks."

"Captain," shouted Owen in a voice of terror, "she's a-backing her main-topsail!"

I perfectly understood this expression, and witnessed the manœuvre in the instant of the fellow's speech. The frigate's central pyramid of sails gloomed into shadow out of morning brilliance, whilst every yard swung as though operated by a single rope; as we approached she drew out, giving us a gradual view of her beauty. I saw the red spot of a marine here and there. A group of officers stood near the mizzen rigging; one who was a little withdrawn held a speaking-trumpet. The ship leaned from us, showing her guns, whose iron throats were choked with tompions. The green water combed her copper in fingers of

froth. On high streamed her pennant, vanishing from the sight in a miracle of delicacy when it was still flickering for fathoms; few seamen were to be seen, but one very well knew that the hatches of such a ship as that were meant to vomit their hundreds to the first heart-shaking summons of the boatswain and his mates.

We were going along at about six miles an hour. Captain Sinclair did not shift helm a spoke; he merely got into the mizzen rigging and held himself there in a posture of attention.

The frigate showed a formidable grin of artillery as she lifted with the yearn of the swell; we were so close I could almost distinguish the faces of the officers.

"Ship ahoy!" thundered a voice through the speaking-trumpet, whose circular mouth framing the ruby face the voice belonged to, seemed to threaten us like a quarter-deck gun. "Heave your ship to. I want to send a boat aboard you."

But we were sliding past, and already the frigate was on our quarter, with Captain Sinclair in the mizzen rigging shouting back, "What is it you want? I don't understand you," with his hand to his head as though hard of hearing.

"Heave your ship to," roared the other,

and pulling his trumpet from his mouth, he brandished it in wrath at his own topsail and the line of signal flags.

Captain Sinclair shook his head, and springing out of the rigging told Owen to dip the ensign once and then haul it down.

"Let them think we're madmen or dogs in manners," said he, addressing me with a wild light in his eyes and a jeering look in his face. "What does she want? She has no right to board me."

He fell silent on a sudden, watching the frigate with an expression that grew harder and darker. I watched her too, scarcely as yet understanding the meaning of it all. It was impossible that anything could be in chase of us as yet. Besides, that noble ship had headed up to us from waters into which it would take weeks to carry the news of the piracy. The backing of her topsail yard seemed to me like a bow from a stranger, a gentleman's civility of the hat. She wished to speak to us; why did not Captain Sinclair stay?

Motionless, one knee a little crooked, his head slightly advanced, his eyes shining in a level stare under a fixed frown, my stepfather watched the frigate: so did I; so did all hands, the man at the wheel again and again swinging uneasily off the spokes, to look behind as though he feared a shot.

"Round goes her taws'l yard," sung out Owen. "Count her broadside guns! Hell alive O! there's a smasher for ye, mates!"

"They should have been allowed to send a boat," bawled a fellow on the main-deck. "We've made old cheese of the ship by this. They've got the scent."

"See here, bullies," shouted another man, "wance let wan of them chaps in buttons come over the side, and ye may sell the rest of your life and liberty for a farden to the first bleedin' Jew ye comes across."

Once the Captain looked round threateningly, but did not speak. The men seemed to have no respect for his presence.

"Full for stays, by the thunder of God!" roared a voice. "She's arter us."

The frigate heeled as she courted the steady gust of the brilliant wind into her swelling cloths: her stern windows flashed, the gilt-work about her quarter-galleries glowed like a splendour of sunset over the white seething of the first of her race of foaming water; she gathered way with a burst of brine from the bow that arched a rainbow from cathead to gangway; in another minute her shape changed, the edges of her sails sharpened upon us, the length of her broadside stole out under the shaking milk-white heights as she came rounding into our wake, and with

the astonishing swiftness of the seamanship of a British man-of-war, where there are thirty men for a rope, and where everything swings and hoists as to a single impulse; the beautiful fabric was in hot chase about three miles astern.

Puff! The first intimation of her intention was a bright ball of gunpowder smoke that sprang from her bow-gun and went shredding like torn silk down the wind. It was unshotted, and the report struck the ear in a single empty blast.

"My lads, his next gun will have a messenger," cried Captain Sinclair, running to midway the quarter-deck and coming to a halt there. "We'll make a long chase of it. We'll escape her in the night. I know the *Mohock's* heels better than you. Starboard mainbraces! Trim to bring her close to the wind. Keep your wits—don't flounder."

He made a signal to the wheel. The ship was brought a little nearer to the wind, and the yards braced forward.

"Up aloft some of you, and rig out that fore-topmast stu'n-sail boom."

They were but clumsy seamen, and they sprawled in the rigging and shook the shrouds and were slow in getting the boom out; but they worked as for life or death: they did their 'longshore best; and indeed it

might mean death to some or all of them if it should turn out that any of the passengers or the original crew had perished.

It was nearly eleven o'clock. I had not broken my fast, but could feel no hunger in the wild, the almost maddening excitement raised by this sudden, most amazing, tragic change of countenance in our affairs. It was intelligible to me now. That ship, suspecting us, was pursuing us, and if she boarded us, the detection of my stepfather's and the crew's crime could scarce be more than the matter of a question or two. We were flying for our lives, and yonder spacious tower astern, grim, silent, patient, with the spray lifting to her hawse-pipes, was after us, and meant to question us, and was trembling to her topmost cloths with fierce suppressed resolution to take us.

Did I say she was silent? Not for long. It was barely three minutes since she first fired, when I saw her luff, a tremble of rich shadows ran through the satin of her sails, red fire glanced near her figure-head, and a second gun was let fly. This time they had loaded with ball. Even my unpractised ears could tell the difference between the hollow thud, like the drawing of a cork, of the first explosion, and the smart metallic ring of the second.

Some of our seamen cuddled themselves about the decks. The fellow at the wheel cried out, "If they go on shooting I stand to be cut in two." The Captain took no notice. He glanced aloft, as though seeking for some token of mischief there. The breeze blew no fresher, but my stepfather had brought the *Mohock* to her best sailing-point; she was a clipper, with an entry of bow like a racing yacht. She was shearing through it as though propelled by steam, sheeting out the water to leeward in a gem-coloured dazzle that went away into the wake without noise.

It was impossible to guess at this early time whether we gained or lost. The frigate hung astern like a cloud. She, too, had set a foretopmost studding-sail, and a third gun blazed at her bow as I watched her. It was just then I caught my stepfather's eye.

"Go below," he cried.

"Why? Let me watch this chase."

"Go below," he repeated. "They are throwing shot at us. The deck is no place for you. Go below."

And he approached me in an attitude that was made a menace of by his face.

"I shall be as safe on deck as in the cabin," I cried imploringly, for I was afraid to go below. "A cannon-ball might as easily kill me there."

He simply pointed to the companion, too enraged to speak, and indeed I was a fool to withhold instant obedience at such a time: for, now the big gun-ship was after us, you saw as plainly as you could see the powder smoke of her cannon, that our bold piratic crew, from Owen down, for all their thick inhuman utterance to us poor passengers, and for all their brave beating of the decks with the butt ends of their muskets, had livers of cream with the brains of hares in their skulls.

I slunk down the companion way, and went straight aft into the Captain's cabin, and watched the frigate for a little through the open window. She looked low down upon the sea, and as far off again. It was only when the swell rose us that I saw the broad white chequered bands meeting at her bows. She did not continue to fire, whether because we were out of range of her bow-shot, or because she knew she was slowly overhauling us and withheld her powder for a sure sling of ball, I could not tell. She was a little to leeward on the quarter. I could see the white of our wake, broadening out fan-shaped as it did, flash to the very bends of her.

I went into the pantry to get something to eat, wondering when I again looked if I should find the pursuing ship growing. I

made a meal off some cold meat, biscuit, and wine, and lingered over it. What would happen if the frigate sent an officer? Who was to contradict Captain Sinclair if he told a lie and his men held their tongues? Suppose they searched the ship, there was nothing contraband in the vessel, I imagined? What was good as a consignment for New York would be equally good as a consignment for any port the Captain might choose to swear he was bound to.

Heavens! how little did I know of the sea in those days!

After half an hour I again entered the Captain's cabin. There hung the frigate steady as the moon upon the waters. Was she growing? I now seemed to see the gleam of her coppered forefoot as the surge lifted it out of the foam boiling about the bows. The Captain's telescope was on deck; I picked up the binocular glass, and the splendid vessel swelled close in the lenses. I saw the red-coated sentries, also two or three men in brass buttons and gold bands carelessly pacing the quarter-deck; now and again one would pause and lightly inspect us through such another glass as I used. All seemed sternly quiet and hidden. At times some sailors would come into the bows: once a gang of eight or ten men

sprang aloft. There was something merciless in that steady silent chase: it was as though the men left all the work of it to the ship; she, iron-throated, swollen to the heavens with relentless cloths, followed as living and lickerishly eager as a bloodhound in chase. The *Mohock* seemed to thrill: we were as the hare; the agony of the fear and expectation of the hearts above was in her.

Whilst I looked I beheld the sea darkening on the windward side. It roughened also, with broader gleams and longer lights. Its dye was a dark violet, whose edge flickered raggedly against the vast purple cloud that shadowed the weather seaboard. The colour spread with the rush of the wind: the *Mohock* leaned sharply, and as she did so a sea sprang in a cloud of salt over the bows of the frigate.

I had no means of judging our pace save by the wake that scaled in a living sheet of brilliance from under the cabin window. The *Mohock* seemed to boil through it with a comet's speed, but the ship astern, leaning heavily over with her studding-sail boom and every yardarm pointing at the sky, and her canvas rounding out of soft shadow into brassy brightness, hung steady. Was she gaining or losing ground?

My eyes were weary, my limbs trembled,

and as I dared not return on deck, I went into the saloon and threw myself upon a sofa.

I might have sank into a reverie that was like a doze; be this as it will, I was startled by the sound of a gun. I sprang to my feet, but the angle of the deck was so sharp that for some moments I found a difficulty in standing upright. I moved as best I could in the direction of the Captain's cabin, but before I arrived I heard a second gun that seemed to my ears a loud and near report; it was immediately followed by a smart noise of splintering: a great piece of mast or yard hit the deck overhead with a mighty thump; the *Mohock* then in a minute or two came upright on a level keel with all her sails thundering. The noise of that vast spread of flapping canvas was like the rage of a gale with thunder rolling through it. I heard a vast deal of shouting on deck, and the drawn yawling of seamen dragging upon ropes. My heart was beating violently, and a cold perspiration covered my face; indeed, I did not know but that the *Mohock* had been hulled and was sinking, and, which was equally terrifying, every instant I expected to hear the crash of a big shot flying through the saloon.

Such was my terror, I sank upon my knees

and crawled, like a staggering kitten, to look for the ship astern. She was not to be seen from the window. No white race rushed now from our vessel. The *Mohock* sat upright, head to wind, and the sea-flashes glanced and melted in runs from under the counter as though she had been at anchor. I returned to the saloon, and looking through a port-hole, saw the frigate close by. She had backed her main-topsail yard, and a long black boat, full of men, was descending to the water to a whistling like the concert of the trees. The large circular window gave me a fine view of the frigate and scene of water she was proudly pawing. I counted fourteen men in the boat, and an officer in blue cloth, a stripe on his wrist and a gold band and crown on his cap, sat in the stern-sheets. The symmetric flash and dip of the oars gave a romantic beauty to the appearance of the men as they bowed and lay back, all of them attired in the light blue shirt and white trousers of the Navy.

The ships hung within easy speaking distance, and those sweeping blades speedily measured the dancing blue between. I lost sight of the boat when she came alongside, and was watching the frigate, when I heard a step, and looking round, saw Captain Sinclair.

I hardly knew him. It was not only his ashy paleness, nor yet a distorting expression of deep despair: it was that sort of change you witness in the dead when the pangs of dissolution have perished out of the muscles, and the countenance puts on a character that recalls another. He took no notice of me whatever; he threw his cap down upon the table, seated himself, and folding his arms tightly upon his breast, lay back with an expression of savage desperate expectation, such as one might put on who, being cornered by a wild beast, awaits a leap.

I went to the end of the saloon and sat down with my eyes upon him, not daring to speak. I suspected he had come below to kill himself, and perhaps me, and so I slunk off in a hiding way, for if it was not in my power to restrain him, it was certainly not my desire that he should involve me in his own destruction. After a little, the light was obstructed in the hatch, and a naval lieutenant, followed by a blue-jacket, descended. The officer immediately uncovered at sight of me.

He was a fine-looking young man, about seven-and-twenty years of age, erect, with dark eyes and smooth cheeks. A sword hung at his side, and his left hand carelessly reposed upon the hilt of it as he made a step towards Captain Sinclair.

"Are you the master of this ship, sir?" he asked.

"I am," answered my stepfather, without rising or relaxing his rigid posture.

"Pray, why didn't you heave-to when we signalled you to do so?"

"I am an Englishman, and this is a trader, and I chose to pursue my course," answered the Captain.

"I will thank you to show me your papers," said the lieutenant, glancing round the saloon with many but quiet marks of surprise at the elegance of the decorations.

"You have no right to see my papers," answered Captain Sinclair.

"I have so much right that I must insist upon your producing them at once," exclaimed the lieutenant sternly, but without temper.

My stepfather made no reply. On this the lieutenant looked about him, and then said something to the seaman which I did not catch. I observed that the blue-jacket was armed with a cutlass. The lieutenant, instinctively guessing the Captain's cabin, walked straightway into it. My stepfather followed him with his eyes, and as the officer crossed the threshold, started, restrained himself, and turned his back.

"Do you still refuse to show me your papers?" said the lieutenant, coming out of

the cabin quickly, after rummaging there five minutes.

"I refuse nothing, sir."

"Produce them."

"It is your business to find them."

"You have hidden or destroyed them. Do you withhold all information as to the character and nature of the voyage of this ship?"

"You must find out everything for yourself," answered my stepfather, rising and expanding his chest, and swelling himself as though he measured his height against the lieutenant's.

The officer paused a moment with his eyes upon me.

"Are you this gentleman's wife?" said he.

"My daughter," snapped in Captain Sinclair.

The lieutenant, making me a slight bow, went on deck, followed by the seaman. The frigate had floated out of scope of my vision, owing to some shift in our ship's position. The lieutenant had not been gone a minute when I heard his voice hailing his ship; the man-of-war appeared to be lying astern. I did not clearly hear his words: I made his hail out to signify that the captain of this vessel had destroyed or secreted his papers, and refused all information. This was followed by a faint long-drawn growl, and I clearly heard the lieutenant sing out:

"No appearance of a slaver about her. She has a richly-furnished saloon, and is evidently an American clipper liner."

Here the voices ceased, and I could not imagine what was next to happen. I said to my stepfather:

"May I go on deck?"

"Stop here!" he answered, with a manner and voice as though he addressed some low blackguard sailor.

I could have wept my eyes out with spite and rage. What right had he to call me his daughter to that fine, gentlemanly officer? His behaviour, his looks, our situation, made his companionship intolerable then, and as he would not allow me to go on deck, I walked into my cabin. There I stayed till I heard voices. When I peeped out, I saw the young lieutenant addressing my stepfather, who leaned against the shaft of the mizzen-mast. I just caught the words—

"You are at liberty to remain in this ship along with your daughter. The crew will be transferred to the frigate, which will keep us company to Kingston."

Captain Sinclair made no sign. As the lieutenant rounded on his heel, he saw me standing in the door of my berth, and came to me with his hat in his hand.

"You are not to be inconvenienced," said

he; "you will remain in this vessel. Had your father chosen to be civil and answered my questions, we might not have had occasion to trouble you."

He half smiled as he said this, with a shrewd roll of his dark fine eyes around the saloon.

"Captain Sinclair is my stepfather," said I.

"I beg your pardon. And may I take the liberty of asking your name?"

"Laura Hayes."

He showed me a set of fine white teeth with the smile he gave, whilst he exclaimed, with the most insinuating, charming look:

"Did not this ship leave England bound for New York, Miss Hayes?"

I glanced over his shoulder at my stepfather, and meeting his stern gaze, coloured, and exclaimed, "Don't ask me any questions."

He smiled and sprang up the steps. The moment he was gone Captain Sinclair came up to me.

"What has that fellow been asking you?" he exclaimed, his face discoloured as though his wrath strangled him.

"If you were my father."

"What more?"

"If this ship left London for New York."

"What did you say?"

"I refused to answer any questions."

He stared with his eyes glowing with the fires of suspicion. His face then relaxed. He brought his hand down so heavily upon my shoulder as to pain me, and exclaimed slowly, and in a low voice:

"Laura, as you value your life, keep your own counsel. Say nothing of what you know. If you do—think. It might prove your evidence that may make me a convict for life. As it is—as it is," said he, stuttering hoarsely and breathing swiftly, "things are not at their worst. They allow me to remain on board! So much the better!" His whole face faded into wrinkles as with a sudden grin of madness. Then repeating, "As you value your life, not a syllable of what you know," he sprang his lips to my brow and kissed me as violently as he had saluted me with his hand. For some moments he stood considering, and then went to his cabin a little unsteadily, as though his vision had been dimmed, and I walked about the cabin waiting for what was next to come, and hoping that it might prove the young lieutenant.

CHAPTER XI

LIEUTENANT JERVIS, R.N.

I GREW weary of being alone, and as my stepfather kept hidden in his berth, I stepped on deck to take a look around, not meaning to stop.

The first sight my eyes went to was the wreck of what is called the mizzen-topgallant mast hanging aloft: the sails upon its yards were set. A few blue-jackets dangled in the rigging, cutting and hacking and clearing the mess away. It was this trifling piece of wrecking, no doubt, that had brought my stepfather to a change of mood, for the *Mohock*, when the frigate sent that shot, was within easy hulling reach, and in the roaring smoke of a single broadside the clipper might have made as magical an exit as her likeness on the bubble that splits whilst you look.

They had trimmed sail upon the Atlantic packet, and a seaman in the uniform of the Navy stood at the wheel. What a smart fellow he looked in his clean dress, carelessly

rolling his figure, and the beds of cloud astern set him sharp upon the eye. This made the third crew the *Mohock* had shipped since she sailed from the Thames.

I stood in the companion, but the man at the wheel called to me to step aft out of the way of the stuff aloft; this brought the attention of the lieutenant to me. He was at the rail with one foot stirruping a coil of rope. He stroked his chin wistfully, and watched intently the frigate as though something was happening aboard that fixed his sight; yet turned when the helmsman called, and seeing me, erected himself with a smile and a little colour and was coming.

At that instant a gun was fired aboard the frigate, and a stream of flags fluttered half-mast high. The lieutenant sprang to the flag-chest, clearly understanding the meaning of the frigate's signal, which was in the bunting of the Navy, and picking out the long thin triangular flag that is called the answering pennant in the Merchant Service, ran it aloft, shouting to his men to back the main-topsail.

There were five men aloft and one at the wheel; yet eight blue-jackets, in obedience to the lieutenant's call, came to the braces with a nimbleness that was amazing after the floundering and tumbling of the 'longshore gentry;

they brought the sail to the mast in silence ; no merchantman's song regaled the ear, and no whistle took its place. Eight and six, thought I ; so here is the ship in charge of fourteen Royal Naval sailors, commanded by a lieutenant who I should think is one of the handsomest men of the breed.

I stood on the quarter watching him askant, whilst he eyed the procedure of the sailors at the braces ; and though I perfectly well understood this change of fortune must prove of terrible significance to my unhappy stepfather, yet I own I could not but drink in a sigh of blessed relief when I thought of that abominable creature Owen, with his daring saucy looks, as safe in the frigate as if in a gaol, and replaced by Lieutenant Jervis.

Presently I wondered why the lieutenant did not come to speak to me. I wanted to know his name and that of the frigate ; till on looking as he stared, I spied a small cutter or gig approaching from the man-of-war, that had likewise hove-to ; the little boat was washed through it in froth by six oars. She gained the side, and a midshipman sprang aboard.

This midshipman was a fine bronzed boy of about sixteen, and all the time he delivered his message his eyes were upon me. I was pleased to humour him. These poor fellows, who are stationed in hot climates for months

and months, see little of our sex, unless they be black, which is a complexion of skin no white man can find any relish for, even after years of enforced abstinence from the roses and lilies of his own country. Their pleasures are few. They run deadly risks from the climates. Many bright and beautiful youths perish from the calomel and quinine the doctors stuff them with.

I was a fine handsome figure of a girl in those days, with expressive eyes, and a great plenty of soft warm hair, and that sort of shape which ardent young men think beautiful in females. The voyage had not teased my good looks. The midshipman having delivered his message with a half shy, half gallant glance at me, said something to the lieutenant, and dropped over the side laughing heartily; the boat then pulled away to the frigate, which, after hoisting her to her place, filled upon her canvas, and, to my great surprise, slowly rounded and headed away in the exactly opposite direction we had been pursuing.

"Is she leaving us?" I cried, after the lieutenant had given instructions for trimming the canvas of the *Mohock*.

"Yes," said he, stepping up to me; "we have now to find our way alone to Kingston, Jamaica."

"Where is she going?"

"To pick up the passengers left on the Great Salvage Island."

I started and may have turned pale, and exclaimed, "Who has told them of those people?"

"You see," says he, observing me very gravely, "that you kept on board for the convenience of cooking your food one of the original crew of this ship."

"The cook!" I exclaimed.

"The cook," he answered. "He was transferred along with the gang who seized this ship, and he has told, or professes to have told, all he knows to the captain of the frigate."

"What has he told?"

"No more than you know, certainly," said he, laughing, "and perhaps a good deal less than you know. But you need not fear being questioned by me in future. The *Mohock* is an Atlantic liner bound to New York. She was seized; the original crew, saving the master and the cook, were turned out of her, and the passengers landed on the rock yonder frigate's bound for."

"What else did the cook say?"

"He was detained against his will to dress the victuals for the scoundrels, and your stepfather was kept to navigate this ship to one

of the Bahama Cays, where the rogues proposed to discharge her of £98,000 in gold."

"It is true, every word," said I.

"What made your stepfather act as if he were one of the pirates?"

I patted the deck with my foot, thinking a moment, and answered, "His mind has been unhinged by his troubles. He was afraid if he fell into your hands he would be implicated and charged with the seizure. He has repeatedly asked me what he should do if found in charge of this ship with a gang of villains for a crew. Who would believe he had been forced?"

"He should have shown me his papers."

"For all I know, the men may have obliged him to destroy them."

"Not likely," he exclaimed with a little impatience. "But even so, would not he, as an honest man, be glad of the security a ship-of-war provided him with, and be thankful to heaven for an opportunity to recover his vessel and her valuable cargo out of the hands of a mob of Newgate humorists?"

"He may be glad and thankful, as you say."

He looked at me with amusement, not unmixed with admiration: then letting his eyes go to the frigate, he exclaimed, "Is not she a beauty? How her bosoms swell and breathe —it's life itself. Those stern windows might

be solid diamonds: how gloriously they flash. Sweet old girl! when shall I see you again?" He kissed his hand to her.

Her canvas floated soft as vapour in a lagoon of the windy blue; the wide sky was loaded with huge swollen shapes of cloud, which seemed to sleep despite the wind; the body of the frigate showed black and sharp as she rose with the swell, and every now and again a flash of wet rusty light broke from the foam that washed her copper; and you seemed to listen for the sound of a gun.

"What is her name?" said I.

"The *Trojan*," he replied, delivering the word with laughing emphasis, as though he would make much of it.

"And what is your name?"

"Lieutenant Frank Jervis, Miss Hayes."

"Lord St. Vincent lives near Canterbury, I believe," said I.

"Trust every Jervis under that shining sun to claim relationship with Lord St. Vincent," he answered.

Something obliged him to leave me. I would not seem in a hurry, and watched a wet squall smoking some little distance to the right of the frigate; a spark or two of lightning spat from it, and I thought I heard thunder. I then entered the saloon and knocked on the door of the Captain's berth.

"Who's that?" he cried.

"It's I, Laura Hayes," and without waiting I passed in, and found him standing in his shirt at the cabin window; he looked as though just awakened from a deep reverie, and the start of the first alarm was in the eyes he turned upon me.

"What have you come to say?" says he, whipping round and thrusting his hands in his trousers' pockets. "I don't want to be advised, nor reproached, nor even addressed, for the matter of that."

"I have been talking with the lieutenant," said I. "Do you know the frigate has left us?"

"Has she?" he replied, with a cold dark face of sullen indifference.

"The cook, who was one of the original crew, has given the whole story, so far as he knows it, to the Commander, and they have started to take the passengers off the Great Salvage. The cook knows no more of your share in this business than any of the first crew," continued I, softening my voice. "He has told them you were forced by the rogues who seized the *Mohock* to navigate her. This is believed, and you are therefore an innocent man in the lieutenant's eyes."

"You'll take care with your talk that I shall not long remain innocent," said he.

I answered coldly, "It is to my interest to make you appear so, at all events. You are my stepfather."

"And that is all."

I kept silent a bit, whilst he stood watching me as though summing me up. I then said, "You are an innocent man whilst you are on board the ship. There is no living creature in her, saving myself, that can whisper a word against you. You will go ashore on the vessel's arrival as an innocent man, and then you do as you please."

"Take your advice to the devil, for God's sake!" he roared. "He may want it; I don't. What! A chit to come to me here——" Some conceit broke in, and he laughed loud and harshly. "When your advice can help me, I'll ask you for it."

I thought him sickeningly discourteous as I stepped out of his berth. Perhaps his behaviour was due to my speech and manner when he came into the saloon after the frigate had brought the *Mohock* to after wounding her.

I killed some time in brushing my hair and changing my dress. It was then nearly dark, with a very pretty spirited play of delicate violet lightning over the sea far off through the port-hole. The wind was failing. Every sound had a lazy creaking note, and the ship,

bereft of her spirit of life, rolled wearily and sleepily upon the long swell. I looked into the saloon, and found the cabin skylight still gilt with the light flowing over the bows out of the west, and was surprised to find the cloth laid, and well laid. The cabin lamps glowed. Covers were laid for three at the head of the table; glass and silver sparkled; and whilst I looked I saw a man-of-warsman, with his hair carefully smeared over his brow, come out of the pantry with a cruet-stand and survey the table with the anxiety of a head-waiter.

Whilst I looked, the lieutenant appeared in the hatch. "Well, Jack," says he, "how are you getting on?"

"That's as good a job as I can make of it, sir."

"There should be plenty. The ship's not long out. The coops are fairly full, and I understand she carried a number of 'tween-deck passengers. Bear a hand with the grub! I didn't know how hungry I was till I looked at this table."

Then he saw me. "Pray, Miss Hayes, where's your father?"

"In his cabin."

"Before we dine," said he, "I should like to have a few words with Captain Sinclair."

I knocked on my stepfather's door, not

insensible, as I passed the lieutenant in the glowing light of the lamps, that his eyes wandered over my figure. My stepfather looked out, clad as for the deck, saving that he was uncovered.

"Lieutenant Jervis wants to speak to you," said I.

"Captain," said the young lieutenant in a frank, gay manner, as though full of good spirits, and happy in his change of ship and experience, "what cabin can I take without inconveniencing anybody aft?"

"You are in command here; you have but to choose," answered the Captain.

"Well, I'll not deprive you of your cabin, anyhow," said the lieutenant. "All I require is the loan of your sextant and the use of your chronometer and charts."

"When the first mate was turned out of the ship," said Captain Sinclair, "he left behind him all the sea-furniture you'll need, saving the chronometer and charts."

"This was his cabin," said I, walking to it, heartily vexed by my stepfather's rude manner.

"I see," said the Captain, as the lieutenant followed me, "that three places have been laid at that table. For whom, sir?"

"For you, and for your stepdaughter and myself" answered the officer.

"No need to trouble yourself so far as I am concerned," answered the Captain, with his grimmest look, and in his iciest, most repellent manner. "I am no longer concerned in this ship. Since you are good enough to grant me the use of my cabin, I'll live in it with your leave till we reach port. Nor will I require your men to wait upon me. The food I need I can myself procure."

"It seems a pity——" began the lieutenant, looking at him compassionately.

"Ay, a pity indeed!" burst out my stepfather. "*That* was the chief officer's cabin."

He indicated it with his clenched fist, and without another word closed the door upon himself.

The lieutenant made no remark, and I was glad to hold my peace. He entered Mr. Gordon's cabin and stayed some time looking round. When he came out, he said all he should find necessary was there saving the chronometers. Perhaps the Captain would lend him one. We then sat down to dinner. I call this meal dinner, for it came nearer to that sort of repast than to the suppers we used to get before the ship was seized. A man-of-warsman had cooked, and done his work finely. He sent us a very good dish of broth, roast fowl, and boiled bacon. He had boiled some vegetables too, so that what with

these things, and the cold meats, and the pleasant little surprise of a damson-pie, with a very good dry dessert routed out by the blue-jacket who acted as steward, I never enjoyed a meal more in all my life.

And then there was the company of the young officer! Jack, after waiting ably and briskly, left us. He had put a decanter of sherry upon the table, and the lieutenant rose to open a pint bottle of champagne for me. I said "No" very earnestly, having already taken as much as I was used to, and we sat over the dessert, under the skylight, talking, sometimes watching the stars in the skylight vanish in a vast blue smoke of sheet-lightning.

I will not pretend I regretted my step-father's absence. In real truth I was very glad he kept away. Whilst the lieutenant talked to me, perhaps it would come as a little damp to my spirits to think of the Captain alone in his cabin, a broken-hearted man, bound to a port where they would make a convict of him if he did not take my advice and vanish on his arrival. Yet I knew how it would have been had he dined with us. I had never sat in company with a more delightful young fellow than Lieutenant Jervis. He was a born gentleman, with all the easy grace of the sea in his bearing. He had a merry

laugh, wonderful white teeth, and played his dark eyes so finely that half his meaning lay in their turns and leers. Beyond inquiring about the passengers, the character of the mates, and the like, he asked no questions about the voyage. Many would have thought his talk frivolous; he told me of hunt-balls at home, routs and high jinks and fine dinner-parties in the West Indies, and it was as agreeable as waltzing to listen to him.

Indeed I was already sick of ships and the scenery and treachery of the sea and the conduct of sailors, and it did me good to hear this young man talk of dancing, of the amusements they contrived for themselves in the frigate, and such things. He looked at the clock after we had been over an hour at table, and exclaimed:

"Will your stepfather let you come for a turn with me on deck, Miss Hayes?"

"I'll risk his objecting to anything so harmless," said I, rising, and went for my hat.

The sea looked as calm as grease, black, and of a smoky appearance. A pale light was shining at one of the yard-arms, and the reflection of it worked like a luminous corkscrew in the water. I asked the lieutenant what it was?

"A corposant," said he. "Fires kindled

by the hand of spirits. I was aloft once and heard a rush of invisible pinions; a light came close—such a light as yonder, and behind was the drowned face of a sailor, very pale and faint."

"A sailor in wings!" said I.

"Of course it was the fluttering of his trousers," he answered.

He now went to the wheel and looked at the card, sniffed around the sea, gazing very earnestly, then left me to speak to a gigantic seaman who walked in the gangway keeping a look-out. Their talk rumbled. They evidently debated the weather and the sail to be kept on the ship. It was a strange night, and mountainous with great blocks of blackness. Between, the stars shone purely, but there was much lightning, and about a mile off a squall of wet without a feather stir of air in it was shrieking in lumps of ice and huge raindrops into the ocean; the fall was up and down, and the noise was like a score of locomotives blowing off steam.

The lieutenant asked permission to light a cigar, and we paced the deck together. I never could have pictured so strange a night. Ships of dim vapour hung in the smoky obscurity, till you looked at them straight, and then they disappeared. Lights gleamed out upon the sea, as though flickering lanterns

were upheld by the feeble hands of starving men in open boats. In the oily blackness alongside, every time the invisible heave made the ship stoop, a marvellous tapestry of the cold sea-glow was kindled. Lieutenant Jervis and I leaned over the rail watching this show for a while. We saw in outlines of waning and gathering brightness what seemed like the turrets of castles, heads of sea-horses, trees, and fish, and many sights which were not like the things they reminded us of.

In going alone to the skylight to look at the time, I spied the figure of my stepfather passing through the saloon; he was in his shirt-sleeves, was ashy pale, and carried a dish of food. I wondered why he should act so irrationally. He would have found the lieutenant very good company, been treated as a gentleman, and led a very comfortable life till we reached port, where he could have sneaked away as things stood.

I roamed about the deck with the lieutenant, greatly enjoying his conversation and society. He told me that his father, a very aged man who lived at Bath, was Rear-Admiral Sir Thomas Collingwood Jervis. Young as he was, he appeared to have seen some active service, particularly amongst slavers, had received three musket-balls in

his legs, lost the tip of his left little finger, and whilst telling me the story took me to the binnacle lamp to show me a scar at the back of his neck.

"A six-pound ball did that," said he. "Had the aim of the gun been truer by the diameter of its muzzle only, this head would never have had the honour of inclining itself to you."

I wondered if he was married, but did not know how to get at that truth. Sailors will not own they have wives ashore when they are flirting with girls at sea.

I went below, after spending a very pleasant evening, partook of some wine and biscuits, and, with a half glance at my stepfather's berth, arresting my walk for an instant to the thought, "Shall I knock and bid him good-night?" I withdrew to my berth. It had been surprisingly quiet on deck. The clouds appeared to have broken and sunk in masses of elusive dyes to the water's edge, where they floated like giant toad-stools and huge bushes, with a sort of deceptive wreathing of lines of thickness round about the horizon, till the ship seemed encompassed in the heart of what I cannot but compare to an enormous vaporous corkscrew, between the spirals of which shone the stars in two or three different colours, whilst dry pale gleams, such

as are said to haunt churchyards, hung low down, and elsewhere the black surface sheeted fitfully in dim flashes.

But there was a number of stout hearts in the forecastle, and a smart young officer aft; then again my stepfather was aboard to counsel and help; so, spite of the ugly look out of doors, I got into my bunk and slept sweetly, and throughout the night dreamt most deliciously. In fact, it was from one of the choicest of those dreams, fragrant with the smell of the bridal nosegay, that I was aroused by a rapping on the door.

"Sorry to disturb you, Miss Hayes," said the voice of the young lieutenant, when I had answered. "Is Captain Sinclair here?"

"No."

"Has he visited you in the night?"

"No."

"His cabin door is open, and—when you are dressed will you come to me?"

His voice was cautious and plaintive, and my heart foreboded trouble. It was seven o'clock, a roasting, shining morning, a flat sea, and the heavens, as I made out, filled with heavy masses of white cloud. So then the thunderous frown of last night's weather had proved but the bully's scowl. I dressed quickly, and found the lieutenant walking up and down the saloon.

"I hate to be a bearer of ill news," said he, "but I must tell you we cannot find your stepfather. We suspect——"

"What?" said I, feeling myself pale and viewing him anxiously.

"That he has made away with himself."

"He had reason!" I involuntarily cried. "Why do you think that he has committed suicide?"

"He is not in the ship, and must therefore be overboard. He must have slunk overboard in a deliberate, suicidal manner; the splash of him would have been heard had he fallen by accident. We found his hat, waistcoat, and other garments in the mizzen chains, as though he had unclothed himself to secure the silent dip of the unclothed skin."

"Poor man! Where have you looked?"

"In every likely place," he answered. "He would have no motive in hiding himself."

"None."

I ran my eye along the cabins, and then went to the one my stepfather had used, followed by the lieutenant. Here they had put the clothes they found in the mizzen chains. They lay on the deck, nearly a suit. I was infinitely more shocked and startled by the sight of those clothes than by the news. The lieutenant's tale had put a faint image before me, but those clothes enabled me to

think of a drowned man. I shuddered and sighed, and chancing to look into a mirror, saw myself very white. That mirror was screwed over a sort of sea toilet-table, and the thing catching my eye all on a second, I picked it up: it was a letter addressed to me. I opened it and read this:—

"SHIP *Mohock.*

"LAURA,—I am a ruined man, and which ever way I look, I see nothing but beggary and starvation. I have lived for many years an honourable life, and now go to God to answer for what I have done in my closing days. My will is at home. All that I possess my creditors must seize. But I do not expect they will trouble you, until the time when they think I should return from New York, nor then if they get news of the piracy of the *Mohock.* They will await my return. You will find £200 in gold in the small chest in the left of my cabin. The key of the chest is in the drawer of the table on which you find this letter. Take the money, and with it return home in safety, and with the balance secure, I beg of you, such little possessions and memorials at home as your mother would wish you and your sister to have. Farewell, Laura! I did not know it would come to this, or I should not have brought you with me.

"AMELIUS SINCLAIR."

My eyes were dim before I arrived at the signature. I handed the letter to the lieutenant, who merely said:

"This puts the matter beyond all doubt. Poor old chap! I should have foreseen it. I ought to have had him watched. His manner was very strange yesterday."

He returned the letter to me, and taking the key from the drawer, opened the chest, saying, "We will make sure of this money at once, Miss Hayes. There's no such friend abroad as our young Queen's head in gold."

He opened the chest, and we saw a scanty stock of wearing apparel, soiled linen, an odd shoe or two. Up in a corner was a canvas bag: a place had been made for it: it stood so that the eye should not miss it. The lieutenant took it up, and the instant he had it in his hands I observed a look of temper that was not wanting in archness and wonder. He glanced at me, then looked at the bag. On one side was written in good bold figures "£200." On the other side, "For Laura, with the same love she bore me."

"There is no gold here, I fear," says the lieutenant, pulling out a pocket-knife; then snipping the string that noosed the bag, he poured on to the deck about a pint of dried peas.

"He was mad, but mean too," said the

lieutenant, after singing a bit of a song, and then tossing the bag into the chest and letting the lid fall. "A jolly stepfather's joke! But stay!" he cried. "How do you know this is not a ruse, that the money is not somewhere? He writes kindly and sincerely. Shall I rummage for you?"

I bowed my head, being too exquisitely mortified to speak, and going into the saloon, sat down at the table, and waited whilst the lieutenant hunted.

"Never a stiver," says he, coming out with a cheerful laugh. "'Tis strange too. Most sea-captains of his sort carry loose cash to sea with them."

He went on deck to look after the ship, and I to my cabin to improve my toilet and prepare for breakfast. I was never more stung and humiliated in all my life. It was not that I wanted the paltry two hundred pounds, but it was doubly irritating and offensive that Lieutenant Jervis should see that my stepfather put the value of a handful of peas on my love, and deemed me fit to be insulted in his dying humour by a piece of brutal cynicism beyond anything I should have thought even he was capable of. But it did me good. Nothing could be more drastic to lay to such grief as I felt for him. If I had a tear now, it was for myself.

I put on a white muslin body trimmed with black. I found some black riband in a box and trimmed my straw hat with it, then went on deck to look at the morning. It was roasting and silent: the sea was like steel under the sun, and the ship seemed to rest in a bed of liquid glass. A slight swell put some life into her masts, and the shadows of the great white clouds which burnt sunwards with all sorts of golden and silvern splendours floated in islands of violet upon the sea and refreshed the eye.

Lieutenant Jervis coming to the rail pointed to the mizzen channels, and told me that was where they had found the clothes. I looked down, shuddered, and withdrew my head. A fit of horror shook me then. The ship had scarcely stirred throughout the long night. Some grease and mess that had been flung overboard on the previous evening floated close by.

I thought that the body of my stepfather might rise and hang close in the brilliant clear brine even whilst I looked down, and it was that which dismissed me from the rail with a sick heart.

The wreck of the mizzen-topgallant mast had been cleared away, but the ship carried a mutilated look aft. Whilst I stood conversing with Lieutenant Jervis about my

stepfather, Jack, with his forehead of carefully smeared hair, reported breakfast.

"There's no stage like shipboard for astounding performances," said the lieutenant, as we seated ourselves; "only think what a theatre this craft has proved in a few weeks."

"What's to happen next?" said I.

"Oh, Kingston, Jamaica, where we shall see you safely on board some homeward-bounder. But before we part you must give me leave to call upon you in England on my return."

I felt the hot blood spring to my cheek whilst I bowed to him.

"Unless, indeed," said he thoughtfully, eyeing me, "they should detain you as a witness. No! 'Tis a case they'll try at home. I expect if the *Trojan* finds the people on the Great Salvage she'll push straight on for England, for then she'll have everything on board for the machinery of the trial. In that case you may arrive too late, and so be spared an unpleasant experience."

"I presume the British Consul at Kingston will assist me to get home?" said I.

"I'll see to that," said he, smiling.

"Not that I want any charitable help," said I, flushing. "I am independent of anything my stepfather could have done for me. He got and spent most of my poor mother's

money, but my father provided against my sister's and my ruin by any successor. How long shall we take to get to Jamaica?"

"At this rate, till the dead rise to the blast of doom. I hope you are in no hurry."

"Not I. The poor man brought me this voyage to divert me, as he called it. A nice time of diversion we have had down to the hour of your coming on board of us!"

"Now he's dead, will you tell me," says the lieutenant, letting his eyes dwell upon mine with that importunacy of gaze which, in such beauty as his, few girls can harden their hearts to, "if Captain Sinclair had any deeper hand in this business than the story as I have it goes?"

I reflected a moment, still meeting his gaze. "He was the top and bottom of it," said I, "and shocked as I now am to think of his having destroyed himself, I am sure in the course of a few days I shall be believing it was the wisest thing he could have done."

"There is a long blank morning before us," said the lieutenant; "we will have an awning spread and get chairs in the cool of it, and you shall spin me the yarn. Will you?"

CHAPTER XII

THE STORM

ALL this morning Lieutenant Jervis and I passed on the quarter-deck in the pleasant violet gloom of the awning. The silence out upon the sea was wonderful. The seamen went on with their work with the quiet of men-of-warsmen; all was hushed in the ship save some languid beat of sail when the vessel rolled to an impulse flowing with more weight than the average of that tender sea-cradling.

I talked freely of my stepfather, and told all that I knew or suspected. He was dead, and I was heedless. He had been but my stepfather too. Nor was that all either. It may have been the vanity of the fool or the hope of the maid; certainly it came into my head to fancy the lieutenant might fall in love with me before we reached Jamaica. Suppose this! My pride went before all things; by-and-bye the news of Captain Sinclair's share in the piracy must reach his

ears. So I told him the whole story as dispassionately as if I related it of a stranger.

He was less surprised than interested. He said that all along the sending away of the mates and the keeping of the skipper had convicted the Captain to his mind as the conspirator in the ship. He laughed at my account of Captain Sinclair falsifying the barometer and dodging the weather, but looked grave, as though some hard words were at the back of his tongue, when I described the marooning of the passengers on that naked rock, the Great Salvage.

He could not conceive how the villains meant to dispose of ninety-eight thousand sovereigns.

"I don't suppose we shall fall in with their schooner," said he, sending a rolling look round the sea-line. "How many of a crew does she carry, I wonder? Is she armed?" And his eyes came to our own blank merchant decks.

When I went below, on the lieutenant leaving me to get an observation, I entered Captain Sinclair's cabin and thoroughly searched it. I found little or nothing of consequence. In a drawer was a cheap silver watch and a gilt chain, with a large sham gold seal attached. He had worn them during the voyage.

I picked up the canvas bag the lieutenant had flung down, and was convinced by the look and feel of it that it had recently held money. The words £200 might have been printed long ago; whereas the reference to me on the other side had certainly been written or printed within the past day or two. I sat down in his chair, locked my hands in my lap, and fixing my eyes on the clothes they had found in the mizzen-chains, mused on the lost man.

I may have stayed half an hour in that cabin, and then came out. I had loved my mother, and nursed her when dying, and had but one quarrel to fasten upon her memory, and that was her weakness in having married this man. Had she lived, what would she have thought of him as criminal and suicide?

All through this day it was so unbearably hot that I could scarcely breathe in the saloon. The sea showed oddly in the afternoon; a sort of white-coloured paths of water writhed about it in dull greasy gleamings; the blue between looked muddy, as though ooze had risen in sediment to the surface. Heavy masses of vapour hung in the sky; but the atmosphere was so thick you would scarcely have noticed them but for here and there a dull line of tarnished copper, or a dim brassy streak, sometimes bright enough

to drop a light of its own wriggling worm-like into the water beneath. At three o'clock you could not see the ship's trucks; and if you watched the flying jib-boom, it went round and round in the heat as though it was a rope they were uncoiling. All this made me think of a world of smoke with a firmament that would reflect volcanic upheavals of red flame when the sun was sunk.

They stripped the ship down to her three topsails and some fore-and-aft canvas, and there she lay motionless but for the soft heave of the swell. The ocean was dreadfully silent, and the stoop of the sky was as though the heads of vast shapeless bulks of beasts were crowding together up there, and frowning down in enormous shadow to peer at us.

At four o'clock it was nearly black. I stood near the mizzen-mast, talking with the lieutenant in whispers. The subduing gloom of the storm was upon us; we could not converse with raised voices. The men glimmered like ghosts; they stood silently here and there about the decks waiting for what was to come. In a few moments some huge drops of water, each as big as a saucer, and seemingly hissing hot, fell in a loud plashing upon the deck; on which, supposing the tempest was at hand, I hurried below.

I had been about five minutes in the saloon, sitting near the sideboard with a fearful heart, when the heavens were flashed up in a deep and dazzling light over our mastheads. I heard the explosion as of a cannon on deck, and saw a ball of fire hurl past the mouth of the hatch. A moment later, and in the midst of a sickening smell of sulphur, I heard such a dreadful roar of thunder, I might have believed God's skies of brass had then been shivered to atoms. The ship was struck! It rained in a living sheet of water as though we lay becalmed at the foot of some giant cataract. I caught a splashing and shambling of feet, cries, and in a minute, as well as I could distinguish, I spied a crowd in the companion-way coming slowly below. Another flash lighted the interior with noontide brilliance, and showed me four seamen bearing a body. One of them bawled out, "Ain't there no light down here?"

I might have groped a month in the pantry without finding matches, but I laid my hand instantly upon a box in my stepfather's cabin, and climbing upon the table, lighted one of the lamps.

"What's happened?" cried I, springing on deck. "Who's this?"

"Lieutenant Jervis has been struck down by lightning. What's to be done?"

It came into my head when I heard this that the treatment for the lightning-struck was much the same as for the apparently drowned. How did I know this? Doubtless I had somewhere read it, and the thing had got stuck as a piece of reading into a corner of memory.

"Is he wet?" I asked.

"Drenched!" cried one of the four men.

They had all come to a halt, still holding the body and looking about them, and two or three seamen hung in the companion-way peering eagerly down.

"His wet clothes must be removed," said I. "That's his cabin. Lay him in his bunk, and find out if there's any one amongst you who knows how to rub and knead so as to bring life into the limbs."

I sought for and found some brandy whilst they carried the lieutenant into his berth, where they stripped, dried, and rolled him in a blanket. All this while the heavens were molten with streams of fire, the thunder bellowed ceaselessly, and the rain roared with the sound of a raging sea on the planks overhead.

When I went into the lieutenant's berth with brandy, one man was rubbing him with what I instantly saw was a good skilful movement of hand. I told another to sit at his

feet and rub. The poor fellow was insensible, and breathed very slowly and low. One of the men held up the lieutenant's coat, which had been split from neck to tail: this man told me that one shoe had been ripped from the officer's foot as though cut by a knife. They also showed me his watch-chain, which had been broken and fused into little lumps of ore.

He lay for two hours in this state. I put my fingers on his wrist, but found no pulse; yet his low, slow breathing told us he lived.

Three of the four men had long before this left the cabin to look after the ship. The man who knew how to chafe remained.

From time to time I continued to administer brandy with a small teaspoon.

"I believe," says the sailor in a hoarse whisper like the murmur of a dreaming dog, "that he'll pull round arter all. But what's it going to leave him?"

"Eh?"

"Oh, these here strokes often bereave the skull of a man of its intellects. They take the sight out of his eyes, and sometimes don't leave him with spine enough to stand upright on."

The lieutenant groaned. I liked to hear that sound. Anything better than the ghastly silence and the slow faint breathing which at

any moment might cease. He groaned again, and uttered something meaningless. I sprang my ear to his mouth, and again he spoke, and now I knew by his voice that something had gone wrong with his organs of speech. It was the noise of an idle, helpless, wagging tongue; and yet I guessed he was trying to speak; and beckoning for the lantern, I saw in the swift passage of the sheen of it over his face that he had his mind.

"All is well with the ship," said I. "The storm is passing; there is no wind. You have been struck down by lightning, and here you must rest silently and patiently till I nurse you into health."

I saw him smile by the lamp I had returned to the seaman's hand. By-and-bye he began to vomit most dreadfully. When this heart-shaking attack was ended he rolled his face to the ship's wall and fell asleep. From time to time the shadows of seamen stole softly to the door to look in. One of them was the gigantic fellow who, as I supposed, had been put to act as mate by the lieutenant. He filled the doorway with his mighty presence, and, in a whisper that trembled with power, asked leave to speak with me. I went out. The bracket lamp was now alight in the lieutenant's cabin, but turned very low; a lamp shone in the saloon, but its bright light could

not extinguish the hues of the lightning as it plunged at the windows. Yet the storm was gone. The thunder rolled at a distance and musically, and I felt a soft refreshing air blowing in through the open ports.

"Is there any fear of his dying, d'ye think, miss?" said the man.

"I hope not. He sleeps peacefully now. Go in and look at him, but do not disturb him."

The man trod on naked feet. He bent over the figure, lingered listening, and returned.

"You see," said he, passing the sleeve of his jacket over his brow, which ran with perspiration, "the lieutenant being down, there's no navigator to take charge."

"What's to be done?" said I, startled by this new aspect, with a fancy leaping hot into my head of the chance Captain Sinclair had lost.

"I must talk to my mates," answered the huge seaman. "Seems to me there'll be nothing to do but to keep her taws'l aback till something comes along to len's a hand. The ship's course may be the course for another twenty-four hours; but arter?"

"Lieutenant Jervis may be well enough to take charge again to-morrow."

"That's to be piously trusted. Meanwhile

I don't think we can do better than let her lie quiet for to-night."

I secretly smiled at the idea of this huge seaman consulting me on the navigation of the ship, and what the men should do with her. I told him to send me a light-handed sailor to help to nurse the lieutenant; but in truth I should want such a one for errands only. I cannot express how grateful I felt on reflecting that the crew consisted of disciplined men-of-warsmen. Here now was an unofficered ship with nearly the tenth of a million of gold in her, wholly at the mercy of her people. Suppose Owen and his gang had remained, and that it was my stepfather who had been struck down helpless!

When in the name of my good angel were my adventures in the *Mohock* to end? I had been kept up by the excitement of the storm and by my having to attend to the lieutenant, but when the evening came and I sat down at the table trying to eat a little supper, my heart fluttered key-cold within me. It was not only the lieutenant lying there in his bunk, moaning sometimes, breathing pretty regularly it is true, and, as I hoped, sleeping, though a dying man for all that, as it might prove; it was also the deep icy shadow cast upon my spirits by the suicide of Captain Sinclair. There was no noise of storm now.

A slow sound of groaning and grinding occasionally ran through the ship as she was heeled by the heave of the deep: it was all of a deathlike silence on deck, with the stars shining brightly in the open frame of the companion; the seaman the big fellow had sent to assist me in watching sat nodding in the lieutenant's berth. So it was that the saloon showed as lonely as a churchyard, with nothing stirring but the pulse of the lamplight in the mirrors and a small rocking of the swing trays; in which time a fit of horror came upon me when I thought of my stepfather lying naked and drowned close under our keel, for I could not conceive that our ship had moved her own length since he sank. I coined him with my mind's eye, and wrought him out of memory, and he stalked in a pitiful shadow from his berth in his shirt sleeves with an ashen face; he came for the food I had seen him carry. It was a trick of recollection, yet I could have shrieked. The warmth, the light, the colour of the early days of this voyage flooded the interior. I saw the table cheerfully dressed, the people at it eating, Monsignor's calm face. I heard Mr. Jackson's laugh and the Colonel's ringing nasal call across, and again I saw the apparition of my stepfather at the head, stern, with a lowering brow, directing a level shining

stare at me till I sprang to my feet, and with a wave of my hand, beat the hysteric presentment out of my vision. Then was I wise to help myself to a tumbler of spirits and water. My nerves were nearly gone.

I nursed the young officer all through the night. A long and dreadful night it was, roasting below. The little draught of air had died out, and going on deck for a mouthful of the sweetness of the dark, I found sea and sky blent in one huge silent shadow tipped with brilliants which the water reflected, so that we seemed to hang poised in the centre of the immense profound. The seamen were very uneasy. One or another was constantly coming to the head of the steps to learn how the young officer did; the man who helped me gave them the news, and there was a great deal of hoarse whispering through those hot silent hours. The lieutenant was a little delirious at times, broke into fragments of song, and they were shocking to hear; for I was certain now the tongue had been paralysed in his mouth; his utterance was a mere wobble; it reminded me of the echoes raised by a poor idiot boy that used to hoot after moonrise in a grove near Canterbury.

But not to be tedious in the relation of this nursing job: the morning broke, a cloud-

less day; the water seemed to swing to the ship in a very swoon of heat, so languid was the wave of it. Lieutenant Jervis had been sleeping throughout the night save when he was delirious; a few times he had turned his head, as though seeking for me, and then I would get up and look at him.

I was sitting, perhaps dozing, in his cabin when the day broke. The seaman occupied a locker outside, close to the bulkhead. Presently I opened my eyes to the blaze of the light flowing off the sea through the port-hole in tingling brand-new needles, and found the young officer watching me. His expression of face was perfectly sensible, his eyes, dark and eloquent as ever, full of meaning. He pointed to his mouth and shook his head.

"Yes," said I, with as cheerful a countenance as I could command; "but the power of speech will return to you."

Evidently he had tried to speak whilst I dozed, and had been shocked by the noises he made; he did not attempt to use his tongue. He put out his hand and flourished it to signify that he wished to write, and I brought him pencil and paper. He tried to sit up, but could not, on which I slanted a book as a desk, and he wrote:

"I cannot speak, and my legs are useless. I fear the lightning has paralysed them."

"What can I do for you? I will do anything."

He wrote: "I thank you with all my heart. I must be patient and wait for something to heave in sight to help us. I shall not be able to navigate this ship. Will you send Turner to me?"

I told the man outside to call Turner, and in a few moments that man-of-warsman whom I have described as gigantic arrived. He stepped to the bunk-side knuckling his brow, and his rough black face, set massive as a carving in granite between his hedge-like whiskers, looked noble with sympathy and feeling. Then the three of us made out to discourse thus: the lieutenant writing, I reading, and Turner answering.

"This stroke has made a sheer hulk of me, Turner."

"I pray not, sir, o' God's name. Youth's a good handspike, and arter the doctors ha' heaved awhile they'll pawl ye to your old bearings."

"Was the ship injured?"

"Not a rope-yarn of her. The pumps suck, and all's right below. She lies under her three taws'ls. It's a sheet calm, and nothen in sight."

"If you get a breeze, this is your course." The lieutenant wrote it, but what that course

was I do not remember. "There's nothing in the road, and by heading straight you should be able to run Jamaica down." He shook his head after writing this, and added with his pencil, "We must have a navigator. The value of the ship is great. We are sixteen people."

"If ships ain't plentiful in this ocean, where are they to be found?" said Turner, with a slow look through the port.

"Keep a bright look-out," wrote the lieutenant, "and show your ensign union down when anything comes. Burn a flare sooner than lose a chance, and have rockets ready."

This was all the writing the poor young fellow then seemed equal to. His hand fell and he looked faint. I got him some brandy and water, and damped his brow with toilet-vinegar. I then went on deck to prepare with my own hands a light meal for his breakfast. I had some skill in the making of small delicate dishes, and the long days I had devoted to my mother had given me a tolerable idea of the needs of the sick-room.

Before going, I spoke to Turner of the fierce heat, and asked if there was no device by which the lieutenant's cabin might be cooled.

"We'll take a pair of windsails and couple 'em," said he, "and lead one leg right into

the door here. Yet if there ain't no breeze in heaven there can come no air on earth."

'Twas a wonderful, glorious, hopeless breast of ocean to look at from the deck of our becalmed ship. If you touched the rail, you skinned your fingers. The horizon coiled shivering through a dim blue vapour that went sweating up from God knows what parts of the vessel. The three topsails swung softly, with a blinding glare of their own. The light in them overran their edges, and I noticed that every sail was framed with a faint film or tremble of airy silver.

Nothing noteworthy happened all that day. The lieutenant lay for the most part motionless, but intelligent and observant. I brought plenty of paper from the Captain's cabin: it eased the poor fellow's mind to converse with Turner and one or two of the others in this way. Sometimes I'd catch his eye following me about, and when my glance went to his, the light of a grateful smile shone in his looks. I asked him if he suffered pain, and he made a slight grimace. But he was one of those who take their chastisements like men.

I went to the ship's library for some books, and amongst the volumes found one on medicine: the word "lightning" was large in the page, and I read the description, treatment,

and so on to him; and was glad to find that though I had not done much, I had done right. From time to time I read from a volume of extracts: he listened to brief tales of highwaymen, shipwreck, horrid murders, sagacity in dogs, and the like. There is no better reading for the sick-room than old-fashioned volumes of this sort, peppered with poetry, and embellished with cuts, which somehow fit the narratives as the wigs of the age of the books did the heads of those who wore them.

That which made him most grateful was my damping of his brow and fanning him. The heat was horrible, and no air stirred in the motionless windsail. Whilst I leaned over him playing the fan, I'd find his eyes dwelling on mine with a look of tenderness and anxiety: it was in one of these fanning passages that I felt my heart go to him on a sudden. Good God! thought I, I am in love with this man, who is maimed, and may be dying! Is this the husband my stepfather carried me this voyage to find me? Then I would hold his hand and feel his pulse and look wistfully at his whitened face. He lay in the gloom of a lower bunk, yet I saw him very well.

The stagnant day blackened into a stagnant night, with a mighty fine show of shooting

stars. I went on deck for half an hour of freshness, and Turner the giant said to me that we could not look for anything to come along till it blew a little draught of air, and saying this he went to the ship's quarter and whistled low and insinuatingly into the dusk, as if he would coax some phantasm into shape and substance by his pipe. "Good angels!" I heard the fellow at the wheel say, "there'll be no wind, Bill, whilst that there blushen marchant covey has hold of our keel. Durned if she ain't got a list with the grip of his blue covetious fingers. He knows the gold's in the hold, and he ain't a-going to let it run away."

Bill slung a ponderous "Hush!" through the darkness, and the helmsman catching sight of me, fell a-wriggling at the wheel against the stars, as if the sailors had hooked him with a grapnel, and were frisking before hoisting him.

I was dozing about four o'clock in a chair at the lieutenant's side, when I was awakened by the heeling of the ship; the foam seethed with a delicious note of coldness under the port, and the cabin was sweet as the fabled Arabian gale with the steady panting of the windsail. The lieutenant put his hand out, not knowing I was awake. I stood up and made more light with the lamp, and he wrote

that I should send Turner to him. The seaman who was supposed to help me in nursing, but who had so far snored like a militiaman through his hours of duty, fetched the big fellow, and the lieutenant wrote and was answered thus:

"How is the wind?"

"No'the by west, sir, a good strong air."

"You are sailing upon the course I gave you?"

"Ay, sir."

"Keep her at it, and press her. Shove her out of this greasy marsh as fast as she'll go."

Turner told him what sail the ship was under, and gave such farther particulars as he might suppose the officer would wish to know without fatiguing himself to pencil questions: the huge fellow then returned on deck.

I took a peep myself, if only for the sake of seeing the ship in motion, so deeply sick had I become of the burning calm; the cockroaches were beginning to crawl, though I had not seen one in the ship farther north, and an ugly ferocious squeal of rats broke out from time to time, scoring athwart my drowsy ears as I sat by the side of the lieutenant, as though it came from t'other side the saloon; though once the shriek was close and ghastly, and I jumped up, at which the lieutenant laughed.

Well, I went on deck, as I have said, to

take a look at the ship in motion, and a tender delicious treat was that sight of velvet heavens, sparkling stars, and a shapeless piece of moon that dropped no light into the sea, and seemed to be blowing darkling southward with the wind. One felt the heels of the clipper in the smooth shearing of her stem: it was like skating. It was as though she ripped through ice with her coppered forefoot. Her pale bosoms leaned southwards: I saw no clouds for the wind to come out of, but the dark waters streamed joyously as glad and fawning dogs to the bends and haunches of the flying craft: the sea-flashes filled the eye with light and life, and patiently in several parts of the ship stumped the watch of the men-of-wars-men, pausing often to stare ahead and around to windward, whilst again and again, even in the time that I lingered, the giant Turner swept the windy dusk of the seaboard with my stepfather's night-glass.

On returning below, I was arrested at the foot of the companion steps by a strange, insufferable bad smell. It seemed to me to proceed from Captain Sinclair's cabin, yet I smelt nothing but fresh air on entering. When I stepped out, the odour sickened me again, and my thoughts being of my patient, I beckoned to the assistant seaman.

"What is this bad smell?" said I.

He sleepily snuffled and snivelled, and then said, "It seemed all right, he couldn't smell no smell."

"Try here," said I, motioning to him.

He came, spat instantly, and cried, "Rats, rats! They'll breed a plague. They must be cleared out at daybreak. I'll speak to Bill about it, miss."

I went to the fore part of the saloon, where the atmosphere was sweet. Lieutenant Jervis, cooled by the wind, was in a deep sleep; I sat down beside him, and presently slumbered too.

I was awakened by the lieutenant touching me. Instantly on opening my eyes and getting my senses, I caught a growling of men's voices in the saloon. It was bright daylight, with wind, and the ship sprang through the seas which seemed to be rolling to her bow. I understood that the lieutenant desired to know what was happening in the saloon, and stepped out.

Just behind or abaft the shaft of the mizzen-mast, snugly let into the deck, was a small hatch-cover; it conducted to a part of the after hold, and throughout the voyage I don't recollect ever having seen that little hatch opened, though likely as not the stores for cabin use were kept there. It lay open now, and a couple of men stood looking with their

hands to their faces; but in the instant of my advancing, the body of a dead man was passed through the hatch and received by the two. Three followed, springing on deck, spitting and growling. It was bright daylight, I say, and there was no need to go close or ask questions: the body was Captain Sinclair's! The two rested him with his face looking my way till the others gained the deck, and it was then I saw him.

I was thunderstruck—I was paralysed! I thought that the heart in me was broken and its pulse stopped by the shock. Was his letter then a lie, as the closing scene of his life had been? He had not committed suicide by drowning, though he meant us to suppose that, by leaving his clothes in the mizzen-chains.

"Don't come this way, miss," bawled out one of the sailors.

The body was clothed in trousers, boots, and shirt. No marks or wounds were to be seen in the throat or head. I stood stockstill, sick and white. Quickly, and with few or no demonstrations of disgust in my presence, the seamen handed the body through the companion way, and when it was gone I returned to the lieutenant's cabin, and sat down, trembling violently.

He could not write unless I held a book to him, but my hands shook so I could not help him, and after cooling my face with toilet-vinegar, I said—

"They have found the body of Captain Sinclair."

He arched his eyebrows into an expression of "Where?"

"Under the little hatch just past the mizzen-mast. Oh, heavenly God! I must not tell you what drew their attention to it. I should have spoken to the men this morning, little dreaming—little dreaming—what made him hide himself there! He shammed to be dead to hide—but for what purpose?"

He motioned with a face of astonishment and pain, as though imploring me to help him to write. This my nerves managed now to contrive, and he wrote—

"How do they know he is dead?"

I dropped the book and put my hands to my face, and swayed myself in the torment of the horror that was upon me; then hearing footsteps, I looked out, and called to a sailor who was standing near the open hatch to send Turner to me. The huge seaman was some little time in coming.

"What is this dreadful discovery?" said I, when he showed himself in the doorway.

"Why, miss, I've just been hearing all

about it," he answered, first addressing me, then looking at his officer. "There was a something," he was beginning to stammer, "that as it might be took the attention of the seaman as helps the lady to nurse you, sir. 'Twas aft, all about the lazarette hatchway. Some of the men thought it rats."

He shifted lumpishly on his feet, staring with embarrassment, rolled a mass of tobacco quid out of one cheek into the other, and proceeded—

"'Twas proper for sweetness, and your health, sir, and this lady's, that the thing should be seen to. They lifted the hatch, but needed no lantern to tell 'em there was mortality decaying somewheres. He lay jammed between two chests. They put the light to his face, and saw—and saw——" Here the giant looked at me with drooping eyes. "In fact, sir, 'twas the master of this ship, Captain Sinclair himself, the man we thought drownded."

The lieutenant pointed to the last question he had written in pencil.

"The officer wishes to know if he is dead?" said I faintly.

"Oh, God, yes, your honour!" cried the man so vehemently, that his voice smote the ear like a bugle-blast. "They're stitching

him up. He's a sight not to be seen by this lady, sir."

I gave way now, and sitting down, cried passionately, but more with the horror than the pity and grief of the thing. I had heard the squeaking of the rats—I could guess what the heat in that hold was—I knew what the man meant when he said it was no sight for me to see.

The lieutenant wrote something which he delivered to Turner, who, knuckling his forehead, went on deck. When we were alone he wrote again—

"He was mad, poor man. I have ordered Turner to bury him. There can be no service. The men are ignorant."

I bowed my head.

Much could I have found to say had Lieutenant Jervis been able to answer me. But since he was dumb I held my peace. Thought held me motionless for long intervals at a time. I could not believe my stepfather had been mad. His placing the clothes in the chains, and his secret, subtle sneaking into the hold, proved him sane. Some reason that he might himself have explained as exquisitely rational had governed him. But whatever his motive might have been, the secret was now his own for ever.

* * * * *

When the old lady came to this part of her story, she stopped and refused to proceed. Her dim eyes hardened with temper behind her spectacles; she folded her arms, and tossing her head, declared in her deep voice that all she had related was a lie; there never had been such a ship as the *Mohock;* Captain Amelius Sinclair was an honourable man, and if the tale was told, his name must not be given on any account. Then relaxing, she admitted that the story was true, and that Captain Sinclair was the arch-conspirator in it, but she had said enough. He had been her stepfather. She regretted that she had been so candid, and declined, with a surly look, to deliver another word.

She is dead, and of the dead *nil nisi;* it must be affirmed, nevertheless, that a more objectionable old woman never tied a bonnet round her head. Throughout, as she recited her tale, you saw her memory was charged with venom. She abhorred her stepfather, she spoke coldly of her sister. Selfishness sank as deep in her nature as her soul could berth it. She lived alone in her old age; quarrelled with and turned a servant away five days before she died, and was found dead upon the floor a week after she expired, probably as loathsome an object—for she lived in the country, and her cottage was not

wanting in rats!—as that unhappy step-father whose body was found in the after-hold.

Yet, substantially, she had related all when she refused to go on; the rest was easily got from the contemporary journals.

The ship *Mohock*, it seems, was fallen in with one week after she had parted company with the *Trojan*. She lay with her mainsail aback. The vessel that met with her was a West India passenger ship, bound as the *Mohock* was to Kingston, Jamaica. A mate was put aboard, and the two vessels proceeded, safely arriving in the course of a few days at their destination. Miss Hayes was sent home by the English Consul. She went to Canterbury, and lived in retirement with her sister. It does not seem that she was called upon to give evidence at the trial of the twelve men who were brought home in the *Trojan*. They were tried at the Central Criminal Court for piracy on the high seas, and their references to Captain Amelius Sinclair seemed to make the charges against him uncertain. They swore that they were watermen belonging to the South-Eastern coast between the Forelands. Captain Sinclair, they said, had himself visited Deal and arranged with Owen and others for the hire of a schooner for the purpose of seizing the

Mohock by launching a boat of apparently shipwrecked men. But they could produce no proof. The thing was generally discredited. Many letters were written by shipmasters and mates to the public journals pointing out the absurdity of such a project on the part of a captain.

The passengers were taken off the Salvage Island by the frigate, and those who stayed in England, and gave evidence, were unanimously of opinion that the captain had had no hand in the conspiracy. The truth, however, is as it is here related, and the reader may rely upon the accuracy of this version of one of the most extraordinary sea incidents of our own or any other time. The whole of the gang were transported beyond seas; Owen and three others for life, the others for various terms.

It is known that Lieutenant Jervis recovered after languishing for many months, and returned to England, and one of the first persons he called upon was the young lady who had nursed him. He made such good use of his leave that they were married before he went afloat again, and Mrs. Jervis then went to reside with her father-in-law, the Admiral, at Bath. But the young fellow never recovered the shock his system had been dealt; his health broke down after he

had been at sea six months. He came home and was nursed by his wife in Bath, where he died in December 1848, and Mrs. Jervis placed a tablet in the Abbey Church to his memory.

THE END.

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