



# Overdue

Clark Russell



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ON

## OVERDUE

"The customary epithets applied to nautical fiction are quite incommensurate with the excellence of Mr. Clark Russell's narrative powers, and these are thoroughly at their best in 'Overdue.' . . . 'Overdue' is the story of a voyage, and its romantic interest hinges on the stratagem of the captain's newly-wedded wife in order to accompany him on his expedition for the salvage of a valuable wreck. The reader gets a vivid share of the animation of such a journey and all the varied pleasures of a first long sea-trip. The climax of Benson's conspiracy to remove the captain and carry off the wife, to whom his lawless passion aspires, is invested with the keenest excitement."—*Pall Mall Gazette*.

"In 'Overdue,' Clark Russell gives us another of those fascinating stories of the sea, of which in these days he is the 'onlie begetter.' . . . As you read you smell the brine, see the great green waves leaping round the ship, or watch the moon illuminating illimitable levels of glistening water. Mr. Russell's word-pictures of the sea convey something of the touch of Turner's brush, with the advantage, that whilst the paint dealt with river and lagoon, the writer deals with the mightier ocean."—*Punch*.

"A mystery of hidden treasure adds interest to the tale, which is written with all the knowledge of sea and seamen possessed by Mr. Clark Russell."—*Bookseller*.

"The skipper Mostyn and his young wife Phyllis are detailed for us with so much minuteness that we follow their adventures with the closest interest. 'Overdue' is a typical Clark Russell book, breezy and brisk, and full of good passages."—*Morning Leader*.

"Those who are well acquainted with Mr. Clark Russell's methods need fear no disappointment from his latest novel. His inspiration never flags, and he strings his nautical knowledge and experiences on a substantial thread of melodramatic plot. . . . It goes without saying that there is no lack of sensation during the *Dealman's* voyage, and, as of old, Mr. Clark Russell manages to bring the salt smell into his pages. He loves the sea in all her moods."—*Daily Telegraph*.

"The appearance of a new novel from the hand of Mr. Clark Russell means almost as much to reviewers as the first glimpse of English cliffs must mean to sailors returning home after a long voyage, for they know that in his chapters they will find plenty to reward their searching, numerous signs of devotion to the literary art, and the sense of expansiveness that always accompanies this writer's tales of the sea."—*Literary World*.

"Mr. Clark Russell will once more please the host that revel in the sea and in himself with 'Overdue.' . . . An entertaining plot. . . . The diver is a rough diamond whom readers will love."—*Daily Express*.

"Humorous as well as vigorous picturing of several sea-water types."—*Outlook*.

"Quite the next best thing for the jaded Londoner to do who, longing for the sea, cannot get to its salt breezes, is to read Clark Russell, for it has been granted to this gifted writer to bring the smell and the wish of the waves to his readers in a way which is at once real and grand. In 'Overdue' you have Mr. Clark Russell at just about his best, and that is very good indeed. . . . If you are not already familiar with the volume, let me recommend you to become so at once."—*Pelican*.

"Once more Mr. Clark Russell contrives to mingle successfully the romantic with the stirring, keeping throughout well within the limits of the natural and probable. . . . Here, in fact, is a sea yarn which does not insult the intelligence, and holds the attention from first to last."—*Globe*.

"'Breezy' is the word for Mr. Clark Russell always. In this story of the sea we have an excellent specimen of that picturesque story-telling which has made him famous. . . . There

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is always a gusto, a simplicity, and, above all, a wide knowledge about this author which mark him off from a newer school."—*Vanity Fair*.

"The book is one which gives you the impression that the author enjoyed writing it, and it will therefore be read with enjoyment. There are some passages which exhibit as great a skill and as full a sense of the humorous character as Mr. Clark Russell has ever displayed before."—*Morning Post*.

"A stirring sea story, which brings home to the reader the realities of life on a sailing ship."—*Daily News*.

"As a writer of exciting sea stories Mr. Clark Russell has few equals, and his latest romance is as good as anything that has come from his pen for a long time past. . . . Excellent reading. . . . Mr. Russell is always clever in the way he unravels a plot, and in the present case he thoroughly arouses and sustains the interest of his reader. The characters are excellently drawn; notably Dipp, the diver, who furnishes much of the humour which permeates the narrative, and without whom the story would be distinctly the poorer. 'Overdue' is full of good writing, and will well repay reading."—*Birmingham Post*.

"'Overdue,' like all Mr. Clark Russell's books, takes possession of the reader from the outset. For the time of reading, the sea-going life seems the only life worth living, and landsmen's experiences are flat, stale, and unprofitable while the blue water forms an horizon to all one's thoughts. Mr. Clark Russell's descriptions are so vivid that the reader seems to live the daily life on board the *Dealman* as she makes her way to the submerged treasure she is to recover, and he gives an account of a waterspout, in particular, which is singularly picturesque and haunting. Phyllis Mostyn, the heroine, is a delightful creation. . . . A book which is fresh and delightful reading throughout."—*World*.

"Mr. Clark Russell—always as fresh and invigorating as his favourite subject, the sea . . . gives a vigorous picture of life in our mercantile marine, lightened with many deft touches of humour, and coloured with all the excitement attendant on a quest for sunken treasure in the South Pacific. Well 'rigged' with incident and adventure, manned by a charming heroine and a dashing hero, the good ship 'Overdue' is safely bound for the harbour of popularity."—*To-Day*.

"There are many vivid pictures of ocean wonders and of life on shipboard. . . . It is well-seasoned with ocean brine, and is filled with love of the sea and knowledge of sailor-men."—*Scotsman*.

"Mr. Clark Russell has not yet exhausted the fertility of nautical romance; this story is as exciting as even he can make it—and that is saying a good deal. . . . The story . . . is delightful reading, . . . and introduces us to delightful people. The plot is exceptionally well-constructed, the action is lively, and the charm of the sea is over every page."—*Glasgow Herald*.

"There is a fine breezy, open-air manner about Mr. Clark Russell's latest book. It smacks of the sea, and shows all the freshness and vigour of his former work. . . . A promising beginning is followed by plenty of incident. Mr. Russell is never dull, and his skill shows no signs of diminishing. Those who love to read of life at sea should not miss 'Overdue.'"—*Bookman*.

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# OVERDUE

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1908

“ Viens sur la mer, jeune fille,  
Sois sans effroi ;  
Viens sans trésor, sans famille,  
Seule avec moi.  
Mon bateau sur les eaux brille,  
Vois ses mâts, vois  
Ses pavillons et sa quille.  
Ce n'est rien qu'une coquille,  
Mais—j'y suis roi ! ”

ALFRED DE VIGNY.

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## CHAPTER I

### PHYLLIS

IN Curzon Street, Woolsborough, stands a block of buildings containing seven shops. These shops are owned by men who style themselves Universal Providers. The honest term "tradesman" seems disagreeable to them; so they call themselves general merchants. Nevertheless, for cash, they will sell you drugs, wines, fish, ironmongery, meat, game, and other commodities, including coffins. If they kept but one of these seven shops they would not be able to elude the terminology of society. They would be absolutely and helplessly tradesmen, or to sink lower yet, shopkeepers. But seven shops, it seems, may form the pillars or supports of a social platform from which those who occupy it can proclaim themselves general merchants.

One of these general merchants was Mr. Spencer Stanhope. He was a man of hard appearance; hard of face, hard of grip of hand without cordiality, hard in business, hard in his views of life, and he had a dead-black hard eye like the head of a nail. He was the son of a man who had died accountant of a bank, and his mother was the daughter of a clergyman. His claims, therefore, upon gentility, though slender, were yet not

without substance. The death of his parents had cast him upon the world very poor indeed ; so poor that he had been glad to make a beginning of things as an errand-boy, at six shillings a week and his meals, and a mattress in the basement.

There are many instances on record of gentlemen who, having begun life as office-sweepers and errand-boys at six shillings a week and a dish or two of broken victuals, did so well, that they were not only able in after years to employ office-sweepers and errand-boys of their own at even better pay than six shillings a week, but to live in handsome houses, to link their Christian and surnames with a hyphen, to rise to the noble height of a knighthood, and to entertain at dinners and dances people whose ancestors might smile at the claims of the long descent of even a moneylender of the House of Aaron.

There were other physical and moral reasons why Mr. Stanhope should be hard. His boyhood had been hard ; he had worked hard ; life for many years had with him been very hard, and he found marriage hard because he made it hard, as hard men do, hardening their wives until they become harder than hard.

The atmosphere of such a home as Mr. Stanhope was capable of creating was not nicely calculated to enrich any sweetness or to brighten any light which might happen to form the conditions of the offspring of his loins. He had had four children by his wife. The eldest, who because he resembled her family—that is to say, her father—was the mother's favourite, was sent into the Army ; for why should not a general merchant indulge in ambitious wishes ? And even a man who sells meat, fish, and game might justly desire to see his son an officer and a gentleman. Unfortunately, young Stanhope was not only unsuccessful as an officer, but a dead failure as a gentleman. His behaviour led to his withdrawal from the

Army, and within two years of his obtaining a commission the British Forces lost the services of a subaltern in a foot regiment. He was variously heard of afterwards : once in pawn in the Mauritius, from which inconvenient situation he was secretly redeemed by his mother ; once from Port Said, whence he addressed a letter appealing for funds dated in the stokehold of s.s. *Samaritan*. When last heard of he was dead and buried in Sydney, New South Wales, having been stabbed in the ribs in a public-house brawl.

It was commonly believed by the friends and patrons of the Stanhopes that the career and end of the youth hastened the period of Mrs. Stanhope's life. She died shortly after the family received the news of young Stanhope's death ; but whether her heart was broken by this ignoble loss, or whether it had been hardened by her husband into physical incapacity of further pulsation, need not be curiously inquired into in a narrative that concerns the Stanhopes only so far as they relate to the heroine of the tale.

Of the remaining three children two are thus to be accounted for : one, christened Matilda, was born an idiot, and guilelessly descended into the grave, not unseasonably, at the age of fourteen ; the next, Josephine, a bud of rich promise, was bitten, when the glowing petals of the flower were expanding, by that adder, consumption. All of which might have accounted for Mr. Stanhope being a hard man. But he would have been hard had he been an unwedded hermit, grown hoary in a solemn cell, a culler and partaker all his life of herbs and simples, with no liver worth referring to, and a drinker of crystal springs. It was the shape of his head that began it, and the hammering of life completed it.

He lived in a comfortable house in the suburbs of Woolsborough. Attached to his house was a huge

conservatory, which was his pride and diversion. Here might be found a vast variety of bulbs and roots with enormous names; big, green, cucumber-like freaks of nature bloated as by gout, distorted as by rheumatism. Here, too, when the sun struck the heat of a furnace through the glass, were to be witnessed a ceiling of grapes, a rich and gorgeous tapestry of green and purple bunches. Clusters of these grapes, along with nosegays of white and red roses and other enchantments of the garden, Mr. Stanhope was accustomed to send to the best paying customers of his firm with Mr. Spencer Stanhope's compliments.

Now, one morning in September, not very many years ago, Mr. Stanhope sat at breakfast with his only surviving daughter Phyllis. This young lady was about twenty-two years of age. It is difficult to describe a pretty girl. Fielding, the great master, who with curious diligence laboured the portrait of Sophia Western, fails, with all his art, to communicate to the intelligence what is instantly apprehended by the eye in the delicious, the alluring, the fascinating ideal portrait of Tom Jones's sweetheart painted by Hoppner. What idea shall I convey to you if I speak of Phyllis Stanhope's auburn hair, her dark violet eyes, not too large and full of light, her complexion, which could alone find expression in a couplet by the pen of Suckling or Waller, her milk-white teeth and rose-red lips, and small ears tinged in the curve with the faint pink of the sea-shell, her nose slightly Roman, with nostrils capable of enlarging with scorn or to the respiration of passion in caress of arm or kiss of lip?

Enough that Phyllis Stanhope was a very pretty young woman, with a suggestion of plain good sense in the look of her face, in her clear calm gaze in discourse, and in her mode of clothing herself, wherein I think she was fitter to please the taste of men than women, because she did not love colours, but, on the contrary, chose sober



greys and greens and dark blues, of which her figure made the first and best beauty, setting off her simple attire as the daisy crowns with grace the plain little natural hand and stem which point its petals to the sun.

It was a fine morning, and the window lay open. A pleasant breeze twinkled in the trees and poured the aroma of the land into the breakfast-room. The open window framed a charming prospect of garden painted with the surviving colours of the summer, and some birds were still in song, and mingled their flutes and the classic note of oaten reeds with the castenet tinkling of some fountains. A universal provider should in reason sit down to a good breakfast, and Mr. Stanhope's table was by no means a display of coarse plenty. If he could sell American and New Zealand cheese to his customers as genuine Dorset, he did not partake of it. Not that he ate cheese for breakfast, though his views of life were so hard that one could easily believe a considerable portion of American cheese entered into them. The very choicest of the fish in season, the very primest ham that was ever yielded by a carefully fed pig, eggs warm from the nest, and Devonshire cream, and coffee richer in bouquet than the incense of the real Cuban cigar, savoury tongues, carefully selected—marmalade from firms who did not advertise for the sweepings of theatres, beautiful flowers from the garden, real silver and cut glass whose facets shone in rainbows upon the white cloth. Here was what Bulwer Lytton would have called elegant profusion, and it was looked down upon from the wall by an oil-painting that was uncommonly like Phyllis.

In fact, it was the portrait of her mother, and with the cynicism of a Talleyrand you would have instantly seen that it was not from *monsieur votre père* she had received the fascinations of her flesh, and the qualities of spirit proclaimed by her face.

Said Mr. Stanhope, suddenly: "Mrs. Robertson told me yesterday that she met you walking with that man Captain Mostyn last Friday by the river, at Bleatfield."

"Yes, I met her," answered Phyllis, without change of face; "and Captain Mostyn was my companion."

"I thought I had told you to drop his company."

"What was my answer?"

"Yes; but my will must be law whilst you remain under my roof and are dependent upon me. The parish holds me responsible for your maintenance, and though you are over age, yet whilst you choose to remain dependent upon me, the law holds you subject to my wishes."

This he said in his usual hard voice, and with his usual hard face, so that one would say no temper had as yet been excited in him. She sipped a cup of tea, making no answer; but breakfast, though scarcely begun, was ended so far as she was concerned.

"Mostyn is a poor man, and a sailor in the merchant service, and in no sense desirable," continued Mr. Stanhope. "Even if he were in the Royal Navy he would be undesirable. What is the pay of a naval officer? Even when full-fledged he can just clothe himself and pay his wine-bill, and what is his wife going to do in an ill-furnished semi-detached villa at home, with a husband for three years on the American or Australian station, no remittances, two or three babies, nurse and doctor, and duns at the door? What, then, are you going to do with a merchant sailor who gets no pension, who is at the mercy of his employer, whose certificate may be suspended for six months if he breaks his propeller-shaft through being underladen? Hundreds of these men are starving, and you are walking about with one of them."

Phyllis clasped her hands upon her knees and directed her dark gaze at her plate on which reposed untouched a

poached egg and a crisp curl of bacon. Eggs and bacon! The sentiment of this dish, though rapturously exalted by Douglas Jerrold, scarcely keeps time with the sweet tune of dark violet eyes and auburn hair. And yet, if one will but reflect, the object of the whole struggle of life goes but a little way beyond eggs and bacon, even when it reaches apparently so far as a moated castle or a throne. And some such thought as this was possibly in Mr. Stanhope's mind when, masticating slowly between whiles, he proceeded thus—

“It is certainly not my intention to support a community of beggars, and there is no sort of beggars more troublesome than poor relations. You may order a common beggar off, or give him into custody; but you cannot so deal with your poor relations, because society bristles with ridiculous prejudices—the aggregate society, I mean; the individual does not conform to them though he may be loud in his professions—and then again you have to reckon with the overseers of the poor. If you marry you will probably have a family; if your husband is Mostyn he will be a poor man, with nothing but risky professional opportunities to depend upon, without perhaps twenty shillings of capital to fall back upon when he is compelled to be idle. You then look to me to help you. He to whose marriage I strongly objected claims my assistance in the sentimental name of my child and my grandchildren. Have I slaved like a Portland felon year after year, rising winter and summer at six o'clock in the morning, begrudging your mother and myself things which most people would regard as necessaries, but which we rejected as luxuries, to find myself burdened in my old age by that obligation of poverty which it has been my life-long struggle to escape? But you are perfectly well acquainted with my views, and yet I am told that you are still walking with Captain Mostyn. Talking to you is

like writing on sand—like breathing on glass and signing your name on the steam.”

He was her father, and possibly her beauty would not appeal to him as it would to a stranger. Once during his speech she sent a glance that should have moved him: suspense that was but the paleness of the heroine, and resolution that is the spirit of heroism, met in that look, and the charms of her face must have given it a most touching eloquence to any one with a heart that stood by and looked on and listened to what was said. But Mr. Stanhope saw things only from a practical point of view. If he allowed that his daughter was fair, his admission was based on the merits of her beauty as an appeal to a rich man, for he preferred wealth even to titles, and I do not think that a lord on five thousand a year would have been half so acceptable to him as a general merchant on twenty thousand a year.

Her silence did not seem to anger him. No doubt she was used to listen to his views without interruption. He should have noticed, however, that never before had his conversation been able to scare her away from her meals. He would talk and talk, and she would eat on, of course thinking of other things. But seemingly this morning she was not going to make any breakfast at all. In fact, her face was taking an expression that should have given him an idea, remote from the common topics of his harangues. Her fingers began to flutter upon her lap, her mouth worked a little, and then, flushing deeply, she said, with an abruptness that was like the escape of syllables in madness, or the palsyng shout of the epileptic—

“I must tell you that I am married to Captain Mostyn!”

He looked at her, and she looked at him. He was hard, but he was not made of iron or of wood. He

blinked as though a dazzle of lightning had swept across his eyes; he lifted his eyebrows into arches, but it was quite clear that the confession was, say by the length of his nose, beyond him as an instant percipient of it. The fork that was raising a piece of ham to his lips stuck midway, then slowly descended, and his hand let go. His whole face now showed like a biceps, or a collection of muscles in any part of the body where muscular action is visible; all the features hardened, and the suggestion of his countenance then was that of a clenched fist.

“How long have you been married to Captain Mostyn?” he inquired.

“We were married last Monday,” she answered.

“Where?”

“At the registry office in Bloomfield Street.”

“Do registrars oblige married people to wear wedding-rings?” he asked, looking at her left hand, which was now visible, for she had raised it from her lap to her forehead.

“I have my ring in my purse,” she said; and putting her hand in her pocket, she pulled out her purse and extracted a wedding-ring and keeper, which she slipped on to the finger they belonged to, after removing from that finger a ring of emeralds and diamonds.

Mr. Stanhope's face had lost its arches of eyebrow; a whole lifetime of the hardness of his character was knitted in his expression like finely woven steel in a doublet. All that was of the very worst in him never could so have shaped the gaze he fastened upon his daughter had she, instead of being flesh of his flesh, a sweet flower of his growth, a holy symbol insomuch that she typified a union of souls sacramental in the judgment of the devout, had she, I say, instead of being his daughter, been one of his shop-walkers who had neglected a rare opportunity to introduce an expensive “line” to the richest of the firm's patrons.

“I should like to see your certificate of marriage,”

said he, as coldly as if he were asking her to give him another cup of tea.

“It is in my bedroom.”

“Fetch it,” he exclaimed, not as though he spoke to a dog, but peremptorily, nevertheless.

It is sad, it is often distracting even to hard men who have driven hard bargains all their lives to find themselves without the confidence of their children, to find their social condition, not to speak of their feelings, betrayed by an action that is irreparable, by a piece of behaviour that means despotic domination of parental discipline, and power defiant, victorious, exultant amid the wreckage of domestic ambition, happy in the defeat of the cherished hopes of a home. Whether Mr. Stanhope deserved what he got should not be conjectured. Such an inquiry would prove immoral. What we are concerned in is the behaviour of the girl, and, as she leaves the room, we say to ourselves—

“You pretty fool, you should not have done this thing. You should have boldly asked your father for his sanction, given him plenty of time, then have told him plainly what you intended to do. If he had persisted in denying you, the consequences would have been shared between you, one not being more guilty or stupid than the other. This would have been honourable, as your aim was honourable, and honour would have been an angel at the altar of your nuptials though so mean and unadorned as a registry office.”

She returned with the certificate, which she placed on the table within his reach, and remained standing. It was a very familiar official form, cold as a county court summons, dry as a shipping Act, naked as a Quaker's meeting-house. It diffused no scent of the orange blossom, it inspired no fancies of white satin, of bridegroom's gifts, of the rolling melodies of the wedding

march, of solemn parsons who will be smiling blandly presently when the company comes together at her ladyship's house. The sight of a registrar's certificate of marriage is quite enough to make one understand why the sentiment of women should find something abhorrent in unions thus barely decreed—I say barely, for marriage by a registrar seems to me like standing on the very verge of the Elysian fields of matrimony, so that the slightest misadventure must cause a couple to reel into the ditch of divorce which runs close beside them. Whereas to be married properly in a church is to be like a newly built ship, that is not only launched but blessed too, besides being made brave and gay with bunting, whilst music attends it, and the acclamations of spectators. Different indeed from the chill privacy of the Reverend Mr. Registrar's secular proceedings.

Mr. Stanhope inspected the document as though it were an invoice. There was no hitch, no flaw; everything was outrageously specific. Had the Archbishop of Canterbury and all the bishops of the United Kingdom assisted at the marriage of Phyllis Stanhope to Captain Charles Mostyn in St. Paul's Cathedral, London, the pair could not have been more absolutely and hopelessly married than the signed and attested sheet of paper held by Mr. Stanhope proved them to be.

He read the date, the signatures, and silently cursed the name of the man who was the registrar.

“Who is George Begby?” he asked, referring to one of the witnesses of the ceremony.

“A friend of my husband.”

Now, her speaking of the man as her husband drove the truth into him with a sudden pitiless force that was like the stab of a bayonet. He caught his breath, his face turned pale, but no other sign of passion or emotion was visible. He folded the certificate and threw it on the

table, and she picked it up. He rose, and glanced at the picture of his wife, and quitted the room, leaving his breakfast scarcely tasted.

She was shocked and frightened by his coldness and behaviour. Had he deviated into common human nature by making a great outcry, storming and threatening, and the like, she would have felt easier; her conscience would have supported her with the consideration that she had deserved his vehement abuse, his storming tongue, that such a reception of the news was to be expected, and she might have welcomed it as a piece of discipline she well understood she merited. Even whilst she told him she was married she felt she had played a mean part in acting a lie whilst living under his roof and partaking of his bounty, her father as he was; but his few cold questions and his pale face and silent stepping out of the room terrified her, and she looked out of the window and around the walls with an expression of uncertainty as though at a loss.

The question now was, what was to happen? What would her father do? She knew he would be going to business shortly, and she would not leave the room for fear of meeting him on the staircase or in the hall. She stared at the certificate of her marriage, and, remembering her father's glance, her eyes sought her mother's face on the canvas, and she cried a little—just a little—two or three tears. She was a wife, and there was a man in the world dearer to her than any spirit in heaven or any incarnate ghost on earth. The thought of him, the sudden presentment of his face to her mental vision dried her eyes with the sunshine of a smile. She had done it; she ought not to have done it; she would do it over again, for her love for the man was great; it was not the love of a miss, a simpering insipid love to be bestowed upon anything in a waistcoat and silk hat. It was not



the love of a girl who wants to be engaged to a man that other girls may talk and envy her. It was the love of a determined, impassioned woman's heart—the heart of a woman that was now a wife.

The birds were singing, and the fountains were tinkling, and the leaves of the trees were sparkling in little suns as they danced to the music of the wind, when Phyllis heard her father's gig drive up to the hall door. She drew well away from the window, and presently the gig, driven by Mr. Stanhope, who sat square, whilst alongside of him was the jammed figure of his man, sped gleaming down the carriage drive; for in this handsome style did Mr. Stanhope every morning go to business, having for the past few years abandoned the practice of being at work and looking after things at six o'clock in the morning.

Phyllis quitted the breakfast-room and entered the hall; a tall, square hall with a central staircase, the walls embellished by the noble head of a Russian elk, golden eagles, bears' heads, and other trophies of foreign fields and woods. A letter lay upon a table in this hall. Phyllis took it up; it was addressed to Miss Stanhope. She did not need to ask who was the writer; she had lived long enough in the world to recognize her father's hard, round, clear hand—an ideal hand for a weak-eyed compositor. She opened the letter then and there; some girls would have taken such a missive, coming to them at such a time, to their bedrooms, with their heart loud in their ears, there to read secretly, perhaps with the door locked, in anticipation of a swoon, in which case they would like to be found corpses; for what could be more romantic than giving up the ghost under such conditions as these, even though the story must be told in the bald prose of the report of a coroner's inquest?

The first thing she found in this letter was a cheque

for one hundred pounds, payable to the order of Miss Phyllis Stanhope, so that she was not to be Mrs. Mostyn with her father apparently, at least for the present, if at all. The letter consisted of a few words—

“Since without my knowledge you have chosen another protector, I must request you to go to him and to leave my house for ever. I enclose a cheque for £100 (one hundred pounds). You will take all your wearing apparel and other effects belonging to you, and I expect you will have left the house before I return from business.”

This was a brutal letter, but, then, as the doctor said to the patient who was writhing with gout, “You can’t help it, my dear sir.” Mr. Stanhope couldn’t help it, any more than he could help the shape of his head. Certainly, if a man with twenty children may seriously regard himself as over-married, surely a man whose offspring had turned out as Mr. Stanhope’s had—one a blackguard, another an idiot, a third a miserable sufferer, and the fourth a girl who, in playing the game of matrimony, had assured herself against the hazard of the die by loading it—might consider himself entitled to write such a letter and to enclose such a cheque as Phyllis held.

And then, again, we must take into consideration the school in which this general merchant had been brought up. Though his firm was extremely prosperous, and had ruined, even into bankruptcy, several milkmen, green-grocers, butchers, and two undertakers, all whom they had undersold until they had expelled them, they were not superior to certain customs of the trade upon which they knew the law would frown if they were ever brought before it. To give an instance: to a major-general who was suffering from scirrhus of the liver, they sent with their compliments on approval a savoury tongue. The general tasted it, for to what other test than the palate can you subject an edible commodity? It was tasted,

objected to, sent into the kitchen, and finally hove into the dustbin. A bill was addressed to the major-general for one savoury tongue. Several serious explosions of temper followed, and the major-general entreated the firm to summons him before the county court judge for the amount. This they declined to do, as "not being worth their while." Several libels were afterwards published by the major-general against this firm, none of which the general merchants thought proper to take notice of.

What sort of letter, then, would you expect a member of such a firm as this to send to his pretty daughter, his sole-surviving child, who had married clandestinely? She read it by the light of the windows in the hall. She did not faint: on the contrary, she seemed to knit her figure and to hold herself more erect. Wrath and wonder: these were the emotions which besieged her. Wrath that her father should have written such a letter. Wonder that a man so hard, so cold, so heart-killing should be her father.

She went to her bedroom and rang the bell. A housemaid responded.

"I want you and Greatbatch to bring down my trunk, dress-basket, and portmanteau. My handbag is in that closet. Then you will help me to pack up, please; for I am going away at once—away for ever."

Perhaps she had not yet fully realized her situation; certainly she delivered these sentences as coolly as though she was about to start on a holiday for a few weeks to Brighton or Bournemouth.

The housemaid looked astounded. But she had been bred in good families, where all kitchen emotion is rigorously suppressed, where a butler, though of forty years' standing, durst not smile at grouse in the gun-room, and where the suicide of his lordship, or the elopement of her ladyship with the Spanish Ambassador,

merely makes softer yet the hypocritical whisper and keener yet the glance of the menial eye.

There was nothing in Phyllis's demeanour to court sympathy from a housemaid, even had she been ill-trained. After a brief pause of astonishment the young woman left the room. And meanwhile Phyllis flung open her wardrobe and pulled out the drawers of two handsome walnut chests. Indeed her bedroom betrayed the taste of the universal provider; Tottenham Court Road never produced anything choicer in the shape of furniture than the stuff that filled the sleeping chamber of Phyllis.

The housemaid and the parlourmaid arrived, bearing the things that Phyllis had asked for. They had evidently talked the matter over in the trunk-room in the attics, and their gaze had something of the character of a stare full of thirsty, helpless curiosity. The parlourmaid walked out and Phyllis and the housemaid went to work, and whilst they packed up Phyllis said—

“I must tell you, Robey, that I am married.”

“Lor!” ejaculated the housemaid. “But I declare only this minute I was saying the same to Greatbatch.”

“I am going to join my husband, Captain Mostyn, at my father's request,” said Phyllis, with an accent of deep disdain in her enunciation of the word “request,” so that even Robey instantly understood that the girl was being literally turned out of her home.

The human nature in Robey broke out.

“If I 'ad a husband, miss, wherever that man lived, if it was a dog's kennel, there would be my 'ome.”

But as the packing proceeded—Phyllis had plenty of clothes; her husband was poor and she meant to carry to him all she owned—a tear or two would now and then roll down her pretty cheeks. If she had been a servant caught in the act of theft she could not have been more harshly treated. How could she help thinking, seeing

that she was in her bedroom, where she had passed many lonely hours lost in thought, often sad, because her father had made his house piteously dull ; she had no sister, no mother to talk to, to vent the thoughts of her heart to, and until Captain Mostyn came into her life existence with her had been a dull round, so that when morning came she would often wish it were night, and when night came she would often wish it were morning. All which was due to her father, who held himself too good to mingle with tradesmen, and who was reckoned by the squires as holding one of those anomalous social positions which have not sufficient merit to be honoured by their contempt.

So she dropped a tear or two as she packed up her clothes, helped by Robey, who would have given her prospects of immortality in heaven to change places with her. For Robey had met Captain Mostyn walking with Miss Stanhope in the sweet country lane, between two tall hedges, that leads from Ramsfield to Shearman's Manor, and, having dropped a curtsey, she had said to the young man with whom she was walking, and with whom she kept company, that her mistress's lover was the sweetest and boldest-looking young gentleman, the manliest in colour and clothes, she had ever seen or read of ; which caused the young man to say—

“ Ain't there no 'ception, Lizzie ? ”

The gardener was fetched to cord the boxes ; he then went to a livery stable half a mile away and returned with a carriage, and the clock was striking one—which made it five hours before her father would return from business—when Phyllis was driven away.

## CHAPTER II

### PHYLLIS GOES TO LONDON

MR. STANHOPE'S residence stood about four miles distant from the house which was Phyllis's destination. Had she been taking the air in a drive for her diversion she would have found much to engage her attention and even to enchant her. September is a lovely month in England, sumptuous in tint, ruddy in orchard, scarlet in creeper. But the horizon of the hills is green and the sentinel trees still wear their summer livery. The girl's road was hilly—prophetic of the life of the bride—and from one eminence she drank in the rushing sweetness of three visible counties.

But she had something else to think of than the garden scenery of the land through which the carriage was rolling. She pined bitterly over one feature of her dismissal; she deeply lamented that she had not told her father whilst she stood near him at the breakfast-table that her husband was leaving Woolsborough for London next day, that he was expecting to be appointed to the command of a vessel bound on a singular, even a romantic expedition, and that when his appointment had been confirmed he had intended to call his wife to him to London, and settle her there whilst he was away. In which case it was quite likely that Phyllis would have confessed her marriage to her father within a few days.

But would this have helped her honour? Certainly

not; she would merely have been protracting the period of deceit. In short, neither she nor her husband comes out well in this part of the story; but much must be forgiven to love in a world whose life is full of it. The long and short of it was, the young couple found it convenient to hold their tongues as far as Mr. Stanhope was concerned. The girl was not going to break her heart for deceiving her father by marrying a man who was a sailor and a gentleman; and Mostyn, incapable of conceiving that any father, let alone a universal provider, would turn out of doors his only surviving child, a gentle pretty girl, for marrying him, Charles Mostyn, who claimed a Welsh pedigree compared to which Stanhope's was of yesterday—I say that Mostyn, influenced by these reflections, thought nothing could be more proper than that his wife should remain with her father until he could settle her in London.

Phyllis's carriage stopped at last at the gate of a little house called Pagoda Villa. Scarcely had her foot pressed the gravel of the walk to the door when a man rushed out of the house. His head was bare; he was without a coat; his red face and shining brow were indications of recent physical labour; in truth, he had been sawing wood in the back garden to help his brother-in-law, Samuel Matcham, city architect, who meant to build a fowl-house.

What uncommonly good-looking fellow was this? Dibdin, in writing of his brother, Tom Bowling, tells us that his form was of the manliest beauty. The great song writer could not have said less had he written of Charles Mostyn, master mariner. He had been born a beautiful baby; he was lovely as a little boy with long golden curls and dark blue eyes; for his beauty he was the pride of the three schools at which he was educated; he was a sort of prize boy, the show-lad for the head

master to introduce in a casual way to visitors, particularly ladies. He was the delight of his ship, the darling of the crew, the captain's and mates' favourite when he first went to sea, and old Ocean had fallen in love with him and cherished him, and had put the floating grace of her billow into his paces, and her tropical lights into his eyes, and the magic bronze of her sunsets into his cheeks.

Mr. Stanhope objected to this man because he belonged to a poorly paid calling! but there was scarcely a woman in England but would have done as Phyllis had on seeing him, on being talked to by him, and, O angels of light and sweetness! on being made love to by him.

"Why, Phyllis, have you come to stay?" he shouted.

But the expression of her face made it immediately clear that conversation was impossible on the gravel walk, with a red-headed coachman with a wall-eye waiting at the gate for instructions about the luggage.

"Step in," said Mostyn, "and I'll help that chap with the boxes."

Phyllis entered the house, and in the passage was met by a tall, slender lady of about eight and twenty. This was Mostyn's sister, Mrs. Matcham, the wife of Woolsborough's city architect, who at that moment was occupied at the Town Hall in responding to libellous questions put to him by Councillor Meal, a retired pastry-cook.

Mrs. Matcham was so unlike her brother, that only the monthly nurse who attended their mother would have been willing to swear that they had proceeded from one flesh. Her eyes were calm, large, and well shaded with lashes, and her nose would have been shapely but for its undue expansion of nostril. Her lips were thin and, when closed, curved into the clearest possible expression of acidity of spirit. She had lost her baby, and continued childless, and as she regarded Mr. Stanhope as a tradesman,



whilst she held the very highest opinion of her own Welsh descent, she and Phyllis did not exactly hit it off, and had not often met in the past; but of course she was perfectly well aware that Miss Stanhope had secretly married Captain Mostyn.

She kissed the young wife on one cheek, and said, "Are you going away?"

"No," answered Phyllis; "I have come here for a little—not for long. I hope you can receive me for a day or two."

"Oh certainly. But what has happened?"

And thus speaking, Mrs. Matcham led the way to the drawing-room.

"My father has turned me out," said Phyllis.

"Turned you out? Do you mean, driven you away from his home?"

"Yes, exactly that."

"What a heart!—he is mighty complimentary. Really, one would think that Mr. Stanhope, instead of being of the firm of Stanhope, Mildew, and Riley, was Earl Stanhope. It's a little too much," said Mrs. Matcham, with an acid sneer, "that Mr. Stanhope should not consider a Mostyn good enough for his daughter."

"It is for his daughter to think," exclaimed Phyllis, without warmth, but with firmness; "and she has thought and decided, and here she is, and hopes that her presence is no inconvenience to you."

Just then Mostyn and the coachman came bundling in with the baggage, making one job of it. The captain paid the driver, and rolled in to his pretty young wife.

"Her father's actually turned her out! How does he treat his servants if he treats his only daughter so?" cried Mrs. Matcham. "But you want to be alone."

And very stately, acid, and thin, the lady sailed out of the drawing-room.

The sailor seized his wife, and they stood glued in speechless ecstasy in that passion of love which transports the ill-treated in the arms of the beloved, that inflames the adorer caressing the sufferer.

“Now, tell me what has happened,” he said.

Her story was short, but not sweet, nor did he like it the better when she pulled Mr. Stanhope’s cheque out of her pocket and said—

“Here is my dowry. Take it, dear. It is all I shall be able to bring you.”

He made as if to tear it up, recollected himself, and said—

“You could have done without it. But a father’s gift is not a stranger’s, and if it had been half a sovereign you should keep it, if only to buy a veil or a pair of gloves.”

“What time do you leave to-morrow?”

“Twelve, by the express.”

“Did you receive a letter from the office this morning?”

“Yes. I have got the appointment.”

“Why do you want me to live in London to wait for you?” she asked.

“Now, do you think I want anything of the sort?” he replied, tenderly passing a few auburn fibres behind her ear. “It’s needs must when old Nick drives in this world. Shouldn’t I be glad—wouldn’t the voyage be a paradise if you were with me on board? But there is scarcely a shipowner who will allow his captains to take their wives to sea with them. The business of this voyage is curious, and the pay and the commission too good to forfeit on the chance of getting another ship, where I should be met with the same objections to carrying my wife with me.”

“How long did you say you are likely to be away?”

“Four or five months.”

She fastened her small white teeth on her underlip, but held her peace. She had known her fate as a wife when she married a sailor. He was a captain in one of the poorest paid services in the world—I mean the British Merchant Service. If they waited as lovers until he was old enough to retire and maintain her on the interest of the capital he had invested out of earnings, they would certainly languish into the time of decrepitude and decay, the time of the toothless, the bald, and the paralyzed; they would become objects unmeet to make love or think of it; nay, they would scarcely remember that such a passion animated humanity and once informed them with its luxurious sensations and its divine temper; and even by the time when senility should be strong upon them, when their shadows tottered by their side, even then Captain Mostyn might have been able to save nothing. “Something must be left to chance,” was a condition of Lord Nelson’s tactics, and a clear recognition of the limits of human penetration. How many couples durst get married in this world, if ways and means are to be strenuously considered before hands are linked? Something must be left to chance, and what initial chance, at least, was to be this married pair’s my tale will unfold.

“When does the ship sail?” she inquired, after a pause, during which he had watched her with melting fondness.

“Early in October,” he replied. “The sooner out the sooner home. Twelve pounds a month, and one per cent. of the recovery. If we pick up the whole forty thousand pounds the underwriters will hand me a cheque for four hundred pounds irrespective of my pay.”

“That is very good, Charles.”

“Why, yes; I should think it is. It will furnish a

house for us, and do more than that; and perhaps next voyage I shall be able to take you to sea with me."

"What is the name of the people?"

"The Ocean Alliance Insurance Company. They will not go to the expense of steam, and I understand that the *Dealman* is smart on a wind. Staten Island is on this side of the Horn, and I will bring you some humming-birds from it."

At this she smiled as though she was thinking of something else, which rendered his reference to his bringing home a humming-bird remote from her fancies.

"Where do you sail from?" she inquired.

"London."

At this she smiled again, but so faintly that the spirit of the thought that pleased her was in her eyes rather than on her lips.

"And where shall I live," said she, "whilst you are away?"

"Oh, I have made up my mind to put you with Kate Chester. She is a kind good woman, and will look after you. Peckham is not a disagreeable district to live in. You will not go there for a fine-sounding address, but there is as much comfort to be found in Peckham as in Mayfair. Chester will amuse you with his yarns. He is hopelessly crippled; his legs have been bent into angles by rheumatic gout, and it costs him twenty oaths a meal to feed himself. But the honest sailorly heart of the poor devil is always breaking through. His spirits keep him alive. He spins a good yarn. He was thirty years at sea and is now fifty-two; and my cousin—let me see, how old shall Kate be? About three years older than I am, and she will love you like a sister, my honey-bird." Here he kissed her. "And if you are not happier at Peckham than you have been at Stanhope Lodge, smite my timbers, as the old Jacks used to say, if I don't give

you leave to sue me for a divorce, the curtain to rise on the arrival of the ship from Staten Island, and here's a sailor's hand upon it!"

Now followed some tomfoolery which, as these people were married, we need not stand by and watch; for who is interested in the love-making of married people, even though the girl be scarce more than a blushing bride, and the man a handsome rolling sailor? The wedding-ring is an extinguisher to that form of amorous procedure which we hire books from the library to read about and enjoy in proportion as they are ill-written and nasty, and instead of the word *Finis*, the printers should close the text of the novel with the cut of a wedding ring, so that all who read novels may know when it comes to *that*, the interest ceases.

Instead of telling you that he took her to his bedroom, which she would use until he summoned her to London, and that Mr. Matcham, the city architect, arrived at one o'clock to dine with them and his wife off a roast leg of mutton, and to curse the retired pastry-cook who had been baiting him with insolent questions with a view to obtaining a majority when the question of the increase of his salary was put to the vote—instead of dwelling on such parish matters let me here briefly refer to the nature of the undertaking in which Captain Mostyn was to find a command.

About eight months before the date of the opening of this story, a brig-rigged steamer, owned in London and named the *Conqueror*, of a burden of some three thousand five hundred tons, foundered in a bay in Staten Island, in which she sought refuge after collision. Her cargo was general and of inconsiderable value: the real significance of her loss to the underwriters lay in the circumstance of her having forty thousand sovereigns on board, consigned to a port on the western South American seaboard.

The office chiefly, perhaps wholly, concerned was the Ocean Alliance Insurance Company.

When the news of the ship's total loss reached London, the directors of the Ocean Alliance, with two or three gentlemen who were involved in the risk, held several meetings, and finally decided that an effort should be made to recover the money by diving. It was feared that if the gold was left to lie for months without a struggle to lift the cases from the few fathoms of brine which floated over them, then, if others, who need not necessarily be pirates or desperadoes acting in defiance of the law, should raise the money from the ooze, legal difficulties, with their formidable conditions of heavy costs, might result. So, after putting the question of steam or sail to the vote, the insurers decided to charter a small full-rigged sailing-ship called the *Dealman*, of seven hundred and fifty tons, and send her to Staten Island in charge of a highly qualified commander, whose zeal in the interest of his employers must be inspirited by a commission on the value of the recovery. With him would go a professional diver and his men, and also a gentleman representing the Insurance, a sort of ship's constable, who would keep an eye on the insurers' interests, and take care of the gold when he got it.

An advertisement for a captain was inserted in the *Shipping Gazette*. Mostyn had been promised the command of a ship in the Australian trade, and was at Woolsborough, stopping with his sister and brother-in-law, when he received from a friend a copy of the *Gazette*, with the advertisement marked. The terms of the notice excited his curiosity. He went to London, presented himself before the Board of Directors, who were so well pleased with his appearance, the plain good sense of his speech, the high testimonials he produced, that though they told him he would hear from the secretary in due

course, he left the room convinced that he would be accepted for the berth *nem. con.* Which proved a true, if an egotistic monition, for that morning, as he had told Phyllis, he received a letter appointing him to the command of the ship *Dealman*, and requesting his immediate presence in London, "as it is desirable," the secretary said, "that the voyage should be commenced as soon as possible, that the diving operations may be conducted during the summer months of the South Atlantic Ocean."

Mrs. Matcham left the young married couple much alone together that afternoon and evening. They took a drive in the afternoon; in the evening they wandered through lanes still green, along the banks of a river whose placid breast in reaches gleamed with the glory of sun-smitten steel to the brilliant showering of the September moon. They talked of Mr. Stanhope. He would now be alone in the world. He had thrust from his side his only surviving child, or would it not be truer to say that she had left him! He was alone, and he would return from business to a lonely home, and, hard as he was, he would find no balm for conscience, no syrup of sympathy to disguise the bad taste in the mouth of memory in a review of the profits he had made that day, the so-much meat, the so-much poultry, the so-much hardware the firm had been sending out since seven o'clock that morning.

"He will marry again," said Mostyn.

"The woman who accepts his hand will deserve to be his wife," answered Phyllis.

Mostyn was too well-bred to say a word against the man to his daughter. In fact, he was one of those gentlemanly sailors I am charged with inventing by people who obtain their notions of the sea from boatmen, and regard the old skipper swinging at the end of his

long tiller, as his leaking bucket washes betwixt the pier heads, the true and only type of the British merchant officer.

“Do you feel chilly, Phyllis?”

“Not in the least. There is no air moving. The harvest moon is bright. Such a moon as that should make a beautiful picture of the sea night.”

They were close beside the bank of the river, and the sound of the cascading of a weir some little distance up a bend was cool and musical as the league-long plash of summer breakers on the sands of June. Near to them was the shadowy arch of a bridge, with trees beyond cloudily lifting their heads into silver, and the hush of the early autumn night was upon this beautiful rustic scene. The birds slept in boughs, in ivy, under thatches. The black spot of the head of a water-rat would stem through the quicksilver, which mirrored the shadowy bridge in an arch even more shadowy than the phantom crown upon the head of Milton's “Death.”

“There is a seat,” said Captain Mostyn. “It's not too cold for a ten minutes' sit down, is it?”

They seated themselves.

“Are not sailors right,” said Mostyn, gazing about him, “when they hold that a man touches the extreme limits of idiotcy when he sells a farm and goes to sea? This is a picture to recall in some bleak black watch a thousand miles in the deep heart.”

“Are fortunes ever made at sea?” asked Phyllis.

“Few are the fortunes which are not made by the sea in this country. We export and we import, and so we pile it up.”

“I mean, do men who go to sea as sailors ever make their fortunes?”

“What! are ye beginning to repent, Phyllis?”

She answered by pressing her cheek against his, which



she contrived without removing her hat or unshipping his cap.

“Could a captain like you ever make his fortune at sea?” she asked.

“Plenty of captains have made their fortunes at sea,” he replied; “but I don’t know whether they were like me. They couldn’t be more earnest or more willing, anyhow. There’s Jack Willis; he commanded at sea, and now owns some of the finest clippers afloat, and will probably cut up for a hundred thousand. There are more like him, and a very great deal more like me. Well, it’s a true saying that you’re always sure of your watch on deck, but never sure of your watch below. It may be there’ll be a deal of watch on deck with me, but it’ll go hard, Phyllis, if we don’t get our watch below too.”

“How much does a ship cost to buy?” asked Phyllis.

“More than we’ve got, my honey bird. But there’s never any need to build. Do as the Scandinavians do—buy rotten hulks from British owners, who dare not send them to sea for fear of the Board of Trade; victual them with offal, man them with Dagoes and Greeks, whom you can kick, curse, and abuse until you force them to desert and leave their wages behind them; hoist a foreign colour, and load the old sieve down to her wash-strake and over-insure her. This is the owner’s road to knight-hood and mansions in Belgravia. Presently you may start a steamer, and end as managing director of a line, with a seat in the House, and a vote that will provide you with plenty of protection at the hands of the right honourable the President of the Board of Trade.”

“You had better talk Greek to me, Charles,” said the young wife; “but I suppose there is meaning and truth in what you say. I wish I was going with you to-morrow.” She put her hand upon his, and said, “Do

you think if you took me before the directors, and explained that I was your wife, and that the mere idea of being separated from you is heart-breaking, that they would let you take me?"

"A pretty girl in the city of London is like a butterfly in the central silence of a cyclone. You would suppose, to watch strong men, and stout men, and thin men, and little men turn and stare at her, that they had not wives and daughters of their own, that they did not live in the suburbs, or at railway distances, where girls, sweet and otherwise, abound, fashionably dressed. I think I see you asking that whiskered conspiracy for leave to sail with me. No! it would not do. Business is very much business in the street in which that insurance office stands, and in the surrounding district. The mere request might bring me into disfavour. And then, Phyl, the *Dealman's* a small ship; she would not be a comfortable ship for a lady; she might prove leaky, troublesome, wet, in which case your presence on board would add to my anxieties."

She understood that he was not sincere in his reasoning. Had not he told her that, with her on board, his ship would be a paradise? He merely sought to make the best of a situation he abhorred by a little misrepresentation.

"It will be a deeply interesting voyage," she exclaimed. "I wonder if the gold is there!"

"I don't see why it shouldn't be," he answered. "Its coffin is iron, its tomb shallow and still."

"Why do you speak of bringing home a humming-bird from Staten Island?" she asked. "I thought that all about Cape Horn was the most desolate region on the face of the earth, frightfully cold, the seas mountainous, and the short day black with the midnight of snow-clouds."

“That’s the winter picture of those parts,” he answered. “In the summer you get hollow, silent nights full of soft stars and the Southern Cross and the fairy clouds of Magellan, whilst that moon up there stares at you from the north ; you get flowers and verdure rich as hereabouts, but I own that, all through winter, Staten Island is as desolate as an iceberg.”

“What time is it, Charlie ? ”

He held up his watch to the moon.

“Twenty minutes to nine.”

Which was a hint upon which she had no need to speak, for the Matchams supped at half-past nine, and their house was a half-hour’s walk from the bench on which the young married couple were sitting.

Next day, at noon, Captain Mostyn hugged his wife on the platform of the railway station, and shot away to London. She knew she would not be separated from him above a day or two at the most. He only asked time after he had called at the insurance office in the City to drive over to Peckham, there to make the necessary arrangements with his cousin, Kate Chester, for his wife’s reception at her house, and a telegram would bring her forthwith. Nevertheless, the young wife, who was alone, felt strangely low, dull, and depressed as she walked out of the station. He was gone from her side, though but for a day or two, and her being at Woolsborough, in the midst of scenes filled with the associations of her life, made her feel more keenly than she could have felt in a strange place how unutterably lonely she would be made by her marriage if she should lose her husband. Why did she not think of this before she stole secretly to the registry office to marry the man who was to make her a lonely, miserable woman if God took him? But girls are not in the habit of thinking before they marry and very often those who try to think for

them are despised, scorned, morally trampled on, insomuch that a wise parent or guardian will say to himself, "I will not take upon myself the trouble of this woman's perpetual virginity. I will not stand in the way of her marriage, even though I should think her choice highly indiscreet, because, if no further opportunity is offered, and she should not get married, my life must not be made a burden to me by her being placed in the situation to affirm with all the venom of an old maid, that I was the cause of her being unwedded and triumphed over by all her girl friends who had got married since."

Phyllis had no friends, none who would make a home for her, which seems incredible as a statement applicable to the only surviving daughter of a Universal Provider who was in a position to retire next day if he chose on a handsome income. At the same time, it must be said that there are always living a large number of girls who enjoy life in their several ways, who live in comfortable houses, and fare tolerably well, and who have in their wardrobes ball dresses which they may wear, perhaps, two or three times in the course of a year, who, if the destiny of marriage, the hand of death, or the fiend of the Stock Exchange should force them into loneliness, might gaze about them a very long time indeed before they found friends willing to give them a home. We might be quite sure that Phyllis could not have lived with her sister-in-law. The alienation of her father was so abrupt in totality as to naturally sharpen, even into intellectual pain, her perception of her dependence upon her husband as a friend, to say no more, and the fragility of that bond of flesh which yoked them.

But the reader must not be detained by philosophic contemplations of life; enough, then, that, when Phyllis Mostyn returned to her sister-in-law's home, after a short

lonely stroll on the evening of the day that followed her husband's departure for London, Mrs. Matcham, tall, cool, and insipid, put a telegram into her hand, and the summons was for her to come to London next morning. The day after, by the same train that had carried her captain away, Phyllis left Woolsborough. She caught a glimpse of her father's house through the carriage window. Did a sensation as though she had swallowed the wrong way swell her throat? Did a tear slide down her pretty cheek? We cannot control our hearts; no man dare predict what he will think, how he will act in a given situation. The study of human nature is not puzzling and confounding because the human mind is the most complex of all machines, but because people do not themselves know nor can foresee their own volitions, moods, mental states, under varying conditions, and what a man does not know of himself another man cannot know of him.

Most people might have thought that Phyllis would have half choked on catching sight of the home from which she had been expelled, away far off in the trees; instead of which she coloured to a sudden visitation of wrath; she considered herself abominably ill-used; she recalled the terms of Mr. Stanhope's letter, and a sort of hate of her father took possession of her. She made up her mind to think of him as an unfortunate accident of her life, a darksome detail of her being, something against which indeed no provision could have been made by her, but which, as it had happened, was to be regarded by her much as the flower considers the manure which gives life to the soil it springs from.

Captain Mostyn was on the platform in a new silk hat, a fine cloth frock coat, and highly polished boots. He looked uncommonly handsome and brown, and as little like a sailor as most sea-captains when they whip off

their gingerbread tomfoolery of lace and buttons, and dress as a gentleman. But there was some suggestion of old Ocean in his embrace of his wife. The shore-going salutation, though ardent, would have lacked the heartiness, the freedom, the idea of there being nothing in sight all round the horizon which characterized our captain's salutation of the sweet body who called him husband.

They got into a four-wheeler and went away to Peckham, a long drive which provided them with a wide scope of time for talk. The address was 5, Sandhurst Square, and when they arrived, Phyllis found herself abreast of a very comfortable house, with plate-glass windows which sparkled in their blackness, a gleaming brass knocker upon a door which was not going to call its maker Jerry, plenty of white curtains, and green shutters never used, but giving a pleasant old-fashioned air to the face of the house. It was one of a square of houses all alike, and in the middle of the square was a space of grass railed and agreeably shaded.

"I should be quite content to bring up here for the rest of my days," said Mostyn, as they waited on the doorstep.

A good-looking girl, with pink ribbons in her cap, opened the door, and her smile was a welcome of itself. All housemaids who open hall doors should be good-looking. A pretty face is a kindly greeting, and decorates a hall better than a picture or a chair; nay, it will embellish a shabby hall-cloth and gild the dingy walls of a narrow passage. A stout middle-aged woman, with pale hair and a ground-swell of chins running into her throat, came along the passage from the foot of the staircase to greet the captain and his wife, and at the same time a voice as loud as thunder was to be heard shouting through a closed door on the right—

"Why, in the devil's name, am I always locked up in

here like a damned monkey in a show when anything's going on outside? Open the door, I say! Are you there, Kate? Open that door, will you?"

"It's only my husband—pray don't be alarmed," exclaimed the stout lady; and she turned the handle and threw open the door and exposed the figure of a broad-shouldered man with a round whiskerless face, so densely veined about the nose that you could not look at him without thinking of the single red lamp of a train withdrawing into a tunnel. He sat in a merlin chair, and on the door being thrown open, instantly propelled himself with a pair of immense bloated hands halfway across the threshold.

"Why the devil," he roared, "d'ye always shut the door behind you when you leave the room? How in the name of ruin am I to make myself heard if I want anything? I might drop dead of an exploded blood-vessel for all you'd hear me, with you upstairs and the cook rattling her blooming old range just beneath, till it's worse than the stokehold of a tramp. Well, Mostyn; glad to see you. And this is your pretty young wife?"

He rolled a pair of rheumatic eyes upon her, and his face, dyed in places like raw rump steak, took on a grotesque expression of admiration.

"My respects to you, my dear young lady, and heartily hope you'll make yourself at home here."

"You don't even give me a chance of greeting Mrs. Mostyn," said the stout lady, who was Captain Mostyn's cousin Kate Chester; and she took the young wife by the hand, and kissed her, and viewed her with admiring eyes; for joy in being with her husband had furbished up the girl out of all stain of travel. She was radiant with white teeth and beaming eyes, and her auburn hair looked more precious and beautiful than gold as it swept past the ear under the upward curve of her hat.

The luggage was brought in by the cabman and a man. Mrs. Chester conducted Phyllis upstairs, and Captain Mostyn, laying hold of the merlin chair, twisted the skipper round and ran him to the sofa, upon which he seated himself, with the cripple close beside him.



## CHAPTER III

PECKHAM, S.E.

CAPTAIN CHESTER was a retired master-mariner, who lived partly on his wife's dowry, partly on his father's legacy, and partly on money saved, strange to relate, from speculations on the Stock Exchange. He died before this book was written, and, as he plays no material part in the story, I should not enlarge upon him were it not that, owing to his face, figure, and attire, he was perhaps the most extraordinary character the merchant service ever produced.

Mostyn, who knew him well, could not help surveying the warped and helpless man as he sat in his merlin chair. He was about fifty-four years old, and wore his brown hair in a net, over which was drawn a peak-ended silk cap with a tassel that dropped below his ear, and nothing but his Peckham or Rotherhithe face rescued him from the suspicion that he was a piratical fisherman in an opera, from whose troupe he had fled in a fit of madness. His turn-down collars were not particularly clean, and his scarf was a sort of cloth-mosaic, which might to the indiscriminating eye have involved fragmentary representations of St. Peter's at Rome, the Pyramids, a camel, and a whale. In this extraordinary neck-cloth was plunged a large brooch, whose white medallion was a portrait of George IV. He sometimes feigned that the King had given this brooch to his father

for singing "Tom Tough" before his Majesty at the Pavilion at Brighton. His waistcoat was of more colours than Joseph's coat, and seemed to suggest a worn-out carpet in a faded parlour full of flue and dust. Upon this wonderful waistcoat reposed—shall I call it a silver chain? Rather let me term it a silver chain cable. The bight or loop of it was so considerable that the middle links of the semi-circle rested upon his thighs. His fingers leaned from the palms of his hands like a row of seaside lamp-posts after a hurricane; his legs were right-angles, and these angles for conveniency were clothed in trousers which would have reminded an old admiral of the petticoat breeches of the tars of his youth.

"Tea will be served up soon," said this singular retired skipper. "Hand us that jar of tobacco and that tray of pipes, will you? Does your wife object to smoking? I hope she don't. She'll have to put up with it if she stops along with me. Only that I know when ladies are what Jack calls in a delicate way, the smell of tobacco is like onions to a beautiful woman who reckons her breath a part of her charms, as it should be. I can't do without my pipe, Charles. There's no bleeding good in talking. The doctors wanted me to knock off whisky. I says, you may call it rum, you may call it gin, or you may call it brandy, but when, says I, you come to whisky you'll find yourself talking to a man who knows his rights, and who'll fight for them, in spite of his bent legs, which you can't cure."

During this harangue Mostyn had placed pipes and tobacco before the eccentric figure in the pirate cap, who, having with slanting fingers plugged a bowl full, looked about him for a match. Mostyn pulled out a small box and struck a wax vesta.

"No, damn it," cried Chester; "never strike a match for a fellow whose fingers have gone by the board. How

am I to catch hold of that flame without burning myself?"

He was able to strike a match on his own account without scorching his fingers or burning a hole in his small clothes, for it is true that men who suffer as Chester did are very careful not to hurt themselves. If they are occasionally subjected to excruciating agonies the reason must be sought in the tender solicitude of others who help them on with their coats, or pull off their breeches, or haul on their slippers regardless of distorted toes. The tongue that dictates these words has frequently had occasion to vent itself in the ignoble language of the fore-castle, because of tender ministrations termed angelic by outsiders who know not arthritic agony.

"You've managed to pick up a fine young woman for a mate," said Chester, after cock-billing his head to light his pipe. "I guess she'll improve as I see more of her. It's a pity you can't take her to sea with you. And yet I don't know; it's subjecting the sex to more than they deserve to carry 'em to sea."

"The insurance people have declined in a most positive manner," answered Mostyn. "The job will pay me handsomely, and I want it to run out without a hitch, because if we recover the money I shall get reputation. It will be mentioned in the newspapers. I want to get command in steam and in a mail company, and a good name in what they call shipping circles is a good thing."

"Is the day of sailing fixed?" asked Chester, sucking at his pipe with an action of the lips which resembled that of a cow's mouth when chewing the cud.

"Ten days' time."

"Who's your diver?"

"Stephen Dipp. He has worked for the Trinity House. I had a short yarn with him last evening. He

seems very confident, and has the air of a man who means to do his bit no matter what the job."

"Well, you'll be fetching Staten Island in the summer," said Captain Chester. "I've heard tell of flowers blowing in those parts when the sun's rolled south. It's a pity," he repeated, "you can't take your wife along with you——"

He ceased to a sound of footsteps, and the ladies entered the room.

"I can't get up to receive you," said Chester. "You see how bad my legs are. I haven't stood for four years."

"What'll you stand now?" exclaimed Mostyn.

"Ring for a cup of tea," said the cripple. "And if it isn't strong enough there's a bottle of whisky in the sideboard."

Phyllis sat down. She looked as fragrant and sweet as a bunch of lilies-of-the-valley in a glass of water. Mrs. Chester helped the divinity of the young woman's charms of face and person by the contrast of her homely appearance, her chins and swelling bust, and just such rotundity of skirt as fascinates the Dutchman's eye.

Mostyn looked with pardonable delight at his wife, and in spite of his aches, from which he was never free, Chester's expression was that of a man whose heart is moved by beauty, whether in poetry, or in marble, or in the marvellous brush of the great artist, or in the radiant white-breasted structure of the shipbuilder's yard.

"I was just saying to your husband," said the retired captain, "that though it would have been a good thing for your young affections if he could have carried you along with him this voyage, yet, taking it all round, the sea is no place for ladies, particularly such ladies as you."

"I'm in very good health, Captain Chester."

“Why, yes; and I hope you’ll remain so. You certainly look it. But it isn’t that I mean. The ladies best fitted for the sea are those who wear their bonnets perched over their noses, who can smoke short black pipes and chew Irish twist, and who don’t mind sitting in the companion-way with a shawl round their heads peeling onions for hishee-hashee, or mending their husband’s pants whilst the old man loafs at the tiller-head and tells Bill, who’s leaning over the side, that he means next voyage to have his hooker look as smart as an Antwerp lighter.”

“Nonsense, Joseph!” exclaimed Mrs. Chester, with some warmth. “To hear you talk one would suppose that captain’s wives, when they are ladies, never go to sea with their husbands. I can assure you, Phyllis, there is no great lady in the land superior in manners if not in breeding—for we can’t all flow from kings and dukes—to many captain’s wives I have met.”

“Are you speaking of the merchant service, Kate?” inquired Chester, with the irritability in his voice of the tweak of a gouty toe.

“Certainly!”

“Will you name one of those fine ladies?”

“Mrs. Torton.”

“Why,” cried Chester, with an exasperating laugh, “she’s a German!”

“What does that matter?” responded his wife. “Are there no Germans in high life in England?”

“A merchant skipper’s wife may be a lady, I hope,” exclaimed Mostyn.

“And so may a naval chap’s,” grunted Chester.

“The Navy’s a very unfortunate service so far as marriage is concerned,” exclaimed Mrs. Chester. “A midshipman makes nothing of marrying a barmaid. You hear of commanders who do not talk of their wives—

neither the commanders nor the commanders' families. I have heard of an admiral who married the daughter of a pawnbroker, and she's now her ladyship."

"What are we arguing about?" exclaimed Mostyn.

"But all the same," said Chester, as though he thought aloud, without the slightest regard to the feelings of his listeners, "whether a captain's wife be a lady or not, it's bloomed hard upon her, if she's young and good-looking and newly married, to be left alone ashore perhaps two years, whilst the husband's chasing cargoes from port to port all over the world."

Phyllis looked down. She did not relish this talk.

"What's the remedy," asked Mostyn, "if owners won't allow wives to ship with their husbands?"

"What's the remedy?" bawled Chester. "Why, of course, don't get married."

"*You* got married," said his wife.

"Yes, and here I am," answered Chester, looking at his legs.

"You would not surely imply," cried Mrs. Chester, "that your marriage is the cause of your rheumatism?"

"You must sadly feel the loss of your legs, Captain Chester," said Phyllis, perceiving that remarks of this sort must easily lead to a quarrel between a piratically dressed man with angle-irons for legs, and a plump woman whose good nature disposed her sooner to dispute with her husband than to allow him to vex a pretty young wife with his views.

"Yes," answered Captain Chester. "Gord has been a good deal of trouble to me. Gord or the Devil. You can take your choice. I believe in both. Not in Gord as a white man, nor in the Devil as a nigger; but there are two principles of good and evil always fighting hard in this world, and evil gets the better, as you may judge by the little pleasure there is and the amount of suffering—

as you may judge, I say, by looking at my legs. When's tea going to be served?"

How did Phyllis enjoy the prospect of being boxed up, during her husband's absence, with a rheumatic sailor whom gout had filled with profanity and sulky views on problems which lie beyond the grave, and who acted and talked like a curmudgeon; though his heart, deep-seated, might be as true and soft as Tom Bowling's, when you gained it through the intricate corridors of his temper? Certainly Peckham, so far as Phyllis could judge by looking out of window, was not Woolsborough, that is, the environs of Woolsborough. How far off from Sandhurst Square were meadows, groves, and streams like to those she had been brought up amongst? On the other hand, Mr. Stanhope was not here: he was about a hundred miles distant, and would stay there; and this consideration should make Peckham, nay, even Clo' Street, Houndsditch, a very desirable place for a dwelling, to use the language of the house agent, for our young wife.

But she had a scheme in her head, a plot as complex as a detective story; and it was that project and her resolution to carry it out, and her conviction that she would triumph because of aid promised, a compact ratified by a hearty kiss in the bedroom above, that enabled her to view with complacency the curious figure of Captain Chester, to listen, sometimes with silver laughter, sometimes with nun-like gravity, to his deliveries, whilst she sipped her tea, often looking at her husband, and often looked at by him.

It was arranged that the *Dealman* should sail on October 1st. This would give her plenty of time to take in such stores as she needed for the voyage. Her crew were to consist, besides the commander, of Mr. James Mill, mate; Mr. Thomas Swanson, second mate; Matthew Walker, boatswain, and carpenter, cook, steward, twelve

A.B.'s and six O.S. The diver's name was, as we have heard, Stephen Dipp, and with him would go three men, Jackson, Brown, and Riding, to tend the air pump and lines when he was over the side.

This was a strong company for a ship of 750 tons. But it was a voyage in which labour would play a large part, for the profits, if the money was recovered, were considerable, and the directors of the Ocean Alliance Insurance Company were much too prudent and practical to starve their adventure.

On the morning following Phyllis's arrival at Peckham, Captain Mostyn, at his wife's request, took her to the East India Docks to show his ship to her. There are plenty of girls who will exactly describe to you the fashions of the hour, who will tell you the cheapest places to go for what they call "costumes," who can talk with more or less good sense about the University match, Lord's, the Oaks, the new religious novel, and so on. But I have never met a young lady who has been able to look me in the face and utter a syllable about the docks of the Thames, Mersey, Tyne, and other rivers to which much that she eats and drinks all the year round arrives in prodigious quantities, and from which is exported all that helps to make up the riches of this country. In truth, there is nothing very sentimental about a commercial dock. It is not a place in which people can easily make love. The grind and groan of lifting and lowering machinery must badly break in upon the religious musings of the man who proposes to sell the fruits of his holy communing with his heart at six shillings a volume. Phyllis had never visited any sort of docks before this trip to the famous docks situated in the Isle of Dogs. No docks were to be found at the seaside places she had visited. In fact, seaside places with docks are not fashionable haunts even to the shrimp eater, or to the young man in



the hard hat who stands upon the thwart of a boat loaded down to the gunwale with people like himself, and sways her from side to side with consequences useful to society sometimes.

Of all the docks of Great Britain, I love the East India Docks best. I sailed from them year after year as a boy, and haunted them as a man for auld lang syne. Phyllis saw what was not visible to me when I was young, with the life of the rigger in my heels. She beheld huge steamers, which could have shipped as longboats the hulls of the old Blackwall liners. But wherever there was a sailing-ship, with royal-masts aloft pointing their star-like trucks to the heavens, there she saw more beauty than in the mighty metal shape of the steamer rigged with poles and funnels, and deprived by science of every suggestion of the ocean life save that of flotation.

The *Dealman* lay astern of one of these large steamers. She looked very small. But as much as could be seen of her from the wall-edge seemed shapely enough. There was a deck-house forward for the crew, with two berths abaft it for the boatswain and steward. And on the quarter-deck was another deck-house for the use of captain and mates. Phyllis stood a little while side by side with her husband looking at the picture of the ship's decks. What imaginable object in life could be more interesting to her? It was to be her husband's ocean home for some months, to say no more.

"Is she an old ship?" asked the girl.

"She is old-fashioned," he answered.

"What is that barrel yonder?"

"It is called the windlass; it winds in the chain cable, whose links pass through the hawse-pipes, which are holes in the bows. As the barrel is wound the sailors sing a song, and the anchor rises out of the mud."

"Take me on board," said Phyllis.

The gangway was a plank stretched betwixt the wall-edge and the main sheer-pole. It was not a bridge which Phyllis would have adventured single-handed. But her husband grasped and steadied her into the main-rigging, then lightly hove her feet on to the rail, and in a moment they were on deck, she a little pale, for the crossing of that plank had scared her, and she felt that if her husband let go for a second she would shriek and topple over betwixt the wall and the ship's side into the water. The mate, a square man, was bawling down the main-hatchway to some people below. This ship was to sail without cargo, and probably they were trimming ballast in her depths. What was in her was enough apparently; she sat with a comfortable freeboard, for there was stability in the immersion of her strake, and she was not a ship that would shift without ballast, an expression some sailors and all shipbuilders will understand.

The mate, Mr. Mill, erected his shell-back at the hatch, and saluted the captain and his wife. He was a man of nearly fifty years old. His face belonged to a vanished type of sea-farers. You thought of the fruiter that swept on the wings of the wind from the Chops of the Channel to the golden Azores; you thought of the butter-rigged schooner dancing at her cable in the streaming Downs; you thought of the tall, black, finely-straked ship with white skysail masts and royal studding-sails, when you looked at him. He had a bunch of furze-like growth under his chin, which, with his cheek and upper lip, was carefully shaved. He had broken his nose through falling down the fore-scuttle, and the lower half of it sat somewhat athwart-ships. Years of professional experience were entrenched in every wrinkle and discharged volleys of curses at you as you surveyed him.

Captain Mostyn touched his cap and passed on with his wife. He had nothing to say to the mate, and had

no idea of introducing Phyllis to him who, as a representative of the jacket, did not by any means rise to Captain Mostyn's ideal of the British merchant officer. High aloft some riggers were dangling in the shrouds and on the foot ropes. The sun shone, and clouds as sable as London smoke rolled along; the dark water of the dock mirrored the black, white, and grey sides of ships and steamers of all sizes and of three or four nationalities. You saw the simulacrum of a red funnel, top part black, trembling, like the ruddy ore from the foot of a blast-furnace, into the shadow of its hull upon the water. You saw the barge and the lighter, the dueless curses of the dock-owners, and if you had listened you would have heard the language of those who manned them. But even the rhetoric of the enraged bargee must pale to the thoughts that breathe and words that burn of the tramp master. On a steamer, not far off, a skipper in velvet slippers, walking his bridge, was shouting to a foreigner forward—

“Let go that there line!”

The back of the foreigner was turned upon the bridge, and it stood as stone deaf as ignorance of the British tongue could make it.

“Let go that there blooming line!”

And nothing could seem more deaf than the back view of the foreigner.

“Let go that there blooming, boiling, bleeding line, d'yer hear!”

And I am very glad to think that Phyllis did not catch the conversation that followed between the captain of the ship, who rushed off the bridge, the boatswain, and the deaf back, that was animated into the life of a windmill in a gale, by kicks, blows, and abuse.

I have tried hard to extract romance out of the Isle of Dogs, but it is one of those flowers towards which Nature has

dened me the power of acting the bee. There are the scents of the world in its atmosphere, the sweetness of Arabian perfume, the choice aromas of the Indies, and the nostrils find it romantic; otherwise the imagination must go hard to work to discover the real and rooted poetic sentiment of the docks in apparitions of ships from all quarters of the globe, in thought of the human loads they have carried, the white flight of the hammock over the side, the sickness, the mutiny, the unrecorded heroism. You will find the poetry of the docks in the shipping papers and nowhere else, and as the people who read them are probably the most prosaic of the countless who blacken the ways of trade, to all intents and purposes such sentiment of romance as you detect in the Isle of Dogs appeals to none.

Mostyn conducted his wife into the cabin deck-house, a term by which I distinguish the house in which the ship's officers lived from the house which the men occupied. It was an old-fashioned sea-going compartment, that had been repeatedly doctored by the chinsers and mauled by the overhaulers of the Dry Dock. The bulkheads wore a spotty look, as though blistered by weather. The walls were snuff-coloured, with a grey ceiling, and down to port and starboard went six cabins, three of a side. Between these cabins ran a table, with revolving hair-cushioned stools for chairs, and the interior was illuminated by two little windows and a door in the fore-part, and a skylight in the ceiling right over the table.

When they went in, a young fellow was at work cleaning a brass lamp. He sprang erect into the bearing of a soldier, and saluted, just as a soldier would.

"My servant, Prince. Was in the Black Watch—a smart chap, apparently," whispered Mostyn into Phyllis's ear.

At this she looked at the young man so intently that Mostyn might justly have thought Chester was quite right when he held that pretty young girls should not be left at home by their husbands when they went to sea.

The young man called Prince was of a middle height and fair, a clear white skin, white teeth evenly set, and soft blue, intelligent eyes. He was not a Scotchman, though he had served in a North British regiment; on the contrary, he hailed from the most unromantic part in England—Pegwell Bay, a nightmare of mud and low-lying fore-shore, renowned for nothing but shrimp-paste and historical lies associating it with the landing of Julius Cæsar. What brought a soldier to sea? What could have induced a 42nd Highlander to ship as steward on board a small merchantman? The question is of no interest, and need not be answered. There he stood, one of the manliest, best-looking—for his class—best-humoured young fellows you could ever wish to do a kindness to. And Phyllis stared at him until Mostyn, to mark his surprise, exclaimed peremptorily—

“What sort of lunch can you put upon this table?”

“There’s yesterday’s cold fowl, sir, the remains of the tongue, and the claret you sent on board.”

“Well, lay the cloth, and do the best you can for us!” said Mostyn, in the tone of a sea captain who gives orders, and what sort of tone that is no man better knows than the wretch who waits upon him.

“Which is your cabin?” asked Phyllis, waking up.

He took her to the after starboard berth, and opened the door, and exposed a little cupboard or closet lighted by a hole in the deck-house wall, fitted with a piece of plate-glass in a metal hoop, which you could screw up or screw open as you pleased. The bed was a bunk which was only not a coffin because it had not been knocked together for a corpse; and in this sea-couch were a mattress, a

bolster, and a blanket; a washstand, about big enough for a monkey to wash his face in, was screwed near the door.

"This is my bedroom, Phyllis," said Mostyn. "Does Windsor Castle own a more commodious chamber? You will suppose," said he, kissing her, "that a sailor who loves his girl as I love Phyllis would not be very willing to bring her into such accommodation as this and subject her to the discomforts which that rat-hole only dimly hints at."

"Are the rest of the cabins as small as this?" asked Phyllis.

"They are smaller," he replied.

She seemed astonished.

"How can people breathe in such dens? I should like to see them."

He opened the door of the cabin that lay abreast of his. It was furnished as his was.

"Who sleeps here?" asked Phyllis.

"Mr. Montague Benson."

"Who is he?"

"Oh, he goes as representative of the Ocean Alliance Insurance Company. He is to look after the ship, and see that she don't sail away with the gold."

"Yes; I remember your speaking of him. Is he a pleasant man?"

"He's a hairy man. His nostrils are smothered in his moustache. His eyes shine like a couple of lamps set in a hedge. His whiskers spread out in fans like the wake of the moon rising over a still sea."

"I hope he'll make a pleasant companion for you."

"It's for him to hope that of me," answered Mostyn. "D'yer know, Phyllis, that the master of a ship at sea is God A'mighty. The Queen on her throne has less power. Benson goes as a passenger. It is in the power of captains

to make passengers very uncomfortable if they are disagreeable."

"What cabin is this?" said Phyllis, turning the handle.

It was the pantry, and the handsome young steward was in it, seeing what he could collect for provender for lunch.

The girl took so much interest in her husband's little ship that she resolutely inspected the other cabins. The foremost to port belonged to the mate, and the foremost to starboard belonged to the second mate. Aft this was the diver's cabin, next to the captain's. Six compartments in all, and where was she to sleep? But warrant the woman's heart! Let her get a footing aboard and keep it, and where to sleep would be a trouble not to overwhelm her in a vessel commanded by her husband.

It was about half-past twelve, and they sat down to such cheer as Prince could provide.

"I might imagine myself in the middle of the ocean," said Phyllis, who would occasionally dart an interrogative look at the young steward; but it was the glance not of a woman who admires, but of a woman who dumbly conjectures.

"I can't imagine what sort of a sea-boat this hooker will make," exclaimed Mostyn. "She has plenty of beam and a flaring bow, and that's promise enough in a sea-way for a wet jacket forward."

"I have often thought," said Phyllis, "that the most beautiful sight in the world must be the mountain of cream which the blow of a ship's bow sends recoiling as the vessel plunges into the valley, swept by wet squalls and guns of wind which measure her paces to the strains of a hundred orchestras."

"Whose sea-novels have you been reading?" asked her husband, dryly.

"I think I have read every sea-story that was ever written," she answered, smiling.

"What you have just said," he exclaimed, "is exactly in the tall-talkee style of a fellow who never puts to sea in fiction without a girl, and whose style and methods are greatly despised by sailors."

"By sailors who write, do you mean?"

"Well, they must write to deliver their opinions."

"What sort of an opinion on such books as 'The Green Hand,' and 'Tom Cringle,' and 'Moby Dick,' which are as rich with gems of thought and description as the night sky is with suns, would a man like that mate on the quarter-deck be able to form?"

"Never heard of two of the stories you speak of, Phyl. Oh yes, you must eat this piece of breast." He filled her glass with a second bumper of claret. "I shall presently want to leave you alone for about twenty minutes. There's a man owes me ten pounds, and I mean to get the money. He is Captain Harrison, and his ship *Bristol*, which arrived yesterday, lies about ten minutes distant. He will have received his pay, and is now flush, and if I don't tackle him at once it will be all up the spout. It reminds me of the Jew pawnbroker, who said to the midshipman who wanted to pawn his sextant: 'I thuthpect this ith about the last of the *Niobe's* thextants. All the rest are in pledge 'ere. No vunder your engines is always breaking down.' A fine confusion, Phyl, to associate the engines with a sextant, which bear about the same relation to each other as the figurehead to the rudder. But it always comes to Harrison's sextant before he's been long ashore."

"Is he married?"

"No. He'd pawn his wife if he were. He was up in China, and received several dozens by order of the provost-marshal for looting. The most reckless devil; floating



locks, curly beard, and rings in his ears, bell-mouth breeches, and swings in his walk like a buoy in a popple. I was a fool to lend him ten pounds. But then, Phyl, I lent it before I knew you. You've taught me to understand that ten pounds mean two hundred shillings, and that I might call upon two hundred thousand people without being able to collect that sum in the holy names of a leg of mutton and quarter-day."

She looked at him wistfully, and suddenly said—

"I wonder if father misses me."

"I should, if you left me," he answered.

"It is you who are leaving me, Charlie."

"My honey-bird! they will not let me take you. And only think of five or six months of this!" he added, with a flourish that contained the deck-house. "This, and the company of a diver and a hairy city gent, who understands all about Lloyd's requirements, and never read a line by Algernon Charles Swinburne in all his time, nor wonders why it is that flowers should differ in fragrance, and whether their colour is due to light which may be one condition only, or to infinite variety of face-texture possibly interpretable by the microscope." He pulled out his watch. "I'll not keep you waiting long," said he. "Go out on deck and lean over the side and admire the ships. The mate will show you the cook-house and the sailors' quarters if you care to inspect them."

They stepped through the door, and the captain, before he went over the side, said a word or two to the mate, who was still at the hatchway. Mr. Mill looked at Phyllis, and touched his cap. She gazed at him full, smiled sweetly, and bowed gracefully.

Prince, the good-looking young steward, was removing the dishes from the table.

"I want to say a few words to you," Phyllis exclaimed.

He was much surprised, as well he might be. He stood erect, soldier fashion, with a slight flush in his clear skin. What did she mean? What did she want? She looked extremely pretty in her hat and jacket, and if I did not know what was exactly passing in her mind then my respect for the reader would make me honestly afraid to go on.

“Do you know who I am?” she asked, very nervous, but smiling nevertheless.

“You are the captain’s wife, ma’am;” and he saluted her with a military flourish, a seasonable and sympathetic expression of civility combined with discipline.

“Yes,” she said, “and we have only been married a few days. My husband earnestly wishes to take me to sea with him and I am passionately desirous to go, for the mere idea of a separation of even a few months is almost as bad as my husband’s death would be to me. The people who have hired this ship for the voyage will not allow the captain’s wife to sail in her, and the captain is too anxious to retain the post to insist that I should be permitted to accompany him. But I mean to go,” she exclaimed, looking at the young fellow with the resolute eye of a woman who thinks only of the intention she is unfolding, and not of the impression she is creating, the varying movements of her beauty, nor the grace of her attitude, if these things be part of her; “and I am talking to you in the hope that you will help me.”

He was shy and awkward, and looked so, sunk his eyes in modesty upon the deck, at a loss, not as to meaning, but as to its vehicle. After a short pause, he replied—

“I should be sorry, m’am, not to do anything that I could to oblige you.”

“I was sure of that,” she cried. “If you had been a common sailor—I mean one of those people that my husband describes as pier-head jumpers—I couldn’t have

asked you to help me. But you have been a soldier in one of the finest regiments in the world,"—the young fellow looked a little proud at this—"and I am sure I can depend on you to enable me to sail with my husband."

"What can I do, ma'am?"

"First of all I shall want you to receive my luggage, which shall be addressed to Mr. Prince, ship *Dealman*, East India Docks."

"What will it consist of, lady?" he asked, a little anxiously.

"A large trunk and a portmanteau."

"What'll the mate think if he sees luggage of that sort addressed to me coming over the side?"

She instantly appreciated the objection.

"If it were a seaman's chest," he began.

"I'll buy one," she exclaimed, quick as lightning. "A seaman's chest will hold my clothes better than my trunk."

"If a regular sea-going chest came to me," said the steward, "why, of course, no questions would be asked, and I could stow it away in my berth forrard."

"Oh, it is so easy—so very easily done," cried the young wife, with her face lighted up; "and then I shall come on board on the morning the ship sails—my husband says the tide will serve at three o'clock in the afternoon—and I shall follow him here after he has left me at Peckham where we are stopping, and you'll put me into a cabin and let me know when the ship is at sea and it is too late to send me on shore."

"It'll have to be the pantry, ma'am," said Prince. "All the cabins will be occupied by——"

"The pantry will do; any hiding-place will do."

"Do the captain wish this to happen, lady?"

"Oh yes, oh yes; more ardently even than I. He will

thank you again and again, and be sure that I shan't forget you."

"I should be ashamed to oblige you for a reward, ma'am," said Prince. A resolved look entered his face, he clenched his fist, and exclaimed: "I don't care what the consequences are, I'll do all you want, and willingly; and if the captain thinks proper to punish me, that'll be his lookout. I'm on board the ship every day until she sails, and all you've got to do, lady, is to send your gear along in a proper sea-chest, and I'll be on the lookout for you on the morning of the day the vessel sails."

If her tongue was speechless her face was not; no glowing, happy, triumphant smile was ever more eloquent of gratitude. She pulled out her purse and took a five-pound note from it; but he put his hands behind him, and said quietly, but in a tone rigid with obstinacy—

"I can't take money for helping a lady who wants my services."

Scarce had this heroic sentiment escaped him when he sprang to the table and went on removing the dishes.

Phyllis glanced behind her and saw the mate standing in the door. He had been insulted by a ballast trimmer, and looked like a man who had seen the devil.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE "DEALMAN" SAILS

THERE used to be (there is no longer) a mixture of fun and tears in the picture of a sailing-ship hauling out of dock. Emigrants were weeping on the main deck. Drunken seamen were tumbling about in contortions of hornpipe upon the forecastle. The dock master cursed the mud-pilot, and the mud-pilot swore like a fiend at the captain of the tug. It was a brave departure, house flag and ensign flying, little brass bounders twinkling on the poop, Sall on the pier head yelling to Jim to jump overboard and she would pick him up,

The picture demanded a grave and penetrating eye for something more than a slender and superficial interpretation of its deep significance. The world was all before that ship, the measureless world of waters, wild and placid, black with the raven-plume of storm, bright as the portals of heaven in the flash of the tropical day-spring. In that ark, at any noontide, at any midnight, in the deep heart of the fathomless brine, would be contained the passions, the griefs, the hopes, the memories, the yearnings of a city in little; for one heartache would perfectly represent a million heartaches in a populous district, and one tear is as the tears of millions, and love is the same, and hope is the same, and memory the same operator, whether contained in a fabric of eight hundred tons or in a city of five millions of souls.

In the first week of October, at three o'clock in the afternoon, the *Dealman*, commanded by Captain Mostyn, hauled out of dock and was taken in tow by a powerful tug with two funnels abreast. Her going was a comparatively quiet one, her crew had been carefully selected, and there were scarcely more than six amongst them who were drunk. Orders were shouted without passion or excitement of gesture. Two of the directors of the insurance company had come down to see the ship off, and stood on the wall as the little vessel slowly glided through the gates, waving their hands to some people on the quarter-deck. One of those people was Captain Mostyn. A second was Mr. Montague Benson, representing the insurance company. Mostyn had described this man to Phyllis as hairy, and hairy he was, with a long nose and large nostrils sunk deep in a moustache that curled out of his upper lip in a very cataract of hair. His whiskers were spread down his cheeks and were immensely thick and wiry; here and there lay a faint streak of grey, otherwise his hair was as black as a crow, and his shorn chin betwixt the stout besoms of whisker was as blue as an anchor on a sailor's arm. His eyes were overshadowed by heavy black brows, some of the fibres of which curled upwards upon his forehead as though he had been making up for the part of Mephistopheles and had changed his mind. The expression of his eyes was rendered unpleasant by a sort of plausible leer. He looked full of self-sufficiency and affected concession. It was the eye of a man who could say a hard thing and do a mean thing to a subordinate or person depending upon him, and bow, acquiesce, smile with deference and admiration, bend a deferential gaze downward in the presence of a title, of a director, of anything that could add another figure to his income.

He stood beside the captain in brand-new clothes. He wore a monkey-jacket, which looked no more like a

sailor's monkey-jacket than he looked like a gentleman. It was one of those "garments" which you may see in ready-made tailor shops, buttoned over busts on legs, and marked, "our newest style for the seaside: price two guineas without vest." In such garments as these, stock jobbers, drapers' assistants, bank clerks, and the like may be met with in Margate, Ramsgate, and other such places in the summer holidays, walking about in the happy conviction that young ladies mistake them for Naval officers on leave, or owners of the yachts in the harbour.

The third person who formed the group, at which the directors on the wall were flourishing farewells, was the diver, Mr. Stephen Dipp. I shall surprise you by affirming that this man was extremely stout. For years I had been of opinion that the best diver must be the man who most closely resembles the living skeleton. A thick neck, fat chops, and a belly shaped like half an apple, do not suggest a prosperous career down in twelve or fourteen fathoms.

Mr. Dipp presented exactly the appearance I have hinted at: he was heavy, thick-set, overlaid, with a sunk voice of a greasy note which made you think of warm fat strained through paper down his gullet, and putting the bubble of its music into his utterance. Yet Mr. Dipp was one of the most noted divers of his time. He had dived for the Trinity House, for Lloyd's, for Insurance Companies. He had dived to blow up ships, to discover where telegraph cables had parted, to penetrate the cabins of foundered craft for treasure. He was dressed in plain pilot cloth, and his big head was sheltered by a cap with a nautical peak.

"Good-bye, gentlemen, good-bye!" he greasily yelled, flinging a hand like a fillet of veal at the men on the wall. "Well, this is taking things easy!" and now he addressed Mr. Benson. "This is starting like gentlefolks. Why,

upon my word, I can't make out more than two men forrard who seem drunk."

"How would you have us haul out, Mr. Dipp?" said Mr. Benson.

"Why, like this, sir. It's enough to make the blood run thick as cheese, capt'n, to see some of them 'auling out. Particularly steam tramps. Watch 'em waiting for the dock gates to open. Funnel guys adrift, the decks an 'urrah's nest, with fenders, derricks, spare hatches, and the like. Drunken firemen tumbling over the coamings of the hatches, drunken sailors trying to get ashore, meaning to run. Sure to be short of lines on the forecastle head. Perhaps she carries away one of her propeller blades before she goes clear. The row's worse than a menagerie when a fire breaks out in sight of the beasts, and there's the capt'n chipping in, then there's the mate exchanging Cardiff or Newport civilities with the Dock Board official. And either she 'auls out so light that you shall swear she must carry away her tail-shaft in the first fresh blow she comes across, or she's so deep that you're certain her six or twelve months' charter don't mean longer than the first gale of wind she steams into. It's the likes of your orfice makes it possible for the one-boat managing owner to be a bigger rascal than any that stands in Toosaud's Chamber of 'Orrors."

"Insurance means risk," exclaimed Mr. Benson; "but I confess I could wish that the moral standard of our shipping industry was raised."

"It'll never be raised," said Mr. Dipp, firmly, "whilst there are sailors to rob and starve, and shareholders to plunder or pay."

"Yes," said Captain Mostyn, whose duties of command were heaped upon the shoulders of the mud pilot. "The British merchant service has sunk very low. They build splendid ocean mail steamers, but the



profession as a calling couldn't be lower. You seldom meet a gentleman in the merchant service. It was the rule for gentlemen to command and to officer the ship in the days when the East India Company's flag was flying. What were those days? They scarce rose to a thousand tons, and were homely in hull though regal in heights, but they held in their hearts such a race of seamen as surely you shall not find now under the red flag. Yes, the steamers of to-day are magnificent: twelve thousand and sixteen thousand tons, with drawing-rooms for cabins, and the luxuries of the world for the table. But their crews! Go into their stokeholds and talk to the firemen. Go into the forecastle and talk to the men, if they understand English. The outports pour their kennel-dregs, and the crimp directs the channel of the filthy flow, into these glorious examples of the shipbuilding art, and we are proud of the British merchant service in the name of tonnage, but, by God, Mr. Benson, not in the name of sailors."

"It's awful to contemplate what must happen to this country," said Mr. Dipp, "if there should be a Heuropean war which finds our merchant service filled with furriners."

"We should starve," said Mr. Benson.

"The absurd blunder they make," exclaimed Captain Mostyn, "lies in supposing that the merchant service is any longer a fishing-ground for the Royal Navy. Suppose a tramp sailor to be an Englishman: what use could you make of him aboard a man-o'-war? The greatest of the shams of the age is the Royal Naval Reserve. They are only intended to do bluejacket's work, and that they must do badly, because they are seldom drilled. The English merchant sailor is wanted for the food and cargo carrier and for nothing else, and since the shipowners choose to employ foreigners in preference to Englishmen, then, when war breaks out, the foreigners will sneak off with

our cargo boats whether convoyed or not. Night often means blackness, and fog withers the searchlight, and steam is steam even at ten knots, and there is not a foreigner the wide world over, call him captain, mate, or lookout man, who will not help with keenest interest the struggles of our enemy to starve our island into submission."

"But what will our Navy be doing?" exclaimed Mr. Benson.

"Who is to answer that question until you name the nations we are at war with," replied Captain Mostyn. "My own opinion is that the heaviest assaults upon our commercial fleets will be dealt by privately owned ships. Our Navy may lock up the enemy's ships, may keep the Channel and North Sea free, may preserve our fashionable seaside resorts from all possibility of bombardment, but how the admirals will deal with the Alabamas and Shenandoahs of eighteen and twenty knots which will pepper the ocean in the good time coming nothing but a Naval war will explain."

By this time the *Dealman* had been towed clear of the docks, and was now going down the river, sliding in good trim through the wake of yeast which the paddle wheels ahead were viciously grinding out of the water of the Thames. The old river smiles into beauty above bridges; its stately swans fitly image the tender elegance and soothing graces of its scenery; the emerald slope, the white house whose parterres breathe in gushes of sweetness into the air, the duplicated bridge, and the thin yellow streak, with feathering oars flashing into gold, a bending shape amidships, a crimson sunshade in the stern-sheets. Fairy-like are the pictures which you paint upon the surface of your waters above bridges, old Father Thames, and much do I love your moods and humours there, where your waters will pout and sulk in some leaf-shadowed pool

or fishermen's haunt, where the inverted cow crops the visionary growth of the soil, where the patient boy watches his equally patient quill which shall not erect itself or vanish once in two hours.

But below bridges the old Father goes to business; he smokes in chimneys, he startles the welkin with the clash and clangour of the rivet hammer, he hoards his receivings in docks lofty with spars, splendid with flags, rich in acres of warehouses and storage buildings. Here he hugs the rum-cask and the bale of wool; here he stacks his mahogany and heaps his bitter aloe; here his broad back trembles under the weight of strings of barges loaded with produce and crowned by sleeping men; and with mighty steamers slowly making for the docks, jetting water from their sides like pulses whose dull throbs report the dying beats of the heart within; and with agitated penny steamers, whose crowded decks would fill the air with bonnets, hats, and umbrellas if a boiler burst; and with deep-laden sailing-ships in tow, iron sailing-ships which mock the old benignant form with their grinning trumpery of painted ports, so deep laden you may easily swear, spite of the red ensign at the monkey-gaff, that the whole of the crew are foreigners, including the captain; and by this other sign, that the masts are ill-stayed and half the sails still hanging by their gear, though she took her tug off the North Foreland. Certainly the merchant service of to-day does great honour to our Imperial dreams. And our slack notions of territorial expansion old Father Thames will any day illustrate for you in the spectacle of a five-masted sailing-ship, deeply laden and manned, for all the weathers of heaven, by four Englishmen and sixteen foreigners.

This picture of busy Thames was a familiar scene to the eye of Captain Mostyn. But his mood just now did not incline him towards admiration of the many-coloured

tapestry of river life which snaked in arras-like reaches with the curving of the banks. He had talked lightly about the merchant service, and things he took no very sincere interest in, with Mr. Benson and Mr. Dipp; but his thoughts went streaming further and further astern to where the end of them was anchored by the keedge of love, in proportion as the tug towed the *Dealman* farther and farther away from the latitude of Peckham.

He left his companions, and went right aft, where stood nobody but the helmsman who gripped the wheel, and, folding his arms, gazed thoughtfully into the air, beholding nothing but visions of his own conjuration. 'The mud-pilot was in charge; the captain would have leisure to think before the release of the tow-rope in the Channel, whither the vessel would be conducted by another pilot shipped at Gravesend, should heap the whole dead weight, moral and material, of the ship's life of white wing and beating hearts upon his one devoted head.

Of whom could he think but of Phyllis? He had left her that morning at nine o'clock, had held her to his heart in the long embrace of a man who loves deeply, who says farewell to his love on the eve of a voyage from which he may never return; for if it be true that in this world you can make sure of nothing but the uncertain, then it is a truth more applicable to the sea-life than any, and a man may go to his business every morning and never doubt that he will return safely at night and dine with his wife; but no sailor capable of thinnest reflection but inwardly feels he could not put to sea for a day without holding his life in his hand, and that at any moment in any hour of that day God may give him the order to let go.

Now Mostyn had been a little struck by his wife's behaviour, not only that morning, but overnight, and when they had gone to their bedroom. For the overnight

had been the last night they would be together for many a long week, and she was not so pensive, not so tearful, not so thoughtful as he had expected to find her. She had made a good supper, and seldom omitted to laugh when Captain Chester said something as odd as he looked. He did not indeed suppose that his departure would press with much weight upon the spirits of his cousin Kate, and yet he could not but consider that her levity was a little unseasonable, seeing that he might never sup again at that house, indeed might never live to return to it, and that to-morrow morning was to behold the piteous spectacle of two loving hearts torn asunder by stress of bread.

Phyllis had not even shed a tear when they clung together in a final kiss. He tried to please himself by reflecting that she showed a proper spirit in schooling herself; in all probability she had given way after he had driven off, flooded her face with tears, cried out his name again and again, fainted perhaps. But as he stood looking sternwards over the taffrail of his little ship he could not persuade himself that she had exhibited a single token by which he might suspect that her grief was pent up, and that her agony of separation would, the instant he was out of sight, prove as torrential as anything in fiction.

This sort of reverie darkened his humour. He was extremely fond of her. No pen could express how greatly this man loved his wife from the hour of his affecting the charming woman he had met at a garden party. He was sure of himself, of course; but will any man in his senses affirm with any degree of solemnity of conviction that he is sure of his wife?

"How little do we know of what passes in one another's mind!" says Sidney Smith. Husbands and wives know no more than others who are not husbands and wives.

It is quite true that Mrs. Mostyn had defied her father and all his works by marrying Mostyn in a registry office. It was equally true that her love had procured her expulsion, with assurance of a bitter legacy of penury if her husband proved a failure as a sailor. But still, thought Mostyn, a new complexion may have visited her mood. Her thoughts may have turned to her father; she may secretly lament the loss of the fortune which would certainly have been hers; she may ask herself, is Charlie worth the enormous sacrifice I have made for him, not only the surrendering of all my past and the wealth that was in it, but the yoking myself to a man whose company I may enjoy perhaps for two months in three years, who, by professional obligation, must leave me all alone or with a baby, or with two or three babies, to live in beggarly fashion ashore, without any social position worth hinting at, and without means to support it if it were susceptible of hints?

"I wish she had cried," he thought. "Dash it all! even one tear would have been pleasant to remember. There is a great deal of truth in some of the opinions of that cheesy old beggar, Chester. It's not fair"—and here he punched the eye of the breeze with his clenched fist—"to leave a pretty young wife ashore—not fair to her or to her husband." His handsome face put on a scowl as he looked round, sending the gaze of a tragedian out of the corner of his eyes at Mr. Dipp, who was talking to the mate. "Why should the infernal insurers object to my taking Phyl to sea with me? May——"

But I will not proceed. Enough that Mostyn had worked himself up into a passion.

Just then some cries from the tug ahead, coupled with the rush of several figures aboard the ship to the side, disengaged him from his uncomfortable reflections. Off the starboard bow of the tug a steam launch was rushing

in a circle at about ten knots an hour. A man on a barge at some distance ahead was yelling instructions in fainting tones to the one man in the steam-launch. It was easily understood that the launch had plumped into the barge, and that the stoker in control of the engines had leapt on to the barge in the conviction that the launch was going down, leaving his mate alone. This mate clearly knew nothing about the engines, nor what to do with them, and as the yelps grew more and more indistinct in the distance, he had evidently thought that the best course he could shape was to keep his helm hard over and waltz the furnace lifeless. This would have been an admirable stroke of nautical policy on a lake or in any untenanted stretch of water. But the river crowded this one man's tactics with drawbacks; and first of all he thumped into the tug that was towing the *Dealman* with such a recoil that he was flung from the tiller several feet forward. The helm instantly righted itself, and off went the launch for a towering National liner which, with lofty solemnity, was picking her way down the river. However, the man was too swift for his launch, and in a moment was heading her off for the liner's stern, sweeping through it at ten knots, and shouting for help as he went. When he reappeared he was astern of the *Dealman*, and Captain Mostyn yelled to him, "Beach her, beach her!" for what could be more alluring than Thames mud to the dizzy keel of a steam-launch sick with the gyrations through which the irresponsible fiend inside was rushing her? But either the man did not hear, or declined to acquiesce. He preferred to go for a dumb barge like a floating haystack, and a man running along her side with a sweep as long as a signal-mast. He was quite successful in hitting her, and the recoil produced an elaborate somersault. Twice the launch nosed the barge, and then went away, with a heap

of foam under her low counter and a figure in the posture of supplication steering her. The bend of the river clapped her out of sight.

Mr. Dipp strolled up to the skipper.

"A queer job," he said. "But, you see, he couldn't stop her, and didn't know what to do. In that there steam-launch lies, I'm thinking, the 'ole moral of the British Navy."

"What do you mean?" inquired Mostyn.

"The hadmiralty," said Dipp, "keeping obstinately holding on to the traditions of the old sailing days, continues to look upon Naval engineers and their men as ' of little or no importance compared to hadmirals, captains, commanders, lieutenants, and bluejackets. All these people, from the hadmiral down to the newest arrival from H.M.S. *Vivid* or *Britannia*, know no more about the hengines of a steamer than that chap who is yelling in the steam-launch. Now, sir, in war one third of the hengine-room complement are on deck to see that the ship don't take fire, to look to the water-tight doors, and so on. If these men are knocked on the head by the enemy, 'oo's to do their work? Most sartinly nobody out of the hengine-room, for outside the hengine-room nobody knows anything about machinery. Another third must be drawn from the hengine-room, leaving the remainder to work hengines of perhaps twenty thousand horse-power. But suppose the second third on deck are mopped up: then you must bring up the remaining third and leave the hengines to look after themselves, and put the ship in the situation of that there launch, because it is quite certain that all the fine gentlemen they now call hadmirals, officers, and midshipmen, and all the square shouldered blokes they've nicked-named 'andy men, as though they was a tribe of parties imported into the Navy from the Andaman Islands—I say that all this part



of the ship's company don't know the difference between a gauge-glass and a piston-rod, between the hengine yer steer by and the hengine that works a capstan."

"What's the remedy?" inquired Mostyn.

"Why, every man aboard a steam machine of war must be a hengineer, and if beneath the grade of a commissioned officer must 'ave the knowledge of an hengine-room artificer or a leading stoker, so that the 'ole ship's company may be equal to the emergency which the Admiralty take care that only about a fourth shall at present be able to confront. You may keep on terming of them hadmirals, captains, commanders, and blue-jackets; but the time's coming when all these men will be required to possess as perfect a knowledge of the hengine-room and the rest of the machinery as the engineers and their men now have, as perfect a knowledge of their ship of steam as their predecessors had of their ship of sail." And with a fat-headed nod of self-gratulation Mr. Dipp made his way into the cabin.

At sea it is customary to call the last meal supper. Jack preserves his primitive traditions in spite of cross-heads and angle-irons, nor is it a question that threatens the foundations of society whether you label your mutton-chop at one o'clock, luncheon, and your dish of liver and bacon, and rice-pudding at seven o'clock, dinner. These matters may be safely left to the adjustment of Jeames under the superintendence of Mr. Snob. On board the *Dealman* supper this evening was served in the cabin at six. She had been in tow since three o'clock that afternoon, and as her rate of going would not exceed six geographical miles in the hour, she had measured in that time about eighteen miles of what the poets of Queen Anne called the "Silver Thames," before the Victorian output from Whitechapel and districts odoriferous with Polish Jews stank into being.

At six o'clock in September the shades of the prison-house begin to close, and this afternoon the shadow was an early night at six, because a north-east wind with two sharp teeth betwixt its viewless lips had driven, sheep-like, a scattering of dingy cloud, which grew compact and made a sort of corrugated floor for the flight of ugly feathers of yellow scud, and at six o'clock it had been raining for half an hour; the river was not shrouded, but you saw things as through a wet sheet of glass: things swollen and distorted out of the aspect of the airy ship or the sentient steamer which went by sobbing and bleating, whilst the shore resembled the strand of a desert coast, and the world was full of wetness and a cold wind, the tuneless noises of breeze-fingered rigging, the hiccoughing of the swollen scupper.

Thus in tranquil forlornness glided the little ship in the yellow scum of the slapping paddles ahead, betwixt whose boxes the chimneys climbed, breaking off into a line of purple-black smoke, sometimes gory at the mouth as a gashed throat, and sparkling like a fiend-invented firmament with the crimson stars of the furnace.

Mr. Benson, Captain Mostyn, and Mr. Dipp, the diver, sat down to a supper which might easily have been named dinner. A little daylight lingered above, but within this deck-house the gloom had obliged Prince, the steward, to light the lamp. It burnt brightly, and yielded a hospitable show. A white damask table-cloth; knives with ivory handles, and sparkling forks of electro-plate, pink wine-glasses for claret, pony-tumblers for sparkling wines, two handsome brass swing trays within easy hand-reach to receive your drinking-vessel in a sea-way, a cold ham, a brace of cold fowl, a tongue, a dish of potatoes bursting, wool-white, through their jackets; yellow butter, as though the cow still cropped the buttercup; white cheese from Frome. And these, and perhaps one or two

other matters which I cannot recall, formed the supper to which the three gentlemen sat down.

The captain took the head of the table, that is to say, the after end; Mr. Dipp sat on a cushioned revolving stool on his right; Mr. Benson occupied a similar stool on his left. There were three stools more at that table, but they were not occupied that evening, at least not two of them, until the captain and his companions had supped. It will be plain to you that the pilot could not leave the deck, and whilst he kept mostly forward on the fore-castle the mate would be required aft to see that his instructions were instantly carried out, and the second mate, Mr. Swanson, would not eat until the pilot and the mate had supped, for in this voyage the second mate did not sit with the captain at table.

Prince waited; he waited well. He was respectful, swift, and watchful, and his skin and teeth, and his looks in general, showed uncommonly pleasing in that lamplight. He had occasion to go in and out of the pantry several times, and every time he went in he shut the door behind him, and every time he stepped out he was careful to close the door, which was in no sense a noticeable thing. And yet a certain quality of nervousness might have been observed in the young man's general bearing; not in precipitancy of waiting, not in excess of zeal, that curse which makes the rural footman strike the over-loaded coal-scuttle against the corner of the side-board and discharge half its contents on the new Brussels carpet; not that curse of the provincial page who carries a can of boiling water upstairs, with the spout aimed so as to insure, if he do not slip and fall down in his hurry, that he shall smite the banisters with his can in such a way as to deluge the hall with boiling water and steam, amidst the curses of the elderly cook who is on her way to bed.

Prince's nervousness was rather subtle, it was elusive, it was furtive. But the gentlemen paid him no heed, except to give their orders, and they talked as they ate and drank.

"This is what they call on the stage a festive board," exclaimed Mr. Dipp, hewing off one-third of a chicken, and then heaping his plate with ham. "This is not the food I got when I first went a-fishing."

"How long were you at sea?" asked the captain.

"Four year," answered Mr. Dipp, whose voice, when it began to ooze through the food he was masticating, set one thinking of treacle running from a spoon.

"How long have you been diving?" inquired Mr. Benson.

"Two and twenty year come the twentieth of this month. My precious eyes! 'oever laid in these potatoes deserves a pair of wings."

"Four years!" exclaimed Captain Mostyn. "Well, in that time you could get the life by heart."

"I gave it up on account of the grub," said Mr. Dipp. "A man can't do a day's work on worms. In every ship I was in, the pig under the long boat was fed better than us men forward. Of course it was good for the cabin table to fatten the pig. There was no call to fatten us men. We was expected to make another sort of dish than what's sent out of the cook's galley. I tell ye, Captain Mostyn, that to live hard, work hard, fare hard, and, harder still, go to hell after all, is the lot of the British sailor, and I should advise no respectable man to send his son into the merchant service, but let the owners get their crews out of the perlice courts."

"I quite believe," said Mr. Benson, "that a great proportion of the criminals of this country would sooner choose a term of treadmill than a sentence of six or twelve months sailing in a British ship. Well, well, the

shipowners are our very good friends," he added, with a smile which showed only in the wrinkling of the skin about his eyes. He raised his heavy fall of moustache, and drained a glass of sparkling pale ale.

"How long is it agoin' to take us to reach Staten Island?" asked Mr. Dipp.

"I'll let you know when I find out what heels this ship has," replied Mostyn.

"How are we agoin' to amuse ourselves?" continued the diver.

"You'll smoke, you'll read, and you'll sleep, I guess; and there'll be interludes in the shape of meals, and you'll have an opportunity for studying the motions of the flying fish, and often the black curtain of the night will sink upon a set piece in the west, a spectacle of sunset quite as fine, Mr. Dipp, as you'll get in the West End theatres, with a moon to follow, a real moon, look you, shining over real water, with a real ship glimmering like a ghost in the middle of the hazy girdle. So cheap, too, not even sixpence for the gallery!"

"I'll smoke, and I'll sleep, but the devil a bit of reading do I do," said Mr. Dipp. "There's nothing worth readin' but noosepapers, and there's to be no noosepapers aboard us. Talk of beautiful writing! Give me the heditor's remarks in some of the mornin' papers. Whenever I get upon this subject I say to my friends, 'Read them articles, and name me the printed book that's going to match 'em.'"

"I'm not much of a reader myself," said Mr. Benson. "People talk to you about Shakespeare, and Milton, and other writers, but they don't read them. For my part I can't understand a man letting himself down so low as to write poetry. There's only one meaner occupation—that of a man who earns his living by dancing on the stage. What's there in poetry that's not better said in

prose? Take such a line as this, which a young lady once said to me was the most beautiful she'd ever read, which is the only reason I can give for remembering it, for my memory don't hold a scrap of verse: 'The music of the moon sleeps in the plain egg of the nightingale,' and until the young lady explained, I didn't know what the man meant. I've heard of a plain egg, and I hope I know what a nightingale is, but what's the music of the moon? Take any practical man of business, a man capable of looking a fact squarely in the face, and ask him first of all if there's any music in the moon, which is a dead body without an atmosphere; and if there is, how music can sleep in an egg, because, if music is asleep, it's making no noise, and can't be music."

"If yer want poetry you must dive for it," said Mr. Dipp. "Not that I understand what poetry is; but under water things don't seem real, and that's the impression which them gents called poets tries to produce, I believe."

"This conversation is exceedingly interesting," said Captain Mostyn; "but it rains hard, and I must find out if things are real or not on deck."

And, so saying, he entered his cabin for a waterproof coat, and stepped out, leaving Benson and the diver eating.

## CHAPTER V

### PHYLLIS AT SEA

AT half-past seven in the evening, the *Dealman* was off Gravesend, where the services of the river pilot were exchanged for those of the Channel pilot. This man was one of many who were licensed by the Trinity House to pilot ships, and I do not say that the privilege of earning a living by this sort of sailing ought to be restricted to pilots who receive licences; because there are very many 'longshoremen who are better acquainted with the soundings, shoals, and navigation of the British Channel and the Thames estuary than the men empowered by law to convey ships through them. A captain has to pay a licensed man handsomely; a small sum will satisfy a 'longshoreman. And, although the licensed pilot is in full charge of the ship, yet the captain is held as responsible for her safety as though he alone were in command. The sailor has very little to thank the Legislature for.

The river spread in a breast of black grease, and a sort of smoke seemed to rise off it as steam rises after a thunder-squall on a hot summer day; but it had ceased to rain, and you could see, and on one hand was the fire-fly galaxy of Gravesend, and on the other hand was the blackness of the Tilbury shore, and between that sterile gloom and the *Dealman* hovered the white riding lights of ships of divers pattern and burden slumbering at their mooring-buoys or anchors. Overhead it was thick

with the sighing of air that no sailor would call wind, and the water slobbered along the sides and bends with the oily gurgle of melted slush. But when Mr. Gordon, the Channel pilot, came on board, a shout swept from the fore-castle to the tug, the strained hawser lifted until its bight hissed in the darkness between, with the noise of a skate cutting along ice. Yes, the *Dealman* was to tow through the night into the green brine of the Channel, there to spread her wings for dark blue solitudes, and for skies as various in dye as flowers in a garden.

It was a blessing that the rain had ceased. You could see a little way around you, take heed of the danger-light, keep your tow-rope a bee-line, walk the deck in comfort, and enjoy your pipe. There was a gangway betwixt the cabin deck-house and the bulwarks which yielded space for two men shoulder to shoulder. For some time after leaving Gravesend, Mr. Gordon and Captain Mostyn paced this starboard gangway, emerging abaft with the regularity of a pendulum, and wheeling round when abreast of the wheel, which was set far enough aft to enable the helmsman to obtain a clear view of the sails, which would be about as much as he needed to see when the ship had taken up her burden of loneliness; but the fore-castle was blocked out of sight of the wheel by the cabin deck-house, which is one of those blunders of marine architecture our nation should be incapable of. For why blind your steersman? Why not provide him with as wide a command of the sea he steers the ship through as he would get if he stood on the bridge? But the sailing-ship grows fewer and fewer, and this gross obstructive condition of the wheel, fit only as a detail of the life of the foreigner, is rapidly decaying, if indeed it is not already dead. Certainly steam has conferred more blessings than the annihilation of the head-wind and the swift and ceaseless passage of the keel.



Mr. Gordon was a talkative pilot ; he had seen much and suffered much, and held strong opinions on the subject of "Goosie-men" and Deal boatmen. He was now in trouble, and, like most men whose minds are in labour with the load of anxious expectation, he was willing to make a midwife of every ear that would lend itself to his complaint, and in Captain Mostyn he found a companion who was not only intelligent but knew the ropes.

This trouble of Gordon was a little affair so far as this story is concerned, and may be dispatched in a few sentences. He was pilot of a ship in tow of that well-known tug the *Gamcock*. They fell in with a majestical array of armour-clads coming along in a double line. The tug towed the sailing-ship into what Wordsworth calls the "water lane" between, and the leading ship on the port line shifted her helm to clear the vessel in tow, which she contrived with so much niceness and dexterity as to drive her ram into the midship section of the sailing-ship's thin plates, and down she went, carrying fourteen foreigners with her ; but Gordon and four or five others managed to float out of the abysm—for a sinking ship makes a big hole in the water—on a grating or something of that sort, and they were picked up by the boats of H.M.S. *Rammer*. The loss of the ship was nothing ; it was for her owners to rejoice and the underwriters to make moan ; and the drowning of fourteen foreign sailors was less than nothing, for they stood in the way of the British seaman, and it was good of H.M.S. *Rammer* to send them home. The only question of the least possible gravity was, "Who's to blame?"

Thus these two men conversed : the time passed, and Captain Mostyn entered the cabin to lie down on his locker for a brief snooze.

At two o'clock he awoke, and when all his senses had come together into his brains he found himself afflicted

with a violent thirst. This he attributed to the ham he had partaken of at supper. It was that sort of thirst which views cold water askant, and finds no promise of appeasement in it. It was a thirst for champagne, for sparkling moselle, for seltzer-water, for a drink nimble and pungent to tongue and palate, and as there was plenty of soda-water on board, Captain Mostyn made up his mind to drink a bottle or two. He would find a store of bottles in the pantry; that he knew.

He stepped from his berth into the interior of the deck-house. The flame was small in the lamp, the foremost window-blinds were red, and a strong light within might easily puzzle a tramp on the port bow, or a sailing-ship on the starboard bow, and lead to complications, violent language, to a steady inrush of water, to a taking to the boats and all the rest of the tragic programme of a collision at sea.

He stepped across to the pantry to try the handle, and found the door locked. This was perfectly in order, and a thing he should have anticipated. Not likely that the steward would leave his pantry door open for some main-deck skulker to sneak through the blackness and fill his belly and his pockets with cabin victuals, and cabin liquor.

Captain Mostyn went on deck, and his pang of thirst was sharp and sore. The difference between thirst and hunger is noteworthy. The beginning of hunger is pleasure, and it becomes suffering only when it grows into craving. But the beginning of thirst is pain which rapidly passes into anguish, and from start to finish there is no pleasure in it until you drink something cool, foaming, and biting, and then, I think, the pleasure of thirst is a larger pleasure than the pleasure of eating in hunger.

The night was very dark; there was nothing to be seen on either hand. No green glimmer of starboard

lamp, no red shimmer of port lamp like the ghastly motion of the corpse-light in the cemetery; the low shores of Whitstable might be away down there off the starboard bow. The tug was towing bravely; some fore and aft canvas had been hoisted on the ship, and the wind hummed in the curved and steady pinions, pale in the dusky heights.

“Is that you, Mr. Swanson?”

“Yes, sir;” and the second mate came out of the deep dye shed by the main rigging.

“I’m half dead with thirst,” said Captain Mostyn. “Take this bull’s-eye and get the key of the pantry from the steward.”

The second mate unshipped a bull’s-eye lamp which illuminated a clock under the overhanging ledge of the ceiling of the deck-house. The steward, I think I have said, occupied one of two berths abaft the house in which the crew lived. The other berth corresponding to his was the boatswain’s. The captain went up to the pilot, who was standing aft near the wheel, and after a few words about the business and navigation of the ship, he told him that his throat was parched with thirst, and that nothing seemed to promise relief except a bucketful of soda-water.

“I know what that sort of thirst is,” said the pilot. “It’s not the thirst you get after drinking. It’s nerve thirst. You may drink plentifully without helping it, or if you didn’t drink at all it would go when it thought proper.”

“I’m not going to wait for it to go,” said Captain Mostyn. “If I were a drinker, which I am not, it’s a sort of thirst I should be glad to pay for; a red-herring thirst.”

He left the pilot’s side to meet the second mate who, bull’s-eye in hand, was coming along the deck, a dusky

shape, and beside him trudged another dusky shape. The second mate's companion was Prince, attired in a pair of dungaree breeches and a jacket.

"Have you got the key of the pantry?" exclaimed the captain, with the feverish impatience of a man consumed with thirst.

"Yes, sir," answered Prince. "What shall I get you, sir?"

"Oh, damn it, I'll get it myself. There's soda-water in plenty, I hope."

"Yes, sir. I'll fetch some bottles"—and the young fellow, who had not delivered the key, was making his way into the cabin; but the captain huskily yelled, "Give me that key, d'ye hear. I shall find what I want. Go forward, and turn in. Hand me that lamp, Mr. Swanson;" and with a bull's-eye in one hand and the key in the other, Captain Mostyn walked into the cabin.

Prince stood motionless outside on deck.

"Go and turn in," said the second mate. "It's a devilish good picnic for you. Have you no mattress?"

The steward seemed not to hear, but with a swift soldierly motion of his body wheeled on his heels and went forward, talking to himself.

Captain Mostyn put the key into the pantry door, unlocked it, turned the handle, and pushed the door inwards. Something obstructed the door, which scarcely opened far enough to admit of his thrusting through. He was in a hurry of thirst, and damned the obstruction as he hove with his shoulder. Be the obstacle what it would, it had something of elasticity in it, for on pushing harder, the captain jammed himself through, bull's-eye in hand and dry as a cat's tongue in the throat, and what he saw by the light he carried his wits could not immediately grasp and understand.

A mattress was extended upon the floor, the head of

it against the dresser under a scuttle in the ship's side, and the foot of it against the door, so as to prevent it from being opened wide. Upon this mattress stood a young woman; she was without a hat; her hair glanced like gold in the flash of the bull's-eye. She had manifestly sprung out of a sleeping posture into a full vitality and consciousness charged with terror. A blanket lay at her feet. She was clothed in skirt and bodice.

"Good God!" cried Captain Mostyn, reeling as though he had been hit over the head, and wildly sweeping the light of the bull's-eye over his wife's figure and face. He was almost stunned; he could not believe his eyes. He cried, "Good God!" and then stared at her like a madman, incapable of thought or speech beyond that utterance. Why, yesterday morning he had kissed her and said good-bye at Peckham, and at Peckham down to that instant he had most reasonably supposed her to be, and there she was, erect on the mattress, white as marble in the flash of the light, and as sweet in face as any sculptor's dream—his own wife! By Heaven! he was so staggered that he forgot he was thirsty.

"You have found me out too soon," she said.

"Lord, Lord!" cried he. "But what are you doing here? Hush! Benson sleeps next door. Speak softly. I am choking."

He sought and found a bottle of soda-water and a tumbler, and drained it as a sleep-walker might, always staring at his wife, and acting a part of perfect unconsciousness or insensibility to the life.

"And you haven't one kiss for me!" said she, and began to sob.

"A thousand, my honey-bird," he answered, and took her in his arms. "But why have you done this?"

"I could not part with you."

"Montague Benson is on board," he said, whispering.

"The next cabin is his. He represents the Insurance Company, who absolutely refused, as you know, to allow you to sail with me. He may, he doubtless will, insist upon my landing you with the pilot; and there you are, for the second time, left behind, with all the cost and fatigue of a long railway journey to London."

"Charlie," said she, also whispering, "they must throw me overboard if they want me to leave this ship, for I vow to God no commands will make me stir, and if there is a man brutal enough to attempt force, you will be a spectator and will know what to do."

Now, how he might have reasoned had this sweet woman been his wife of say twenty or twenty-five years' standing, I must leave the discreet to conjecture; but the woman he held was his wife of, comparatively speaking, only a few days, and her presence therefore appealed with the full and conquering witchery of the sweetheart to the impassioned lover, and having found her on board the ship, he, with the utmost enthusiasm of his soul and heart, backed by all his strength, desired her to remain.

"It may be managed!" he whispered. "Anybody lay hands upon you! Not if there is an iron belaying pin aboard. Oh! I am so infernally thirsty."

He drank another bottle of soda, and then closed the door and hooked the bull's-eye so as they could see each other.

"I suppose," said he, "that Kate was in this job?"

"Oh yes, and so was Captain Chester. Neither could bear to think we should be separated, being just married."

"I thought you took my saying good-bye rather coolly," said he; and he saw her smiling. "Why, your lack of tears actually fretted me. What'll you do for clothes if Benson don't turn you adrift?"

"Don't mention Mr. Benson's name," said she, in a

voice which indicated that she pouted with contempt; the light was not strong enough to reveal each subtle facial play. "I have all my clothes with me."

He looked round the pantry.

"Where?" he asked.

"In my sea-chest."

"Speak plainly, Phyl."

"I bought a sea-chest big enough to hold all my clothes."

"Did you bring it with you?"

"No, I sent it."

"Addressed to whom?"

She held her tongue.

"Addressed to whom?" he repeated

"Oh, I'll tell you in good time, Charlie," she answered, as though peevish.

"Where did you get that mattress?" said he.

"All in good time; don't wake Mr. Benson up."

"Damn Mr. Benson!" he exclaimed, a little irritable with suspicion, for his idea was that the mate or second mate had helped his wife to stow herself away, and there was a certain indignity in the fancy that annoyed him. Nor did he like to believe that his officers connived against him, though their conspiracy should result in delighting him. "Somebody on board this ship must have helped you, Phyl," said he.

"Oh, Charlie, what can that matter, since I am with you?" and the sweet body threw her arms round his neck, and rubbed his cheek with hers like a purring kitten.

He was profoundly stirred by this heroic behaviour of the girl. He guessed that she had lain in hiding in this pantry since the hour of their departure from dock. The atmosphere was not particularly sweet, with its relish of cheese and raw hams. That rude, second-hand, somewhat mutilated mattress was a coarse couch for her noble

limbs and golden head. He contrasted this sea pantry with her Woolsborough bedroom, and the smell of the shelves with the scent of Woolsborough gardens. From time to time a thin creaking noise might be heard, the feeble lamentation of a bulkhead, the complaining groan of something strained below. The ship was light, and floated buoyant along the gleaming path framed by the froth cascading from the sponsons. But the English Channel was under the bow, and the respiration of the sea was in it, the panting of a breast that had not that night been vexed by the wind, and Phyllis, standing up on her mattress, began to sway a little with the motions of the vessel. But she was so pale in that light that her husband could not know that her pallor was now the whiteness of nausea.

“I believe I shall be obliged to lie down, Charlie,” she said.

He immediately understood what was the matter with her.

“Come to my cabin,” he exclaimed.

He took down the bull’s-eye lamp, opened the door, and conducted her to his berth. If he had been seen, from without, conducting a lady from the pantry to his bedroom, it was all one to him. He required a little time for reflection as regarded Mr. Benson, but as to the mates——

His bunk was ready. It was clothed with sheets, blankets, and quilt, and was equipped with pillow and bolster; he was a little choice in his sea-beds, holding that man a fool who suffered the ocean to make the life harder than it was rendered by owners, weather, and perils. His mattress was thick, stuffed with horse-hair, and fit for a king to rest his uneasy head on.

“Shall I lift you in?” said he.

“Where are you to sleep?” she asked.



Oh, there are plenty of soft planks in the deck," he answered; and without further ado, seeing that she was truly poorly with the motion, he put his arms about her, laid her in the bunk, and after removing her boots, covered her up with the care of a man who restores a treasure to its casket.

He took from his locker a bottle of brandy, and gave her a nip, and kissed her, dwelling with a husband's privilege upon her lips, and though it is hard to smile when you are seasick, the young wife parted her lips into an expression that was as sweet as a smile when he lifted his head from hers and "God blessed" her.

He crossed the cabin to lock the pantry door, put the key in his pocket, and went on deck.

"Mr. Swanson?"

"Sir!" and the second mate, who was standing in the weather gangway, came round to the front of the deck-house.

"Ship this lamp."

Swanson slipped the light into its frame and the white face of the clock gleamed out: three minutes before seven bells of the middle watch, and the darkness and the silence upon the water and the near stoop and dusky illusive frown of the shadow just above the trucks were like a mystic syllabing to the soul, but to no physical functions, of the words "Middle watch." For truly it is that one watch at sea in which the black ooze of a thousand fathoms deep might give up its dead, in which that dark and trembling disc, that dusky eye everlastingly looking up to heaven, might be astir with gaunt and terrific shapes of the drowned in all ages, alive with the ghastly pageantry of fragmentary shipping, the broken galleon, the dismasted slaver, the sternless frame of the East India trader, which in her time had blown in royal pomp under the moon and along the pathways of the sun.

“Did you see me hand a lady to my cabin just now?” said Captain Mostyn.

“No, sir,” answered the second mate, who, as he had not seen the thing referred to, spoke in a note of unmitigated astonishment.

“Well, the lady is my wife. She is Mrs. Mostyn. She has paid me the high compliment of coming to sea with me without my knowledge. Now, Mr. Swanson, did you know that Mrs. Mostyn was on board?”

“Certainly not, sir,” replied the second mate, with honest emphasis.

“Do you think Mr. Mill knew she was aboard?”

“I can’t answer for Mr. Mill, sir. But I should say he didn’t.”

“Naturally it gives me very great pleasure to have my wife with me, but unfortunately the insurers are opposed to her presence, and Mr. Benson, who represents their interests, may do me the indignity of requesting me to send her ashore with the pilot.”

“He’ll never have the heart to, sir.”

“No lady,” continued the captain, “can be supposed to know the sea-life. We have not long been married. It is natural that she should wish to be by my side.”

“Ay, natural in her, and natural in others, sir,” said the second mate, thinking of his girl.

“But it would annoy me,” continued Mostyn, “to believe that you and Mr. Mill had connived at an act supremely innocent in her but of a sort to subject me to misconstruction and to some humiliation.”

“Captain Mostyn, speaking for myself, I know nothing about it,” said the second mate, who added, after a brief pause, “In whose cabin was the lady hiding, sir?”

“I found her in the pantry,” replied Mostyn, starting to the conviction with which that simple question had

instantly penetrated him. "Why, of course, the steward was in and out of his pantry all day, and——"

He took down the bull's-eye and walked forward.

It is not customary with captains of even small ships to go on errands of their own to their forecastles. The case of Captain Mostyn, however, was peculiar, was singular, was extraordinary. He blackened his bull's-eye and walked to the after-part of the crew's deck-house. All about here everything lay in indigo in the dark palm of the inky hand of night. There were no stars against whose trembling sparkles the ratlines could trace their squares. There was no colour of night in the sky to outline more than the paleness of triangular canvas. The ship pitched a little, and the bow-sea, mingling with the froth of the churning paddles ahead, broke away in dim glancings like sheet lightning with the steady hiss of escaping steam. If the figures of men stirred upon the forecastle you could not see them.

The captain struck on the door of the berth occupied by Prince. The door slid in grooves which formed a coaming for both the after-berths, and, when the captain knocked, the steward sung out—

"Who's that?" and ran his door half open.

He had been a soldier, and could continue the practice and sentiment of "sentry go" even at sea.

The captain bared the lens of the lamp and the light was full upon the narrow low-pitched interior.

"Is that Mrs. Mostyn's chest?"

"Yes, sir," answered the man, without an instant's hesitation, which was the more admirable in that the blow of the captain's fist upon the door had awoken him out of a deep sleep and a dream of being one of the Queen's guard at Balmoral.

The captain poured the lamplight upon the lid of the chest, and easily read, in painted letters, "W. Prince," and

stepping close, he likewise read, in his wife's handwriting, on a stout card, nailed to the lid, the words, "Ship *Dealman*, East India Docks, London, E."

"You helped to conceal Mrs. Mostyn?"

The steward, with a military salute, answered—

"Yes, sir."

The captain hung in the wind. Here was candour that was fearless, and here was conduct that merited either cordial thanks or angry reproof, official logging, and any penalties of degradation, diminution of wage, and the like, which the commander of a ship might think proper to inflict.

"I acted against my sense of duty," said the young fellow, respectfully but firmly; "but the lady was not to be denied, and it was not for me, as a man, to stand by and see her cry at the thought of being separated from her husband she'd just been married to, and so I did what she asked, and I told her I'd do it, and then, if I was punished, it must be the captain's lookout."

"I'll not keep you waiting to find out what that lookout is," said the captain, smiling, and he walked aft.

The steward shut his door and lay down again as eight bells were struck.

On several occasions until the morning broke Captain Mostyn visited his wife. She needed his attentions. She was, indeed, grievously seasick. It would be sometimes serviceable, in the interest of the beautiful, the sublime, and the romantic, if we could eliminate from representations of these things the sundry ugly conditions of life which do most unfortunately enter into them and form a part of their being. I will not undertake to speak for Phyllis; but I have no doubt that there are a great many young wives who, had they followed their husbands surreptitiously to sea, would, in the agonies of seasickness, the headache, the faintness, the death-damp, the being

hove up, the swooning sensation of falling, regard themselves as incomparable fools, and give, yea, even their beautiful heads of hair, to be safe on shore in an uncradled bed, with nothing worse to worry them than the wish that their husbands were by their side.

However, before the dawn turned the eastern sky to granite, the girl was sleeping and no longer seasick. It is strange the doctors do not suggest that the best and only remedy for seasickness is sleep, and procure it for the sufferer, at the beginning of the voyage, by artificial means : because no man vomits in his dreams, and the insensibility of slumber ends motion and all that proceeds from it.

The captain stood looking at his sleeping wife, lost in thought. He found her devotion admirable, and her sufferings now, and her hiding in a little close pantry, and her heroic willingness to confront as many months of brine and weather as the ship should remain upon the sea, heightened her behaviour and devotion as a wife to a degree that nothing in all his memory of reading and listening to yarns could parallel. How would it be possible for him to part with her, now she was with him, lying in his sea-bed there, all her clothes aboard, and room enough for her by an easy arrangement of sleeping accommodation? A small bracket-lamp feebly lighted his cabin. By it he looked at her. The ashen stare of the new-born dawn made an eye of the large circular port hole. He swore, with as great an oath as could ever escape the swelling heart of a sailor, that, if Mr. Benson insisted upon putting his wife ashore, he would go too, take his chance of law-suits, leave the ship without a commander, and the gold down in Staten Island to be dived for under another skipper's jurisdiction. This resolve greatly comforted him, for when you are in doubt you will get no ease until you make up your mind, and the sense of this—the need of shaping a course—is so strong

in human nature that people will toss coins for the head or tail of them that one chance or the other—both chimerical and superstitious—shall enable them to decide what to do.

He had slept but little, nor did he feel the need of sleep. It was not that he lacked a bed: a sailor can sleep anywhere or anyhow, amid violent noises or in tomb-like silence, which disturb the nervous ashore. The captain put out the lamp and walked quietly along the cabin on to the deck. The sea-rim eastward was a black line against the grey sifting. But it was a fine dawn; some stars shone, and away on the starboard bow, about two miles off, hung the shadow of the Ramsgate and Broadstairs cliffs, slowly whitening their chalk faces as the morning, beyond the Goodwins, brightened into the flash of sunrise. And then it was a blue, cool October day, with a sea merry with smacks from Ramsgate, Shoreham, and west country ports, frisking with porpoise-like grace on the small, brisk, crisp, and sparkling send of the surge as they hugged the wind with sheets well flattened in, some bound for the North Sea, and all going a-fishing. Far away down south-west, the white light of the east smote into life a grove or wood of funnels and masts—the Downs! where black-eyed Susan came on board, a piece of water more pregnant with historic interest than any in this whole globe full of memorable things. The light of the sun kindled the thin stretch of the Goodwin Sands into a thread of amber fringed with white coral, and into this remorseless beauty of the English Channel bit the gangrene of death. What was it? The black and ribbed hull of an old collier, to be absorbed presently by deadly suction, as the bubble reputation explodes out of being, as it streams for a breath or two down the River of Life. But the Goodwins, with that old brig, was, on that bright morning, a glorious picture for the pencil of a Cooke. As a star

clothes the evening air with beauty, so did that vein of amber and white sand deepen the spiritual significance of the material delights which met the eye by its token of sea loveliness and the sailor's death.

And who shall say that the scene betwixt the Forelands is not one of the most pleading in variety of colour, in tender contrast of white fronts and crowning sweeps of silken verdure, of any round the British coast? Often have I contemplated those shores when the sun has flashed five hundred windows into brilliant beacons, when scores of lamps have made a Milky Way from the east cliff to the west, when sunset, beyond the melancholy plains of Sandwich, fainted to the beam of the full moon, newly risen, bloated, but soaring into silver, and draining its glory into a trembling river of light.

At half-past seven Captain Mostyn was conversing with the pilot. The South Foreland was then well astern on the starboard quarter, all three topsails had been loosed, whilst, as through the night, so now, the tug with swaying funnels and a plunging bow, continued to slap a foaming wake at the *Dealman's* stem, and what with the steadfast drag of the hawser, and what with the diligent pulling of the *Dealman's* clothes, flights of white wings betwixt the masts and six divided sails on square yards, the pilot had a right to hope that his services would cease to be required in about an hour's time. Captain Mostyn had told him all about his wife, and that matter having been discussed and dismissed, the pilot roamed into a discourse concerning the grievances, perils, and hardships of his own calling. He swore that there was scarce a pilot in the United Kingdom who averaged by his earnings more than a pound a week. How could a man dress neatly, clothe his wife, educate his children on twenty shillings a week? Everything so dear too. Beef ninepence, when he remembered prime cuts at sevenpence,

coals always on the rise, house-rent horrible to talk about, and one pound a week, mind you! What would the people ashore think? What did they know of the work of the men who carried them through waters where, perhaps, it was sometimes a little more than six feet under the propeller? A pound a week! and on top of this a bond to the Trinity House for one hundred pounds, to be forfeited along with the fees if anything went wrong. And why shouldn't things go wrong when you are in charge of a British ship whose crew don't know the tongue of the flag, who, if you say "port," starboard; who, if you say "let go," take another turn; who——?

But at this moment he was interrupted by Captain Mostyn abruptly walking away from him and going up to Mr. Benson, who stood on the starboard side of the cabin deck-house, looking, in a sleepy, bloated manner, first up at the sails, then at the coast, then at the sea, as though he thought somebody had called him, and was trying to find out where he was.



## CHAPTER VI

### PHYLLIS STAYS

“Good morning, Mr. Benson,” said Captain Mostyn.

“Good morning, captain,” replied Mr. Benson. “You are running a fine show yonder. What place is that?”

“Dover, sir.”

“Then Folkestone will be beyond. Dungeness should soon be heaving in sight.”

“It is over the bow,” said Captain Mostyn.

The picture of coast was not so far off abeam but that most features of beauties dear to the Englishman’s heart were within eyeshot. You saw the mail steamer coming out of Dover, thickening the blue October air with two dense sooty lines of smoke, which at their extremities feathered upwards, and threw into keenness the light of the towering cliff. Inshore, too, you saw the lazy smack flapping a red mainsail and darting a ray of noontide effulgence from her black wet side as she rolled from the sun. It was Shakespeare’s Cliff, and far away to port hovered, in mirage, the film of another historic stretch of shore, the Calais coast, with the sails of a four-masted vessel, hull down, pictured on that blanched ground like a shadowy pencil-drawing on paper.

It is as hard to perceive the brains of a man through the wig he wears as to observe the operations and motions of the spirit through such whiskers and moustache as Mr. Benson wore. Every portion of the exposed human

face is an index to the feelings of a man who chooses to be ingenuous in countenance. But how can the cheek blush or whiten visibly under such whiskers as clothed Mr. Benson's face? How can the brow express the mood by contraction or by rippling into wrinkles, when the best part of it is concealed by Mephistophelian eyebrows? How are the lips, ambushed by a cataractal moustache, to avow by the thousand varying movements of the mouth the multitudinous humours of the human heart? If you looked hard at Mr. Benson, even with a critically interpreting eye, you got but little more than hair. His eyes indeed reposed in their sockets; but the wizardry of the human eye in its power to spiritualize the lineaments was neutralized in Mr. Benson by hair. He stared at the passing scene of cliffs. Captain Mostyn watched him, considering how best to approach him on the subject of his wife.

Just then Mr. Dipp, the diver, came, with a lurch, to the cabin door. He was clothed in pilot cloth, and rubbed his hands as he looked at the land. After "Good morning" had been exchanged, Mr. Dipp said—

"Capt'n, 'ave you got such a thing as a drop of milk on board?"

"Swiss milk," answered Mostyn.

"Oh, damn it! no—excuse me," exclaimed the diver. "I would rather spoon down a gallon of treacle than a thimble of that liquid candy. Good for babies, I dare say, if it ain't off to keep 'em laughing with wind. I find," he added, in a greasy, confidential note, "that a glass of rum and milk taken afore breakfast is the same as adding twenty year to a man's lifetime. It settles the stomach, and prepares the road for any horrors it may be guilty of at table."

"There is no milk aboard us except Swiss milk," said Captain Mostyn.

"Then I must do with the rum," said Mr. Dipp. "Where shall I find a drop?"

"If the steward is in the cabin he will give you what you want," answered Mostyn.

The stout diver lunged over the coaming, and vanished.

"Mr. Benson," said Mostyn, in a voice that betrayed something of nerve, something of anxiety, "you know, of course, I am a married man."

"Yes, and newly married," said Benson, fastening his eyes on the skipper.

"I tried hard, as I think I told you," continued the captain, "to persuade the directors to allow me to carry my wife to sea with me this voyage. They declined"—Benson nodded—"on the grounds, as I apprehend," continued Mostyn, "that I should not be able to so wholly devote myself to my duties if my wife were aboard, as I should if alone."

"Yes," said Benson, gravely.

"Shall you be greatly astonished, Mr. Benson," said Captain Mostyn, gazing now with a cool, handsome face at his companion, "if I tell you that Mrs. Mostyn is on board this ship?"

No doubt Mr. Benson looked surprised. Had he been clean shaven he might have hung out a dozen signals of astonishment. Nothing seemed moved but his eyebrows, which arched a shade or two, and after a pause he exclaimed—

"I don't think the directors will approve of her remaining in the ship."

"If that is the case," said Mostyn, "all I need say is, if she goes, I accompany her."

Again nothing seemed moved but Mr. Benson's eyebrows. His eyes took on an expression of reflection, and he searched the brilliant scene of coast as though for a thought.

“Why did you bring her on board in defiance of the directors’ express objection, well known to you, Captain Mostyn?”

“I did not bring her on board, sir.”

“What am I to understand?”

“That her devotion as a wife was superior to her recognition of my professional interests, and she followed me.”

“You found her on board, then?”

“Yes, sir; and I shall leave the ship if she goes.”

“You will land yourself in difficulties if you do that,” said Mr. Benson. “Written contracts are not to be violated at will. Where’s the lady?”

“In my cabin,” answered Mostyn.

Mr. Montague Benson was a practical man, if he was nothing else. Though he sneered at poetry and romantic views of life, he at least understood the doctrine of averages, and was as neat a dab at a balance-sheet as the latest poet at turning a couplet. He could look Captain Mostyn full in the face and behold in him a man of strong resolution. Now, Mostyn had threatened to leave the ship if his wife was sent ashore. That he would execute his threat in cool and sailorly contempt of all legal and even moral obligations was as sure as that on the whole he was the handsomest man Benson had ever met. More, he was a gentleman, and Benson had tasted enough of the merchant service to thoroughly understand that this flavour is a sparse dressing in the salad of the mercantile navy. If Benson was not a gentleman—and he certainly was not—he knew what a gentleman was, as even a strapper may tell a flower by its aroma, and he enjoyed the society of gentlemen, not only because the article was rare in the City, and the circles in which Benson described his orbit, but because, as he used to say, gentlefolks always put him at his ease. If Captain

Mostyn left the ship with his wife, the vessel must be detained whilst the shore was communicated with, and telegrams of and for instructions sent to and by the insurance directors.

Benson thought to himself, we don't want to be delayed; we have towed right through the night; in a short time the tug will have left us, and we shall be sailing down Channel for Staten Island. Mostyn may be replaced by some one who might make himself very disagreeable all round, which would end in Mr. Dipp requesting to be transhipped, the crew revolting, and the whole voyage proving a costly joke. This, thought Benson, undoubtedly is the right man. What sort of a woman is his wife?

All these reflections passed, with the velocity of thought, through Mr. Benson's brains, and possibly the pause before he spoke scarcely occupied five seconds.

"Is the lady likely to be at the breakfast-table?" Benson asked.

Mostyn instantly reflected: "If he sees her he is certain to admire her, and that will be going the whole road for me."

"I cannot say, sir. She has been suffering from sickness in the night; but she was better, and I found her asleep when I last visited her berth."

"I shall be happy to make her acquaintance," said Mr. Benson, with the adroit ambiguity of a practical mind baffled and at a loss. And then he moved about, first here and then there, falling now into an attentive contemplation of the land, and now into thoughtful observation of the blue streak of French coast which, by the hand of mirage, was still hung up in the delicate pale ether over the horizon; but any one could see that he was thinking hard, and that his thoughts neither concerned the port beam nor the starboard beam.

When Benson walked away Captain Mostyn entered the cabin, where he found Mr. Dipp sitting at the table revolving an empty tumbler. Prince was preparing the table for breakfast. The sunshine streamed brightly upon the little skylight, and the curtseying and slight rollings of the vessel discharged ripples of light over the bulk-heads, and the interior was as frolicsome with this play of reverberated splendour as a garden full of flowers nodding and swinging in a summer breeze.

"I don't think," said Mr. Dipp, "that I ever swaller'd a mellow sup of rum. Who shipped it?"

Mostyn named the chandler.

"Him!" shouted Mr. Dipp. "What's caused *him* to turn aside into the paths of godliness? Why," he went on, looking stealthily at the steward, "he was brought up twelve months ago, and charged with supplying condemned Admiralty stores to a British owner."

"And what made the British owner step off *his* road into the byway of honesty," said Captain Mostyn. "I should have thought that condemned Admiralty stores were entirely to the taste of the shipowner."

"To change the subject," said Mr. Dipp, observing that the captain was passing on, "may I ask if there's a lady aboard?"

"My wife's aboard," answered Mostyn, looking at Prince.

"You astonish me!" exclaimed Mr. Dipp. "I thought that we was to be all men. I'm but a rough party for the ladies." He pulled at his shirt collars as though to improve the decoration of his neck. "There'll be no dressing, I hope—meal times, I mean. Us divers, you see, capt'n——"

"I don't know what you want to say, Mr. Dipp," said Mostyn, "but I'm quite sure if the presence of my

wife is not unwelcome to you, your presence will be very welcome to her."

Mr. Dipp swayed in his chair in a bow that was like looking at the motion of an upright figure under water, and Mostyn passed into his wife's berth.

It is the privilege of few men to suggest the flower. The cauliflower perhaps; but nothing outside the kitchen garden. Shelley was but one of a few. Three persons who knew him spoke of him as a flower. One said, "he looked like an elegant and slender flower, whose head drooped by being surcharged with rain." Another said, "his form, graceful and slender, drooped like a flower in the breeze," and a third, "that the poet's figure bowed to the earth like a plant deprived of its vital air, whilst his face suggested a flower that has been kept from the light of day." One could not speak thus of many of one's male friends. But to how many fair girls may this charming fancy of the flower be applied? It was an image instantly present to the thoughts of Mostyn when he looked at Phyllis resting in his bunk. She had been sleeping; she was now awake, and her gentle languid eyes were immediately bent upon his, with a motion of the mouth whose meaning he would have been a fool to miss.

Seasickness does not improve beauty: it tinges the cheeks with yellow, the lips grow ashen, and the expression of piteous and helpless suffering works with a cunning which is almost death's own in its subtle power of transformation in the whole face. But, though Phyllis had been bad, she had not been very bad. She had not been nearly so bad as some Frenchmen I have travelled with. She had slept, and now she was awake; let her tell her own story.

"How are you feeling?" said her husband, lifting his head from hers.

"A little dizzy, and about forty years of age," she answered. "But the worst of the sensations are gone. I don't seem to mind this rolling. I think I should like a cup of tea."

He put out his head and ordered Prince to get a cup of tea for Mrs. Mostyn at once.

"I must look a sight," she continued.

"No," said he, "I see no change in the colour of your hair and eyes, no change in your mouth, teeth and all the rest I love. Benson knows that you are on board."

"What does he mean to do?" she cried, starting up on to one elbow.

"He desires the pleasure of making your acquaintance."

"Are we far out at sea and safe from him?" she inquired, exhibiting no very marked symptoms of dizziness, or even of advanced age.

"Dungeness is over the bow," he replied, "and the pilot is still with us. Mr. Benson exactly knows my sentiments. If he demands that you should be sent ashore then I accompany you bag and baggage."

"Oh! but he'd not do that," she cried, sitting erect; there was no upper bunk for her to knock her pretty head against. "What is the ship to do without a commander, and how can I be in the way? I should be content to eat the food of the sailors, bad as I know it is. They must throw me into the sea to get me out of this ship, Charlie;" and emotion was so strong in her that I believe it exorcised the last of the seven fiends of nausea, which had possessed her bright body since the ship began to reel in the tug's white wake; for the light of passion was in her eye, and the flush of blood, urged by a tempestuous heart, was in her cheek.

"I don't think, Phyl," said Mostyn, "when our friend sees you he will continue to object to your going this



voyage with me. Do you feel equal to getting up and dressing for breakfast?"

"I'll do anything to remain with you," she replied, throwing her feet over the bunk. "Anything, at least, but eat. I am sure," she said, with an arch and engaging simplicity which yet could not expand into a smile, "I could not eat even to oblige Benson."

He laughed outright, and then opened the door to receive a cup of tea from Prince.

"The milk is Swiss," said he, "for we carry no cow, even for Dipp, who sprang upon me this morning the announcement that milk and rum increase his years. Will you be able to manage alone?"

"Let me first see if I can stand."

She got out of the bunk but held on to its sideboard. She presently let go, and found out that she could stand.

"Is there everything here that you want?" said he, peering about. "That's the washstand. You'll find water in that can. I've got nothing but brown Windsor, I'm afraid. You must use that pannikin for a tooth glass. You'll find a new sponge in that bag." He lifted the lid of a locker, and said, "Here are hair-brushes. Happy girl, not to want my razor! Drink your tea, and I'll take away your cup."

This was done, and he went out, telling his wife not to leave her berth until he looked in on her again. A short flight of steps conducted you to the top of the cabin deck-house. On this roof stood Mr. Benson and the Diver in conversation. What they talked about Captain Mostyn could not hear and certainly was not eager to know. He had made up his mind, and was at peace with conjecture. He walked right aft to survey in the water something which had been a secret and silent condition of the ship's life ever since she had come abreast of Deal Castle,

Whilst passing through the Downs in the darkness of the night, one of the several scores of hungry men who haunt the narrow waters in search of bread had marked the *Dealman* towing steadfastly through the Gulls, and then, to the drag of her big lug, the galley-punt swept transversely to the ship's quarter, where her men "hooked on," as it is called; that is, they caught a mizzen chain-plate by a boarding-hook attached to a line which they paid out and then belayed. And this silent, subtle ark, with three patient figures sitting aft, streamed along in the wake of the *Dealman* with no grander expectation in the hearts of her crew than the hope to land the ship's pilot, and so earn a few bitterly needed "shullens."

The Deal galley-punt has immemorially proved the most famous of 'longshore fabrics, not excepting the life-boats. She may be seen slowly flapping in to the shelving beach of Deal when its pebbles blacken, stirless, to the soft summer lipping of the water. She may be seen soaring and vanishing amid the flint-coloured ridges of the storm-swept Channel, flying like the seamew under a fragment of sail, vanishing to her own plungings in the hurling spray lashed out of the back of the savage snapping surge of the Downs by the pitiless thong of the gale. She ascends the river as high as London Bridge, and often tows down the long distance, cold and foodless, in hope of earning a sovereign by putting a pilot ashore, and just as often as not her men's expectations are disappointed.

Close astern of the *Dealman* was one of these galley-punts. Probably the three men in her had not tasted food for twenty-four hours. Their being there was a salt stroke of gambling; how could they make sure that the pilot would use their boat? A smell of cooking from the ship's galley seemed to diffuse itself in a sort of aroma of ham and fresh fish to as far aft as where the captain

stood, and this may have put the thought into his head, though his own natural humanity could not stand in need of the impulse of a frying-pan. He hailed the boat, and asked the men if they had had anything to eat.

“No, sir,” shouted one of them, a mass of a man in a jersey and yellow sou’wester, and a cobra shawl about his neck; “nothen to eat, and nothen to drink.”

The captain returned to the cabin-door, and told Prince to make up a parcel of ship’s bread and beef and fill half a bottle of rum. Who was to lower these things into the boat? The captain’s humanity could not rise superior to his dignity, and the steward was a soldier. It is only a sailor can sling a bottle of rum—and a sailor with bushy whiskers, and dungaree breeches, and a hairy hand all acrawl with ancient marks of tattooing, lovely blue rings on the fingers, a sweet bracelet round the wrist, a miniature of Christ crucified on the back from the knuckles down—this man lay aft to the orders of the captain, dropped the biscuit into the boat that had hauled up under the counter to the slackened drag of the tug, and cleverly swung the bottle of rum—an extinct fine art at sea, I should say—into the impassioned embrace of the mass of manhood in a yellow sou’wester.

“Poor devils!” thought the captain, as they eased off line and dropped astern. And the reason why Mostyn was touched was the reason why most thoughtful men at sea are silently but consciously moved by the illustrations of shore life of the country that is dear to them. It is not now as it hath been of yore—steam shortens absence, though it is true that a man in steam shall see less of his home in the course of a year, during which he makes six voyages, than a man whose ocean trip runs into twenty-four months. But figure yourself a sailor—it is three years since you sailed away from home. Your memory is foul with the dead bodies of the Hooghly.

Recollection reeks of the flavour of the camel-dung cigarettes of Alexandria. An intellectual nausea oppresses you when you think of the Malays of Capetown, the sanitary humours of that place, the ear-thrilling trombone of the Dutch throat. Nothing can you recollect of Chusan, Shanghai, Rangoon, and such places, into whose skies nature is said to pour the splendours of the Arabian night—nothing, I say, to sweeten the remembrance of the dry white East, with its Pagan stinks, and lily-livered rogues. What boots the sight of a junk or a joss-house, and what happiness attends the looting of a Chinaman's tray loaded with silver fal-lals? The illustration of the home-shore life moves the affections and passions of the homeward bound after long absence. It is the tug, the barge deep with stone from Calais, the smack rolling home with her hold sparkling with silver fish, the old collier brig staggering over the short seas on a wind, with well-patched canvas, and a woman mending her husband's hose in the companion-way; and it is the Deal galley-punt too, called in the parts she belongs to "knocktoe." All these things bring the summer holiday, the time of youth, the play-ground, the day of sport, pleasure and glorious heedlessness, back to the mind of the watcher on the ship's deck. He witnesses in each familiar object a theatre of memory—the white cliff, the golden shore, the group of houses cuddled in the embrace of the gap with a solemn finger of spire pointing to God. The band is dimly heard in fairy music; again he is paddling in the surf, or later yet walking with some nut-brown maid between tall scented hedges, and on them, and on the yellow haystack, and on the motionless horse, and the red-roofed cottage, with its romantic peak of white-washed gable, the English moon, the beautiful English moon, pours her light. There is no whiff of hubble-bubble to be caught, no unseasonable flavour of curry that is cooking,

no chink of rupee in the money-lender's flagged hall, no beastly baboon of a god, thumped through malodorous ways by the tom-tom. This is how many men feel when they come rolling home after having been long away; and scarce nothing could have excited a keener sense of farewell to Old England in the heart of Captain Mostyn than that slender homely Deal galley-punt towing astern.

A bell was rung in the cabin, breakfast was on the table; Mr. Benson, the diver, and the pilot were hungry. Mill, the mate, stumped the look-out, and the captain and the other three went in to eat. The men were for taking their places at the table.

"Not that seat, if you please," said the captain to Mr. Dipp, indicating the stool next his on the starboard side.

He opened the door of his wife's berth and passed in; she was ready, waiting for him, seated upon a locker. To pretend that she looked as blooming as was the practice of her beauty at Woolsborough would be absurd; she had undergone a term of imprisonment in a pantry flavoured with ham and cheese. She had suffered from sickness, had slept but little, and then again, a passion of anxiety consumed her. Whilst she dressed she kept on wondering what Mr. Benson would do, whether her love had not proved too selfish for any ideal of wifely, lofty, and beautiful devotion by imperilling her husband's professional chances, so that this very day he might be without command of a ship, with a black mark against his character in the sight of shipowners, with legal difficulties to confront, with the unholy certainty of poverty, and very short commons later on. But she was bound to please; her looks preserved their fascination, her hair was lustrous, her shape the perfect woman's.

"Do you feel equal to joining us," he said, looking at her, well pleased, as indeed he had reason to be.

“Yes,” she answered, rising; “but what will Benson do?”

“We shall see,” was his answer; and, opening the door, he took his wife by the hand and led her into the cabin.

“Phyllis, allow me to introduce Mr. Montague Benson—Mr. Dipp, the celebrated diver—Mr. Gordon, the ship’s pilot, who is shortly leaving the vessel. My wife—Mrs. Mostyn—gentlemen.”

She greeted each of them with a bow; there was dignity and there was repose in her manner which would have been more exalted as an illustration of breeding but for the circumstances of her situation and the haunting dizziness. Benson returned her salute with the best City bow he was master of, and the critical and jealous eye of the husband instantly witnessed appreciation of the lady in what was visible in the meaning of flesh in the hairy face that stared at his wife. Mr. Dipp saluted with a sudden convulsive drop of his head, as though he had been hanged, and a “’Appy I am sure, ma’am,” as if he was drinking her health. Mr. Gordon’s bow was rendered somewhat remarkable by the large and sustained smile that accompanied it. It was the smile of admiration; it was the smile that a man will put on when he views a pretty woman. Prince, standing at the pantry door, gazed intently, though unobserved, at the lady. Any one equal to the interpretation of looks, knowing what this young fellow had done for Mrs. Mostyn, would have sworn that in that man she had a friend in whom connivance had bred a chivalrous interest, and who, common as he was, would act as nobly and knightly a part on her behalf as ever may be read of in the romances of the old Provençal poets.

They all sat down, Phyllis on her husband’s right, Benson opposite her, Mr. Dipp on her right, and the pilot took the stool at the bottom of the table which lay nearest

to the cabin door. Mostyn slightly, scarcely noticeably, glanced at Benson to judge of the impression his wife was producing by her appearance and bearing alone; she had not yet spoken. He was satisfied. He did not want to quit the job he had undertaken. He foresaw crowds of difficulties ahead if he deserted his command. He strenuously desired to remain with the ship, and equally impassioned was his resolution to keep Phyllis by his side, whether aboard or ashore, so deeply had he been touched by the token she had given him of her devotion.

The breakfast was good: fish of yesterday's purchase, but sweet; eggs and bacon, hot rolls, a ham, and other appeals to the mercy of the stomach; coffee and cocoa. And what better meal could grace the breakfast-table of a diver and a pilot, and even a City man?

When men are not gentlemen the presence of ladies usually promotes awkwardness, shyness, the gaucheries of perturbation which men who are not gentlemen do not suffer from when in company with females who take money for liquor, who may be met behind the scenes of the music-hall and the shop counter. Therefore, Mr. Dipp and the pilot were at first a little constrained, and talked together, and tried to put each other at ease, Dipp by a joke or two about the tug and the ham before him, the pilot by laughter and enjoyment of his breakfast, which included sundry glances at Phyllis.

But Mr. Benson was to be at home; he rose to the occasion, hairy, ample, and with that unconscious leer which men's eyes will assume when they live in no doubt whatever as to the ornaments of their mind and the graces of their person.

"Is this your first trip to sea, Mrs. Mostyn?" he inquired, in the insinuating voice of one who means to please.

"The very first," she answered, with a smile, which enabled him to admire her teeth.

"A rough beginning," said Mostyn.

"A pity indeed!" exclaimed Mr. Benson; "but it is quite consistent with the traditions of the true English wife."

"Women of all races have undergone a sight more than men would have endured for the fellows they loved," said Mostyn.

"Hear, hear!" cried Mr. Dipp, as though affected by the sentiment. He added, with a cordiality which lost nothing in the grease of its passage, "And now you are on board, ma'am, I hope we shall 'ave a pleasant, a fine, and a successful voyage."

"I echo you," said the pilot, "though I'm leaving."

Phyllis fixed her eyes upon Mr. Benson. It was a full question, made eloquent beyond all gift of speech by the liquid light that veiled it. He would have been an ape or an idiot had he mistaken. Looking at Captain Mostyn, he said, "I agree with Mr. Dipp, and heartily hope that the voyage will be a fine one, if for no more than for the sake of Mrs. Mostyn."

She flushed with delight. "How can I thank you, Mr. Benson?" she cried.

"It is truly kind of you," said Mostyn, who was unaffectedly moved. The relief of his heart was great, and woman's love had vanquished, as it nearly always does. "You, Mr. Benson, and you, Mr. Dipp, and Mr. Gordon, have been informed how this came to pass." He put his hand upon his wife's. "We have not been long married; the idea of a separation running into months after so brief a spell of partnership ashore was insupportable. This is the result, and I thank you with all my heart."

"Mr. Gordon," said Benson, "may I suggest that you do not refer to this little romantic incident when you are ashore?"

"I was born without the gift of the gab," answered



Mr. Gordon. "I can keep my tongue in my cheek as well as another. Your case is safe in my hands, Mrs. Mostyn."

She bowed and smiled her thanks.

"As safe," said Mr. Dipp, "as if it had come on a thick fog with Gordon on the lookout, and leadsmen in the chains telling him how deep the water was."

Mr. Benson in silence, but with a certain sort of stealthiness, as though instantly prepared to avert his eye if detected, watched the young wife, glancing at her figure. Then, in a kind of waking-up way, he exclaimed—

"Captain, that berth of yours will never accommodate two."

"The steward must sling in the men's quarters," answered the captain; "and Mrs. Mostyn will occupy my cabin."

After this the talk became general. Mr. Benson happened to know Woolsborough, he was even acquainted with the name of the firm in which Phyllis's father was a partner. He exhibited a tendency to absorb the talk. Scarce a subject could be started upon which he was not prepared to deliver an opinion. He affirmed that his highest ambition was a seat in the House of Commons. Like Mr. Gordon, he was not gifted with flow of speech; he was not a man, for example, to fill three columns of the *Times* with well-rounded sentences, after the style of Salisbury and Chamberlain; but there was much he wanted to say which he could not say anywhere but in the House, and if he despised poetry he loved plain English words of one syllable, like to the best passages in the Bible, whereby great truths could be delivered without any expense of learning, or dredging of other men's books for adjectives. He talked for effect; he seemed to grow more hairy, more ample, self-sufficient; and Phyllis, who, like every woman in the world, had something of the

actress in her, flattered him with approving attention, which, honestly, she held he deserved, though already she had made out that he was a character of coarse fibre, unimaginative, carrying in his tongue the dark menace of the bore, informed with that quality of conceit which is graduated by the uninviting qualities, heightening in degree as the man is personally objectionable in face, figure, nature, and manner. But, in his small way, Mr. Benson was a power. As the representative of the insurance people he could have summarily executed their mandate by ordering her ashore, the issue of which might probably have proved her husband's professional destruction. He had suffered her to stay; he had been kind, and so Phyllis listened with all the graceful attention the movements of the ship and her giddiness enabled her to give.

## CHAPTER VII

### BENSON AND THE BREEZE

AMONG the dimming canvases of the sea is the picture of the tug casting off the sailing-ship. Steam renders the typical ship of the hour independent of the tug. But men are alive who remember that wooden ships of the Royal Navy of Great Britain were being towed out to sea when fleets of iron steamers flying the red flag blackened the ocean with soot. It is God's will that official stupidity, almost bestial in its insensibility to human needs and progress, should curb the fiery spirit of our country, and throttle with brutal prejudice the glowing aspirations of her generations.

The coast of Dungeness lay abeam; the eastern sky was embroidered with pale golden clouds, against which, about three miles distant from the *Dealman*, a large black mail steamer was painting a stately picture of herself. The red lug of a fishing-boat just this side smote in its passage a living sharpness and diamond brilliancy into that long shapely mass with its hundred scuttles running a line of white fire along her side. All about were tender morning drawings of the Channel—the lifting tramp sloping her funnel to the horizon as she rose; the schooner yacht, clothed in the white satin of her festive holiday-making branch of sea-faring, leaning from the south-east breeze; the hull of an old Blackwall liner towering light on her bilge streaks, towing down as a coal hulk to Plymouth

Sound to transform her cabin, once upon a time gaudy and beaming with skylights and goldfish, into a hold as black as a coal-sack.

The tug cast off; all hands laid hold of the hawser and brought it in, shedding jewels as it came. The main-topsail was aback, the tug was wheeling an arc of white foam out of the blue, and on the bridge stood her skipper, flourishing his cap. The galley-punt hauled alongside. Mr. Gordon shook hands with the captain and others, and, in a voice touched with feeling, hoped that Mrs. Mostyn would have a good time, for she certainly deserved it.

“Pray step on top of the deck-house, Mrs. Mostyn,” said Mr. Benson; “we shall be out of your husband’s way, and you will be able to get a good sight of the show. I will carry up a chair for you.”

No, she did not want a chair. She was much obliged. The October breeze blew with the edge of the east, and though she was clothed in a jacket her warmer garments were lodged in her sea-chest, still in Prince’s berth. She climbed the short flight of steps and Mr. Benson followed her, and Mr. Dipp followed him, and all three stood on top and gazed about them.

A number of the men were still busy forward, coiling down the hawser, but a few had been summoned aft, and were bracing the main-topsail to the wind, and presently others were at liberty; commands like pistol-shots broke from the mouth of the captain, and were re-echoed by the mates; figures of seamen trotted aloft slapping the shrouds as their feet spurned the treadmill of the ratlines. Canvas fluttered, hanks rattled, sheaves cheeped, the ship heeled, and spouted a white feather from her weather stem. It was all “Sheet home!” “Hoist away!” “Small pull to wind’ard!” “Well that top-gallant-yard!” The breeze was full of such barbarous cries, as unintelligible to the

landsman as the "lead" of the flying jib-stay to a stoker.

Yonder to leeward, making for the land, was the yellow streak of the "knocktoe," thrown out to the eye by white water, and rapidly dwindling to the steady drag of her lug, a dull and dingy shimmer above her. Though Phyllis did not feel perfectly comfortable, she could not but take so lively an interest in this picture of her husband's ship, starting on her own account for deep solitudes and foundered treasure, as to almost overwhelm the lingering sensations of nausea. She was astonished by the ease with which Charlie gave orders. It seemed impossible that any man should remember the names of all those cords and sheets up there, and pronounce words quite unmeaning but instantly construed by the sailors, who hopped, sprang and waltzed in their zeal, and made her see that they knew what was ordered by rendering the ship more and more sightly and sprightly every time they yelped a chorus and dragged a rope. She had never been to sea before. She would not, therefore, be able to distinguish a good sailor from a bad one. Indeed, she might not have been able to tell the difference between a sailor and a costermonger, for, bar the "pearlies," both would look very much alike, especially the costermonger, and his would be the capacity of deeper and wider utterance, in invective.

But, as a matter of fact, the men whose movements she watched were as likely a body of sailors as ever came together in one ship. You missed in them indeed that suggestion of smartness which the clothes of the man-of-war impart to the limbs and trunks of their wearers. Their garb fitted the humble obscurity of their calling. It was in keeping with the traditions of the red ensign. It suggested hardship, peril, the barbarous unknown coast, all that has entered into the life-story of the

merchant service. That fellow yonder was fitted by a Jew crimp; his boots will presently go to pieces like a bag of brown paper in water; his belt and sheath-knife cost him the money value of a dinner-set of cutlery. He looks as wild as Crusoe in that cap which the crimp threw in as a sop to a bargain that paid him about five hundred per cent. Men do not go thus attired on board men-of-war, neither do they sing bold far-streaming windlass chanties to rude words. But this fore-castle side of the merchant service, this side of hoarse sea music, and coarse and varied clothing, provides an element of romance which the severe uniformity of the man-of-war fails to yield. It is not the music, it is not the words of the sailor's working-chorus, which he times with the pulse of the pawls, that are beautiful; it is their environment which gives these things their poetry—the desolate plain of the ocean, the spirit of loneliness in the sky that roofs the sea, the swelling sail, the dependence of comradeship that vitalizes the solitary speck and directs it as true as the flight of a star through the mighty furrowless field.

“Pray, Mrs. Mostyn,” said Mr. Benson, “won't you consider this voyage as your honeymoon?”

She must please Mr. Benson. She must be kind and gracious in speech and look. It was an odd question, and Benson's face, with its corrugation of brow answering in him to the human smile, fitted it.

“We've certainly had no honeymoon worth talking about,” she replied. “I shall accept this voyage as my honeymoon.”

“Talk of 'oneymoons,” said Mr. Dipp, “the queerest I ever 'eard of was told me by a capt'n newly 'ome from the South Pacific. He said that a Kanaka embarked in a schooner bound to Noumea. He took his newly married wife along with 'im. She was a native of the New 'Ebrides, and on passing the island his wife was born in he took it

into his head to carry her ashore and spend his 'honeymoon among her tribe. Her tribe watched him whilst he landed, then fell upon him, killed, roasted, and eat him up."

Here the group was joined by Captain Mostyn. The top of the deck-house was a good place to keep a lookout on. A low brass handrail protected the edge. Aft was a short length of painted plank for a seat, and immediately in front of this stood a standard compass; for gold is gold, even at the bottom of the sea; and when you are bound away for treasure you will see to your compasses.

"Aren't you cold up here, Phyllis?" said Mostyn.

"No; the air refreshes me. I'm beginning to feel as if I could eat some breakfast."

Needless to say she had made no breakfast, not even toyed, not even glanced at the slice of tongue her husband had helped her to. Mr. Benson stepped to the skylight, and called down to the steward, who arrived.

"Now, Mrs. Mostyn, what are your orders?" said Mr. Benson, whose affability struck the diver as of a most predetermined kind.

"Tea and sandwiches," suggested Mostyn.

"Two little sandwiches only, steward," exclaimed Phyllis, looking with kindness and gratitude at the fine manly young fellow who had enabled her to be where she was.

"Will you forgive a trifling suggestion?" said Mr. Benson; "suppose we add a pony tumbler of brandy and soda."

Phyllis laughed and thanked him. The drink was, in fact, exactly what she would have wished to ask for.

"This is like yachting," exclaimed the diver, gazing round the sea with the expression that attends the anticipation of enjoyment. "I'm not going to ask the captain, but you, ma'am, is there any objection to smoking?"

“Absolutely none, so far as I am concerned,” whipped in Phyllis, with a quick look at her husband which stopped him; for he was captain, and this was the top of the deck-house, and a lady made one of the company, and but for her Dipp would have been referred to the main deck.

The diver pulled out a piece of cavendish tobacco, which he cut into thin chips into the palm of his hand, observing to Phyllis that he hadn't been to sea for nothing. It took him a long time to learn, he said. He 'acked the edges of his sea-chest to pieces and spoilt another man's before he got this art. He then rubbed the chips together and fingered them, that Mrs. Mostyn might see how fine was the tobacco he had cut. He next loaded the bowl of a wooden pipe, lighting the tobacco with many hearty sucks, during which operation the muscles of his face worked as though a dentist was drawing his biggest tooth. Phyllis admired the manner in which he struck a lucifer match and held the flame in a fist like a scooped-out turnip; indeed, she began to think there would be things inside the ship as well as out to divert her whilst she was with her husband.

“You're as smart as a yacht,” said Mr. Dipp, rolling his eyes about, and speaking in a greasy note of enjoyment of his pipe.

The ship was clothed to her trucks. The wind was about a six-knot breeze, the sea ran in thin melting lines, and each brisk head, singing saltly as it poured, glanced in the bright eastern light; and through the morning's frolic of waters streamed the *Dealman*, with her crew busy about the decks coiling down. The steward made his appearance with a small tumbler of brandy and soda and a plate of two sandwiches on a tray. Phyllis drank; the sandwiches were placed upon the skylight, and she ate standing, her bright hair trembling, her dress rippling



like the fly of a flag, her pale face eager, her eyes charged with the surprise of all this miracle of novelty, and starred by the morning sun. Her husband looked at her. He turned to Prince, who was descending the ladder.

“Get a hand,” said he, “to help you to bring Mrs. Mostyn’s baggage aft to my cabin;” and by the time this was done, the sandwiches had been eaten and Phyllis went to lie down in her husband’s bunk to sleep as long as she could.

Captain Mostyn, followed by Mr. Benson, stepped down on to the quarter-deck.

“I can’t wonder,” said Benson, as they came to a stand abaft the deck-house, “that you should have wished to be accompanied by your wife. I congratulate myself upon her presence. Female society will brighten the tedium of even a sailing voyage.”

“You quite understand how it’s been brought about,” replied Captain Mostyn. “I repeat my thanks to you, I am sure. I hope the directors will appreciate your kindness as fully as I do.”

“Chaw!” cried Mr. Benson. “If the directors challenge me, what is my answer? Off Dungeness a charming lady makes her appearance on board. She is the captain’s wife. She had been prompted by devotion to her husband to take a step, to court inconvenience, suffering, possibly expulsion—a step, I may say, the mere thought of which would make most women’s hearts shrink in their bodies. Now, gentlemen, I think to myself, what am I to do? I admit that life is a tight fit with human nature on board a merchant ship; but room had to be found, gentlemen, room had to be found. It was not in me, gentlemen, to ruin the hopes of a loving and faithful young wife. Your interests have not suffered, and, if offence it was, I am prepared to repeat it when the occasion arises.”

He declaimed rather than conversed. He moved his arms in several dramatic gestures; plausibility was in his eye and in that which stood for a smile above his eyebrows. But Mostyn was a sailor; he had used the sea for many years. The world is right in speaking of Jack as a simple-hearted man. Not because he cannot swear and drink, bilk a skipper, raise a panic in a theatre by falling out of the gallery, pay his landlady with the foretopsail and the like. It is because, living, as he does, during the greater number of his years, with men of the same order of understanding and knowledge as his, seeing nothing in port but the back side of society, never, during months at sea, provided with a chance of talking to women and learning from them their method of looking into things and understanding them, their arts, graces, and vanities, he fails to master the science of human nature as it is studied and expounded ashore. Hence, like a man who argues illogically, he will fasten his eye upon one corner of the tapestry of truth and his inferences from what he sees are right; but he is incapable of casting his eye a little further afield; if he did, then what he saw would vitiate his deductions from the corner his eye dwelt on. So with Mostyn; he saw but the surface of human nature, and was extremely obliged to Mr. Benson for his kindness in allowing his pretty young wife to remain on board the ship.

A very brief conversation sufficed to transfer Mr. Swanson without protest to Prince's berth, and Prince to the crew's sleeping quarters. But now that the issue was exactly as Captain Mostyn could have prayed for, it was proper that he should say a gracious sentence or two of thanks to the steward. He did this as man to man, scarcely as the captain of the ship to the person who fills one of the humblest posts in her. How a "tramp" captain of to-day, one of those steamboat captains, who, as

man and boy, do but little honour to the service they keep traditionally illiterate and savage, and a stinging reproach to those who do business in the jerry hold washed along by leaking boilers and red-hot bearings, would have borne himself, I will not pretend to know. It is an old saying at sea that the man who ill-treats a sailor is no sailor himself. Prince was not a sailor, but he had done the captain so great a service that Mostyn's heart accepted the obligation as a blessing, and why, then, because the captain happened to be a gentleman and master of a small ship, should he omit to play his part in the whole duty of man by neglecting to thank the poor fellow?

The cabin dinner was served at one; somewhat earlier Mostyn had noticed a fall in the glass. His wife did not appear at table. A sudden swell had grown out of the north-east, and came rolling and swooning in lateral rows of wind-wrinkled humps, and the *Dealman* sank and lifted. Three sat down to dinner—the captain, Benson, and Dipp.

“Your wife,” said Benson, who looked of the colour of butter above his eyebrows, “feels this motion, I fear.”

“Yes,” answered Mostyn. “What's in that dish, steward.”

“Pork chops, sir.”

“They look damned greasy,” exclaimed Mr. Dipp, peering down his nose at the stuff.

“There is always grease enough going at sea,” said Mostyn. “You meet with it everywhere, in the sea-boots of the sailor, in the duff, in the scum simmering atop of the water in which his meat is boiled, in the lamp that stinks him out of his fore-castle, in the red gleam of sunset in the greased top-gallant and royal masts. Tell the cook, steward, to be a little less greasy.”

“I'm for trying one, anyway,” said Mr. Dipp, plunging his fork into a chop, and peering at it, poised on a level with his eyes, like a botanist at some grotesque vegetable.

"I'll eat, if only to report. Good cooking makes men feel young. It's John Chinaman as fixes the seat of reason in the guts."

Mr. Benson did not appear in a hurry to begin his dinner. The buttery pallor of his brow lingered. He looked at the roast chicken, the piece of boiled pork, and the dish of pork chops, which, with the pudding and cheese to follow, formed the noontide repast of that day, with a lustreless and an unseeking eye. To Mostyn's inquiries he vouchsafed no further answer than a stupid stare. The heave of the swell filled the ship with a complication of motion. Whilst the bow was sinking, the broadside was heeling, and the recovery of the fabric, immediately followed by a depression of the stern and a staggering reel to starboard, was as abrupt as the shock of a gun-blast to shore-going nerves. It was easily seen that Mr. Benson was rapidly going to pieces. The hand of old Ocean was upon his anatomy, and his various parts were being dislocated, the stomach rising into the mouth, the brains sinking into the belly. He stood it for about five minutes, then, with a half-choked shout for brandy, which he did not wait to receive, he revolved on his seat, stumbled against his cabin door, which burst open, and raised such an outcry, not unsanctified by an occasional ghastly damn, as would have awakened a parish full of sleepers. The steward went to his relief.

"He suffers horribly," said Captain Mostyn.

"Men of his build always go in for a bust when they begin," exclaimed Mr. Dipp, who did not appear to find the pork chop he was eating too greasy.

The mate, who had charge of the deck, stood in the doorway of the cabin, and sang out—

"Weather looks dirty north-east, sir."

"Take in your royals and mizzen top-gallant sail. I'll be out in a minute," exclaimed the captain, beginning

to eat rapidly ; for he saw weather in the colour of the skylight ; he could hear weather in the stormy slap of canvas aloft ; he could feel weather in the swing of the plank under his feet, and he guessed that if he did not make a meal then, and at once, the next chance for eating might be a long way off.

It was about one bell in the afternoon watch. All away north-east the sky was thick and sallow, with a horizon as tallowy as a Portuguese, and the swell came out of that dirty yellow wall in long sparkles to the pale glance of the mist-smothered sun in the south. It was about this hour when the breeze freshened. It drummed and sang in small guns, and a hundred screams in the shrouds, and the heads of the swell sprang in racing feathers of froth that vanished like snowflakes, or smoke, or steam.

Now was set fairly under way the true business of the deep. High seas in heavy weather may be found in most parts of the world, but there is no sea so quarrelsome, snappish, snarling, wrangling, as our home waters in half a gale well to the westward where the shores of hereditary antagonisms yawn out of ken in the middle-way from the loftiest masthead that ever sank from truck to kelson. The brine was presently swelling white in the rich splendour of foaming water along the weather bends of the *Dealman* as she swept onwards, bending low, then stiffening her spars with her fore and main-topgallant yards on the caps, and six "souls," as they call sailors, stretching their legs on the foot-ropes, with men on the jibboom, grasping and silencing the white terror and wrath of the canvas, with hands hauling up the mainsail, with hands busy with the mizzen-topsail—this ship had the good sense to forbear a crossjack—for the boatswain had piped and thumped, and all the people of the ship were busy in snugging her. An old world scene ! though

happening every day in long iron sailing-ships, in cranks flying the bilious colours of old Italy, in apple-bowed lumpers, which, before they founder, will seize the flag of Norway in the sea-posture of distress to any shrouds which may be standing.

But I warrant that few who read these lines have been aboard a sailing-ship snugging down to a growing gale. What memories do they carry of the song of the reef tackle, the rattle of chain sheets, the slatting of half-suffocated canvas, the shouts of the mates, the yells from aloft, the jockey at the yard-arm, with the earring not in his ear but in his hand! The plunge of the ship shrouds her forecastle in a thunderstorm of crystals through which the flash of the slung froth is as the stab of lightning.

Whilst the men were aloft, knotting a single reef in the topsails, a picture hove into view, and as they were sailors it doubtless cheered them. It was a steam tramp, of about two thousand tons, "flying light," that is to say, with nothing in her but water in her ballast tanks. She was outward bound, to fetch a cargo from North America or any other seaboard you please; and she sat like an egg-shell, which would have been a safe and proper posture to adopt in dock or on the smooth surface of a river. But the sea here was now running high, it was under-sweeping this balloon of a "tramp," in low, flint-dark cliffs with brows of snow, which poured in a mighty roaring under the counter and along the port beam of the pitching, galloping, staggering, stumbling water-borne symbol of the jerry shipwright's base art. The heavens were dark beyond her; they streamed wild and torn over her; she flung high and low her black and red side; she was like something alive, wounded, and privily but barbarously goaded by a devil-hand, and you saw a wet gleam in a piece of brass-work, a moist flash off a binnacle-hood, pale as the draining of moonlight in water when

the cold satellite looks down with blurred and tarnished face through her prophetic circle of storm.

“She’s knocking herself to pieces,” said Mr. Dipp, to Captain Mostyn.

She pitched till the stowed anchor in her hawse-pipe was lost in the boiling smother, and then you saw her red propeller under her high-lifted stern whirling like a ship’s wheel when the volcanic swing of the rudder to the blow of the sea smites the spokes into the velocity of a catherine wheel.

When a propeller, liberated from its grip of the water, revolves as yonder tramp’s, the engines are said to race. They go mad, they work like the pulse in fever. Their convulsion is that of the circular rush of the mechanism of a great clock whose spring suddenly breaks. But in a moment or two—for the pitching of a ship is often as rapid as breathing—the stern is submerged, the propeller buried, the mighty hand of the sea is upon its blades, the arrest grips the steam fiend by the throat. He is near choked, when up again darts the stern. The liberated screw rushes round with the speed of a gale, the engines fall wild and mad again, for if engines have not souls they are quite as human in behaviour, and particularly in protest, as a good many two-legged things who seriously believe that they possess souls, and even pray for those of others. That tramp was a pitiful spectacle to the eye of a mariner. How much more would she have appealed to the sensibilities of the marine engineer?

“She’s atearing her bowels out,” said Mr. Dipp. “Why do the Board of Trade let them rogues, called managing owners, send vessels after that pattern away to sea, to cross the Atlantic in winter, so light that a rat in a trap might feel safer, though half dead, than the men who sign articles for the likes of her?” He nodded to the steamer, which had overtaken them whilst the

*Dealman* was snuggling down ; but she was bound to fall astern presently, when the song of the topsail halliards should thrill an impulse of buoyant vitality into the heels of the ship.

“I should be sorry to be in command of that bridge,” said Captain Mostyn.

“I should be sorrier to be in command of her engine-room,” replied Mr. Dipp. “*That’s* where it is. The pity goes to the man on the bridge, because he’s seen. The real pity belongs to the engine-room, where the heart of the ship beats, and sends the blood, ’ot and alive oh, into all the arteries. I say the pity, and all other proper feelings that a man may have, belongs to the engine-room, where the work is dark and hidden, and the danger a hundredfold more’n it is on deck ; where a bursted boiler strips a poor fellow of his flesh, and plucks his eyes out, as if steam was a skunking hook-nosed vulture ; where men in the depths of the stokehold, sweating and half dead in a temperature of a hundred and sixty, founder with their ship, helpless to escape, and refusing to escape if offered whilst dooty’s to be done. Think of the Queen’s ship *Victoria*, lying several hundred fathoms deep off the coast of Tunis ; and if I could dive fur enough to get at her, you lay I’d find the engineer of the watch at his post with the telegraph at half speed ahead, meaning that no engineer would ever leave his place until the telegraph says ‘Stop!’ and dooty’s ended, and the struggle for life begins.”

“Yes,” said Captain Mostyn, thoughtfully, with a glance aloft to mark the doings of the men on the yards. “It’s true we make nothing of the hearts who are the life, and must become the fighting life, of the steamship, but who are overlooked by the crowd because they are sunk in the vessel’s bowels. In my last voyage in calm weather, I came across such a tramp as that with her nose dipped deep, and her stern cocked high, and a couple



of engineers dangling in bowlines over the stern, fitting a new propeller. It is the engineer who is the real handy man. I think I should feel pretty small as captain of one of Her Majesty's ships, if ignorance forced me to put elementary questions about the mechanism of my vessel to the engineer. No man should take command of a steamship without knowing as much about her machinery, how to deal with it, how to nurse it, how *not* to slapdash at it, as is the custom of the ignorant and inconveniently vehement bluejacket, as I know of the hold of this ship, and the spars and sails by which I navigate her."

The scurvy example of man's stupidity and Christless indifference to the lives and sufferings of those who use the sea and toil for them, staggered, and slobbered, and grovelled, and lurched astern, with hideously immoral disclosure of naked propeller coming and going, going and coming, till the box-shaped fabric, bow on, blotted the unwholesome sight from the eyes of the honest sailors of the *Dealman*. Possibly ten knots was her guaranteed speed. This was no doubt reduced by leaky joints, now she was at sea, to seven, and as the propeller was half the time out of the water you will readily conceive that she fell stumbling astern like a buoy when the sailors mast-headed the *Dealman's* upper yards as high as a single reef would let them soar. The ship rushed with the wake of a comet through the swelling and foaming under-run, and the breaches of the sea made by the stormy thrust of her bow, raised a thunder like the trumpets of the hurricane blown amongst the heavy foliage of the tropic forest.

"She walks, I think," said Mr. Dipp, beginning to step the weather quarter-deck alongside Captain Mostyn.

The tail of the wake spread in a boiling white road to abreast of the floundering tramp, where it vanished in the sea-throb and vapour of brine, through which you saw the dark green surge melting and pouring from the

horizon. The mate paced the length of a plank or two in the gangway. The crew were variously employed. The men would be divided into watches in the second dog-watch. Black smoke from the galley chimney blew sharp down in a swift scattering through the lee fore-shrouds.

"Yes, I think she has legs," said Captain Mostyn. "I should be pleased to carry this breeze to Staten Island."

"I wonder how Mr. Benson is getting on?" said the diver. "Do you think that he is going to make himself comfortable this bout?"

"There's plenty to eat and drink," replied the captain; "and he has all night in and the day to himself. Does your scheme of happiness at sea go beyond that?"

"You'll forgive my speaking personal to your face," said Mr. Dipp, after a brief pause, which he filled by staring at Mostyn, "but d'ye know you're one of the best-looking men I've ever met in all my going afishing."

Mostyn preserved his countenance with the gravity of an actor, who aware that he is being stared at as a great man must not appear to know it.

"Where was you educated?" continued Mr. Dipp.

Mostyn named the three schools.

"Well," said Mr. Dipp, "my learning cost my father less than a shilling a week. I ask because you speak in a way that is most uncommon amongst the skippers that I've knocked about with."

"A little high falutin?"

"No, sirree. It does me real good to hear you. Mr. Benson's idea of words of one syllable won't wash. Big thoughts ask big terms. Look at the Germans—they'll pay out half a fathom of syllables to express one notion, but that notion contains fifty others, like the Chinese puzzle of balls within balls—one ball with half a score of kiddies inside; and that's where Mr. Benson doesn't do himself proud. He's got ideas, but how are you going to

cork up a nine-gallon cask in a quart bottle? Lor'! if I had but the language!"

"Write the life of a diver, Mr. Dipp—write your story."

"Yes, and whether you're coddin' or not, captain, if properly wrote, the book 'ud be the talk of the country. That's where I want language. Was you acquainted with Mr. Benson before this voyage?"

"No."

"Wonderful growth of 'air, sir. Must be like livin' inside a scrubbin' brush. When it comes on hot he'll be shavin' of himself."

"He'll want it three times a day," said the captain. "I have admired the military blue cheek when nothing in the regulations talks of whiskers. Do you fancy him, Mr. Dipp?"

The diver looked with something of archness at Captain Mostyn, and in the greasiest note of his chest answered—

"Ask me that question when I get 'ome."

The master-spirit of the last century affirmed of the child that "custom shall lie upon thee like a weight, heavy as frost, and deep almost as life." This is a quintessential truth, nobly sought, and grandly revealed. The peculiar custom of the sea is to feel unmarried. A man leaves his wife ashore, and will no doubt often think of her, but all the time that he is at sea and abroad he is alone. Custom lay with the weight of frost on Mostyn. He had always been alone at sea. He was newly married, and there was no habit of wedlock in his mind. This habit takes time in acquiring. It is easy to sling two in a hammock, but the habit I refer to is all that marriage signifies, the solemn obligation of one dependent on your love and loyalty, the mysterious meaning of children, who, as that gouty old manatee, Captain Chester, justly observed, make sacred the only unity which in this world can in any sense of the

word be considered sacramental. When, therefore, Mr. Dipp, after his arch look and darkling saying, added, "I hope that Mrs. Mostyn isn't suffering as Mr. Benson do," the captain absolutely started to the instant impression of novelty conveyed by the diver's remark.

His wife was aboard! and so engrossed had he been by tending the ship, and so deep-rooted was his habit of thinking himself as alone when at sea, that Phyllis, as a condition of his existing shipboard life, had gone clean out of his head. He thought to himself, "Good God, I had forgotten her!" But the instincts of the seaman must even dominate the perturbation of love, and he paused to send a critical eye around the sea at the weather to windward, at the weather to leeward, at the lightning-like rush of the surge beyond the taffrail, at the freckled back of the polished green knoll which showed as though in a frame, when the ship sank her head, betwixt the yearning curve of the foot of the forecastle and the headrails rounding to the eyes. Then, with a heart teeming with love, he entered the cabin.

He opened the door of his sea bedroom, and there was his wife, lying in his bunk, wide-awake. Those eyes, soft violet wells, pure in their spirituality as the blue ether of heaven is calm and gentle, in which he had sought love and found it, were instantly turned upon him, and she smiled. He kissed her, and asked how she felt.

"As giddy as the ship," she answered. "What sort of a sea have you steered into?"

"Just a pleasant little hubble-bubble. The ship races like a yacht. Are you sorry to be here?"

"About as sorry as you are that I am here. But, as a sailor's wife, why should my head be affected by the sea?"

"Benson fell away from the table hideously ill."

"I know. I heard him. His brand-new monkey-jacket has no salt in it. So thick and coarse a man as he

might easily break a blood-vessel ; which would be a good excuse for you to set him ashore, and then we should have the ship to ourselves," she continued, with the languid smile of the sea-tossed woman. "It would be strange if he should go and I stay, as I shall."

"He'll have to hurry up with his blood-vessel," said Mostyn, "if his mind sets shorewards. This breeze will be speedily sweeping us past the Scillies, clean away from all convenience of port, unless he begs me to shift my helm. For what good? The insurers might send a worse man, who would report you on board. No; let him keep his blood-vessels all fast. Do you feel like getting up?"

"Let me see."

She threw her feet over and stood upon the deck. The chasing sea shouldered the sweeping keel with a regularity that was like the revolutions of the crank of a marine engine. She lifted buoyant with a slanting rush which yet gave you time; for aloft was a staying power which controlled the weather-roll, and put a measure into the fabric's paces as timely as a dance to music. A pole-mast, with a shoulder-of-mutton sail, though supplemented by one or even two funnels, will not do in a rolling or pitching sense for a ship what is done by the braced yard and the steadfast pull of humming canvas.

"I feel quite able to go on deck," said Phyllis.

It was his privilege to place her hat upon her head, and to overhaul her sea-chest for a warm jacket. This done, they linked hands like Adam and Eve in Milton; but, unlike that forlorn couple, they shed no natural tears. On the contrary, Phyllis burst into a laugh, for Mr. Benson raised his pipes as they passed through the cabin, and his gurgle, gasp, and groan reminded the young wife of one of the several quarrels which occur in the tragedy of Punch and Judy.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE BALLOON

WHEN the *Dealman* was seven days out she had measured nearly thirteen hundred miles of ocean. Her average speed had therefore been about one hundred and eighty miles every twenty-four hours.

On this seventh day in the afternoon a pleasant breeze blew from the westward, but the frown of a thunder-squall darkened the horizon here and there, and in places you could see the rain falling from the clouds in shafts like old yellow marble, and wind was in the slant of the rain. They had traversed some twenty degrees south and west, and the sunshine was warm, and the afternoon a bountiful picture of cloud, streaming seas, the frolic of lights of foam, and the fire of Heaven, with three ships in sight abeam, all hull down, and on the lee bow, at about a league and a half, flapped a little brig, heading the course of the *Dealman*.

Phyllis sat in a deck-chair abaft the deck-house, where the plank ran clear from scupper to scupper, and beside her, sitting on another chair betwixt his divided coat tails—for strange to relate the gentleman had shipped this day a city and suburban coat much affected in financial circles, and he needed but the top hat of the London streets to make you involuntarily glance round for the Royal Exchange or the Mansion House—was Mr. Montague Benson. Between the deck-house and the bulwark-rail

paced the captain, and the second mate lurked somewhere to leeward, whilst Mr. Dipp, abreast of the wheel, had hung his body over the rail, and, pipe in mouth, with an occasional cloud blowing away from his nostrils, lay looking intently upon the passing surface as though he mused upon what might be reposing on the bottom.

Now, if we direct our gaze at Phyllis we shall at once see that she had entirely recovered from the bad effects of seasickness. Her eyes were bright and lively, and flashed signals of a heart at rest, grateful, happy, beating steady to a pulse of secret rejoicing. Her lips wore the bloom of the sweet blood in her veins, and the searching and betraying daylight, with its added glare of white deck and white canvas and sparkle of sea, did but accentuate that refinement and delicacy of her features for which she was under no obligation to the member of the firm who sent out savoury tongues on approval to irritable generals half dead with gout. This improvement by revelation of daylight in the refinement of woman's beauty marks but that feature of nature which the microscope renders superbly visible; for if you take anything made by human skill, and subject it to the test of enlargement, you will find that, in proportion as it is magnified, so do its coarseness and defects multiply in grossness; whereas, if you microscopically examine the handiwork of Nature, you will discover that its exquisiteness of finish increases as the magnitude.

Phyllis was to be complimented on falling happily under a law whose operation, let me assure you in the case of features and complexion, is by no means universal.

It was this young wife's business and self-imposed duty to make herself entirely agreeable to Mr. Benson. In some sort of way the sweet young creature had come to think of him as a power. He represented enormous

commercial interests—enormous to her, who was the wife of a poor sea captain, a bride with a scurvy dowry of one hundred pounds, not a rap to give her man outside herself and her clothes, which, as he could not wear them, were profitable only to the extent of saving his pocket. She dimly dreamt that if she rendered herself particularly engaging to Mr. Benson he would stand by her husband as a friend after this voyage, get him a fine command, perhaps help him into an ocean mail line, which would be a dowry of her own earning, and the sweeter and dearer to her because he would owe it entirely to her love.

To most women—I speak with submission—nature has supplied a sort of mental feeler or moral forefinger, like to that which physically garnishes the anatomy of the spider, whereby, through sedulously keeping it pressed upon one of the silver fibres of its weaving, it feels whether the thing entangled is a house-fly, a bluebottle, or a wasp. For we are not to be told that a spider can distinguish the forms and natures of the coloured surfaces which fly foul of its web by its sight. So with women. Men may differ in beauty as the stars in glory, but few women by simple inspection only would be able to gauge the moral character and worth of the thing that has been caught in their meshes. I do not propound this in the spirit of dogma. I abhor the blockhead who thrusts his proposition into this world of fallacies as indefeasible. There are many women who do not seem furnished with feelers, who accept the wasp as artlessly as they accept the house-fly, who will pine for the betraying rogue, and yearn for his return to the web from which the more prudent spider has artfully bitten him adrift.

Phyllis was a woman who enjoyed amongst her other gifts that of the moral feeler. She did not like Mr. Benson. She could never feel entirely at her ease when conversing with him; but her anxiety for her husband



and his interests naturally, to a certain extent, vitiated her inferences. Moreover the voyage was still young, and nothing had been said, or even looked, of a sort to dismiss her to her husband's ear with a trouble. To prove that she could have more shrewdly employed her moral feeler but for her husband and his necessities, I may affirm that the intellectual mercury in Phyllis's mind stood at about fifteen degrees higher than the average girl's. She was fifteen degrees more clever, ardent, sympathetic, loyal, generous, unselfish. You will say that if she had risen to twenty degrees she would have been an angel. Probably ; and I would cheerfully throw in a pair of wings if I did not know that the angels men like best are unfeathered.

Benson and Phyllis sat on deck, whilst the captain walked, and the second mate lurked, and the man at the wheel held the ship to her course, and Dipp, hanging over the rail, dived with his eyes into the deep sea. Phyllis had already, during a day or two past, tried Mr. Benson with a number of topics of conversation. Having lived, when with her father, much alone, she had read pretty widely, and, her taste being good, she had read with profit to her mind. She could quote you couplets out of Waller, Suckling, Herrick, Shelley, Swinburne, and others who have made English verse the sweetest and the most exalted of the world's poetry. She could taste the humour of Charles Lamb, and portions of "Paradise Lost" awed her as the swelling melodies of the cathedral affect the devout who are musical. Her mind was stored with passages from Charles Dickens, and she regarded "Vanity Fair" as the most vital and virile novel of the century. She had wished to read Fielding, Smollett, Sterne, and Richardson, and was sorry, on peeping into them, to find that they had not written for young ladies who refused to stoop low merely to see dirt. But when it came to Jeremy Bentham, and John Stuart Mill, and Sir

William Hamilton, and Dr. Whewell, and the famous Archbishop of Dublin, she found herself entirely at fault, t'other side of the hedge, in short, and unable to climb over it. And Benson had no literature, no music, no sculpture, no architecture, no anything in the smallest degree delightful to be found outside the pages of these wise and painful enthusiasts.

"I don't go the whole road with you," said Captain Mostyn, who had come to a stand to listen to Mr. Benson, "maybe I don't understand. I'm quite sure my wife doesn't."

"You do Mrs. Mostyn an injustice," exclaimed Mr. Benson, casting upon her anything but a fatherly look.

"Well, to my way of thinking, it's like this," said Mostyn; "free trade is very good when there is reciprocity, but when all the benefits are conferred by one side and all the ports are sealed with tariffs by the other, free trade seems to me merely a term to express the privilege and profit you concede to the foreigner and deny to our people. Take the French system of bounties to the shipowners. You say our shipping has thriven enormously, though no bounties are granted; but that is what is called begging the question, for would it not thrive more enormously, helped by bounties, seeing what the unaided spirit of it is?"

Mr. Benson smiled in pity; at least his eyes smiled, and his forehead may have helped the mirth of the superior person to the extent of a wrinkle or two.

"It's clear you don't understand the fundamental principles of free trade," said he; whilst Phyllis thought to herself—

"What a bore the man is! Is there nothing else to talk about but trade—here, in the face of those gilded clouds and those beautiful spires of canvas towering above us?"

And her musings flowed to Woolsborough and to the universal provider's shops, whilst Mr. Benson continued, with a frontal largeness of demeanour that gained in breadth by a powerful display of shirt-front—

“I will give you Mill's definition of free trade. He says, the purchaser of British silk encourages British industry; the man who purchases silk at Lyons encourages only French. One, by people who don't think, is called a patriot; the conduct of the other ought to be put a stop to by the law. But Mill points out that the purchaser of any foreign commodity of necessity causes, directly or indirectly, the export of an equivalent value of some English article, something beyond what would otherwise be exported either to the same foreign country or to some other; and this fact, he declares, though it cannot be verified, rests upon evidence of reasoning impossible to disprove.”

He looked as though he had delivered his maiden speech amidst spasmodic storms of “hear! hears!” in that august assembly upon one of whose benches he hoped some day to sit between his coat tails.

“It's about as clear as mud in a wine-glass to me,” said Mostyn.

Here Mr. Dipp came slowly to the group from the rail, and Phyllis, wishing to end Mr. Benson's chatter, said, in a pleasant voice, for a girl's voice is always pleasant on board ship where life is mostly all hoarseness and whisker—

“What ship have you been looking at, Mr. Dipp, in the bottom of the sea?”

“Don't reckon,” replied Mr. Dipp, “because a man's a diver he's always thinking of diving. I've been listening to Mr. Benson, and allow that if 'is real sentiments are the same he's been trying to make clear, he'll get no votes when he offers himself.”

Mr. Benson turned in his chair and viewed him with a frown.

"What should a diver know of political economy?" he exclaimed.

"All I know," answered Mr. Dipp, firmly, "is that free trade is a blooming fraud, if buying and selling aren't mutually conducted."

"Stick to compressed air," said Mr. Benson.

"You're not going to tell me what compressed air consists of."

"Tut! tut!" said Mr. Benson. "Men who breathe it don't seem to run lean."

"Tell me something about diving, Mr. Dipp," exclaimed Phyllis. "I dare say there are places still undiscovered in this world; but there is one mysterious awful place which will never be explored. It is the mightiest of all mansions. It is the green halls of the sea."

Mr. Dipp looked pleased. It was glancing a complement, so to speak, at his calling.

"What would you like to know about diving, ma'ān?"

"How deep can you go?"

"Speaking of myself, I've never been lower than twenty-five fathom."

"A hundred and fifty feet, Phyl," said the captain.

"Like sinking from that truck," said Mr. Benson, looking up.

"No fear," answered Dipp. "That depth 'ud be murder."

"What's the greatest depth ever reached?" asked Mostyn.

"Why, sir, a diver named Hooper sank thirty-four fathom—two hundred and four feet—to a ship named *Cape 'Orn*, sunk off the coast of South America."

"What was the water pressure?" asked Mostyn.

"Eighty-eight and a 'alf pounds to the square inch," answered Mr. Dipp.

"That's more than the pressure that drives a Channel packet from Calais to Dover. I wonder it don't burst you," said Mr. Benson, looking at the Diver's fat neck. "How long can you stop under?"

"It depends. From one hour to four, but not longer, and that was done by a diver named Ridyard, who in that time sent up sixty-four boxes of treasure from a depth of twenty-six fathom. The ship was the *Hamilla Mitchell*, and forty thousand pounds was got out of her."

"There should be many wonders down in a depth of two hundred feet," said Phyllis.

"What sort of wonders, mum?" asked Dipp.

"Coral caves, and mermaids with golden hair and golden combs," answered the young wife, with a smile and a merry look at the diver, which, had he ever read "All for Love," by Dryden, would have instantly set the poor devil thinking of those lines about Cleopatra, who—

"Cast a glance so languishingly sweet,  
As if, secure of all beholders' hearts,  
Neglecting, she could take them."

"Don't know that I should be in a 'urry to come up if I fell in with one of those parties," said Dipp. "Half tails, though."

Mr. Benson laughed.

"I've heard tell of them people sitting on the sands, strumming instruments and singing songs to coax poor sailormen to jump overboard and swim ashore. They're artful enough to conceal what's fish in them by cultivatin' their hair, which grows prodigious long and wrops up their extremities in locks of gold."

"When you dive do you ever see any queer fish in the sea?" asked Phyllis, sweetly.

“What would you consider a queer fish?” asked Mr. Benson, with the insinuating manner he was used to adopt when he desired to be uncommonly courteous.

“Such a thing as a Jesuit saw,” answered Phyllis. “It rose close to the ship; it had a bald head and two wicked, black eyes; it shook a fin at the father and sank.”

“I hope that nothing answering to a gent of that sort is likely to come across me,” said Mr. Dipp. “I do believe, mum,” he added, with a great grin, “it would make me so afraid that I’d never dive again.”

“I’d much like to see you in your diving dress, Mr. Dipp,” said Phyllis.

“Would you?” he answered, looking with a face of honest kindness at her. “Well, capt’n, you’ve got a wife who’s not to be said no to when she asks. Where are my pumpers and signalmen. ‘Ere, Jackson!” he shouted to a man who was standing near the galley door, “lay aft.”

The fellow came along. He was one of three stout sailors who had signed to work the pumps and tend the diver’s lines, and also to help in the general work of the ship; but the boatswain was chary of putting these men to a deck job unless it was pulling and hauling. They were useful men aloft to the cry of “all hands,” but it was tacitly understood that they were Mr. Dipp’s men, whose real duties were to follow. And so they did more loafing than would have been easy or even practicable had they formed a portion of the regular crew.

Mr. Dipp said something to the man, and both entered the cabin.

Meanwhile Mr. Benson praised Jeremy Bentham to Phyllis, who felt exceeding glad that this insipid unintelligible mouthing must end abruptly with the reappearance of Mr. Dipp.

“Oh, Bentham was a glorious fellow. Utility! That

was his grand theory. The greatest good for the greatest number, and that's why he would have James Watt a greater man than William Shakespeare. He taught people to ask the question 'Why?' You must be aware, Mrs. Mostyn, that the only way to get an answer is to ask a question. Ask your question shrewdly, and your answer works out in truth. Why was it supposed by the ancients that if you dropped a ball from the masthead of a ship in motion that the ball would fall at a little distance behind the mast—a distance proportionate to the speed of the ship?"

He paused. Captain Mostyn was looking at a squall on the weather beam. Phyllis who was deeply uninterested, listlessly gazed at the hairy face that confronted her.

"Because," exclaimed Mr. Benson, "they never tried the experiment."

"Where would it fall?" answered Phyllis, who was wondering whether divers took as long to dress as ladies.

"At the foot of the mast of course."

"Are these matters of much consequence?" asked Phyllis.

"Now you are putting it as Bentham would; you are asking a crucial question by which you extort the truth." She looked a little away from him, not liking the expression his eyes took. "They are of first-rate consequence. The law of gravitation is involved in this simple question of the dropped ball."

"Dipp will have to bear a hand," said Captain Mostyn. "There's wind in the brow and wet in the wake of that dirt."

But it was forming slowly, it was on the horizon and was taking it leisurely whilst it filled its bag for a pibroch in the shrouds. And it was going to be a squall that you could see through; which is a cheery sea token, just

as the breaking of the dawn in the middle of the sky is a solemn presage to the shipman of the bowline.

It turned out, however, that divers do not take long to dress, and Phyllis nearly let fly her honey-sweet breath in a girl's shriek of amazement when there emerged—shall I call the thing Dipp the diver?—an outrageously grotesque figure; a compound of a knight of the joust, and a penguin—a something consisting of helmet, stomach, and elephantine legs. It was such a figure as being set up in a moon-lit castle hall, surrounded by a moat and coloured by painted windows, would have affrighted the most experienced and bloody-minded burglar that ever broke into a house with intent to murder, if life stood in the way of booty. One glance would have sufficed. Terror would have rendered a second impossible.

The figure approached Phyllis with the strides of one who wades. A man shod in gun-metal, his head clothed in a helmet weighing sixty-four pounds, is in no physical state to dart “the light fantastic toe.” Yet, though Mr. Dipp may have converted himself into an object of horror, the figure he cut was not without splendour. His helmet, which was of planished tinned copper, decorated with neckrings and brass tabs for supporting lead weights, and thick plate glasses on each side in brass frames with guards, and a front round glass, likewise framed in brass, streamed with the white glories of the sun as though feathers of fire blew from it down the breeze.

Phyllis stood up. The shape was so monstrously novel, she felt, if she remained seated, its presence would be too oppressive. The right flipper of the figure rose to the helmet and opened the front window, and a portion of the features of Mr. Dipp was revealed.

“Would you think me a queer fish, Mrs. Mostyn,” said he, “if you met me under water?”



"If I was a mermaid," she answered, laughing, "and you threatened to stop, I don't think I should wait."

"Fancy Mr. Dipp making love in that dress in a coral grotto," exclaimed Captain Mostyn.

"He has got men to pump sighs into him," observed Mr. Benson, "but how would they escape his lips?"

"And you sink in that dress to the bottom of the sea?" said Phyllis, deeply interested.

"Yes, mum, yes," answered Dipp, in rolling greasy notes; "I step down a short ladder, catches hold of a weighted line like this," he raised his arms, "and slide down it."

"And where do they pump air into you?"

He touched the parts of the helmet.

"And if you feel faint or ill, what do you do?" said Phyllis.

"Pull my signal line."

She looked at the strange figure, then glanced at the sea.

"You have wonderful courage," she said.

A laugh of gratification filled the chambers of the helmet.

"You want your wits, ma'am, whether you call it courage or any other term," spoke the voice behind the window. "Not long ago some divers went down in Australian waters to find a torpedo that had sunk. They had scarcely disappeared when they signalled to be hauled up, and they came aboard half boiled, having gone down in water where there was a volcano."

"Stand by all three royal halliards—mizzen top-gallant halliards"—rapped out Captain Mostyn, in the quick harsh note of the sea command. "Helm there, let her go off two points. In with you, Phyl, before you're drenched, and send Prince with my water-proof."

The squall had put out the sun, and the sudden

gloom made the oncoming mass seem wilder and harder than it was. It was livid in the brow, white at the base, scarred and mouldering in half a dozen dyes of dirty vapour on the breast, with shreds and rags and tatters of stuff flying off it into the thick blue it was discolouring and would immediately blacken. Flash! the stroke was spiral, crimson, dazzling, and, as though a mine had been exploded, the roar of thunder was a single blast of noise. Then the ship was rushing in the first of it, royals and mizzen top-gallant-sail clewing up, flying jib and main top-gallant staysail hauling down to a hoarse bawling, lee scuppers sobbing with rain; the brine, white as milk, seething smooth as silk along the depressed bends, the taut weather-rigging and running-gear shrilling or tromboning in diabolic concert as though five hundred cats were making love, with a lion roaring at the noise.

But, as I have said, it was a squall you could see through. It swept its shrieks betwixt the masts with a second flash and a second great gun of the skies in the grey mess to leeward, whilst the sea began to snap and lift in sudden leaps of foam blown into smoke. Soon the weight of the wind sank. You saw the sunlight on the weather horizon, and presently they were singing out at the royal halliards, with blue sky over the trucks, and large, lazy, magnificent masses of cream-breasted cloud in the weather heaven painting violet shadows on the water, and the ship was brought to her course, having closed, during the rush of the squall, a brig, on the lee bow, to within a mile and a half.

There is no fairer picture in the world than a shapely well-clothed sailing-ship newly washed by rain, when the sun is shining. She sparkles with gems of the beauty of the rainbow; her decks flash as she rolls; she leans from the breeze, and her side glows over the cold sea-snow; the delicate shadow of wet adds loveliness to the

sky-yearning curves of her heights. She walks in grace and glory, and her path is a light upon the sea. Phyllis came out of the cabin. She beheld this picture, and with an eye quick to love the highest when it sees it, stood still in admiration. Her husband's gaze was upon her, and if she saw beauty in his ship how much more that was beautiful did he witness in his wife!

"How near that little ship is down there, Charlie."

"She is a brig, and I twig the tricolour just hoisted at her trysail-gaff-end."

"What long words you use at sea! Try-sail-gaff-end. Four words to signify one thing. How would single-word Benson relish your lingo, Charlie?"

"A brig hangs up a trysail and a ship a spanker. Confuse these things, Phyl, and farewell to Britain's glory. And pray, missy, what's the difference between a brig and a snow?"

"I'll answer if you'll explain the difference between a blouse and a bolero."

"Blouse is right enough, but it's kidding me you are, ducky, when you talk of bolero."

She laughed, with all the love of her heart for him in her face, and said—

"What's a snow if that yonder's a brig?"

"That yonder may be a snow, for all I know," he answered. "A snow is a brig with a mast abaft the main-mast, upon which you set the trysail."

"What clever people you sailors are. You must have a language of your own; you are too great and fine and good to converse in the easy speech of the shore. Who first invented this romantic dialect of royals, top-gallant-sails, and trysails? I have read a good deal in Dean Swift, but the lingo of the sea is much older than 'Gulliver's Travels.'"

Suddenly her eye caught something in the sky on a

line with the weather lower fore-topsail yard, and she cried—

“Is it a black planet? Good gracious, Charlie, look!”

He looked, and saw a balloon, big as the disc of the moon and yellow as cream, against a background of snow shot with rose and violet, and burning with the glory of God at the shoulder it gave to the sun. The captain sprang for his telescope. He took a long and thirsty look, whilst Phyllis, with one finger to her eye, stood close behind him ready for the peep-hole he must hold for her.

“Let me see it,” she cried.

It swept in and out until curiosity grew frantic for gratification. But who on earth can hold a telescope to a girl's eye and keep the thing she wants to see steady in the object glass? It is a good sign, to be sure, when a girl is obliged to seal her eye with her finger; it proves she cannot wink; but it also reports that she will need training before she becomes mistress of the art of the telescope. Phyllis saw nothing but a large yellow globe that sped up and down and then fled from left to right without impressing a single detail, a lonely picture upon the retina.

Mr. Benson came bundling out of the cabin.

“Hallo!” he cried, following the example of the others, and looking up. “What have we there? A balloon? All this distance from land!”

“Two men are in her car,” said the captain, speaking with his eye at the glass; and slowly depressing the telescope as he spoke, he continued, “I can follow the thread of their grapnel line. Yes, by George, there's the grapnel, dangling about twenty feet above the sea. They mean to run her foul of that brig. They *may* hit her, if not then another ship. That's their scheme. They are in deadly danger, and want to get home.”

How the balloon happened to be all that way out at sea who is to say? She may have been blown from the land. But what land? She may have been filled and sent soaring from the clear fore-castle of an ocean steamer. But no matter how or why, those two miserable men in the car of that balloon were in their doleful situation; their sense of their ghastly extremity was visible in the dangling grapnel moving like fingers attached to the tentacle of something monstrous, living and air-borne, blindly feeling along for succour.

“Is she descending?” asked Benson.

“Not to judge by her grapnel.”

“If they miss that brig they’ll perish,” said Phyllis.

“That’s more than likely,” answered Mostyn, watching the motion of the balloon with the impassioned and pulsating interest a true man will take in any circumstance which involves risk to human life.

“I wonder how long they’ve been up in the air blowing about?” said Phyllis.

“Long enough perhaps to have eaten their larder clean,” answered her husband.

“Frightful! They may be starving, and dying from thirst.”

The young wife fastened her eyes on the balloon with a face so sweetly transparent in its disclosure of her simple and affecting thoughts that no great actress, not even Mrs. Jordan, the one delicious and perfect romp of the English stage, the most artless in her incomparable art of all actresses past or present—not even that delicate beauty could have subdued nature to the expression of Phyllis’s face which Mr. Benson with furtive eye found more admirable in the sense of wonderful than the balloon.

Mr. Dipp emerged. He had shed his equipment of helmet, gun metal glories, and shape of penguin composed

of indiarubber, and was the stout, good-humoured person in pilot cloth we have before met. A greasy "Ullo!" announced his perception of the balloon, which apparition so greatly affected him that unconsciously he pulled out a piece of black tobacco and a knife and fell to cutting a pipe-load, his features working in a way that changed the mystical heaven of feeling in Phyllis's face to the light of merriment.

"What's she a-doing of down here?" cried the diver.

"They'll never make anything of ballooning," exclaimed Mr. Benson. "Air's not water and it's not land."

"Babies know that," said Mr. Dipp.

"I mean," continued Mr. Benson, talking as usual for effect with special reference to Mrs. Mostyn, "that air don't supply you with resistance enough to get locomotion. Where's your friction? Where's the wheel's grip of the metal. Where's the paddle's clutch of the water it scoops? Where's the solid opposition which enables the propeller to force its fabric onwards? You may think to stem the air, and by all sorts of highly dangerous arrangements you may drive a contrivance, shaped as you please, on a quiet day at three or four miles. But what's going to happen when the wind blows at ten miles, fourteen miles, thirty miles, fifty miles an hour? Would you like to be alone with a clever man, Mrs. Mostyn, in a flying machine that has busied your companion for twenty years, as if a razor or a revolver or a grain or two from a chemist's shop were not surer, speedier, and less messy than a body that has fallen through a thousand feet——" he broke off; in fact, nobody wanted to hear more.

But I am bound to say that, to my humble way of thinking, Benson was right in his arguments. The utmost uses the balloon can be put to have been proved. They are many and valuable. But it is a dream of Bedlam,

magniloquently ridiculed in "Rasselas," that man with his feet off a solid platform of plank or soil shall vanquish the element that bloweth as it listeth, and renders him when high hung, like yonder two poor devils, as tragically helpless as a drowning man.

Silence fell upon the ship; it was a moment vital with suspense. Would those iron claws, moving slowly under the path of the balloon, catch a hold of the brig's rigging? The men dropped their several jobs, and neither Mostyn nor the second mate said anything to them, being profoundly intent themselves. The brig was now about three-quarters of a mile distant, upon the *Dealman's* lee bow. It was manifest that her people wished the balloon should hook them, for sometimes they luffed so as to shake the way out of the little vessel, and sometimes they starboarded their helm and kept her away, which tactics clearly indicated that the Frenchman wanted so to contrive it as to be fair and full in the road of the grapnel when the balloon was over her.

"They must bear a hand," said Mostyn. "See that squall on their track?"

A large body of snuff-coloured vapour, gilt-edged by the sun, with grey shafts of rain leaning from its belly to the darkling waters, which were spitting and rushing in short, savage springs under it, was fast overspreading the sea to windward of the brig, and again Mostyn sang out for hands to stand by the royal and other halliards, as his ship was heading so as to nose the smother before it should howl and flame and sweat itself out.

"By Heaven! they've caught on!" shouted Mr. Benson.

The slant of the balloon proved without telescopic interpretation that the grapnel had hooked the brig. What part of her? Apparently the fore-topmast stay and one fluke had pierced the canvas, and in its own way

had riveted itself. A flash in the squall was followed by a loud burst of thunder, which pealed across the sea in volleys like the reverberation of hills, and with deep excitement all who were looking saw that the first of the rush of the wind had caught the balloon, which was slowly descending, and that the great bulb-like power, straining at its moorings, was towing the brig's head dead away to leeward, mocking the helpless helm and the useless lay of the yards. One could only guess that the men in the car were letting out gas as fast as it would shoot, and hauling in the slack of the grapnel line. Before this extraordinary incident could be consummated to the desire of the beholders aboard the *Dealman*, the fury of the squall, flashing lightning from her viewless eyes and bellowing thunder from her lips of cloud, with rain-like hair falling from her storm-swept head, rushed upon the brig and balloon, and put them out as a cloud puts out the stars.

Phyllis fled to the cabin for shelter. The rain swept the ship like a league of carbineers. It blew twice as hard as t'other had, and not only were all three royals clewed up—the top-gallant halliards were let go, staysails hauled down, and the spanker, whose gaff was a standing one, brailed in, and the ship fled through the smoking wrath of the moment, the sky as black as if the moon had clapped her shutter on the sun, vapour-like remnants of crape flying through the topmast rigging, and the whole ship slanting and plunging as though, from truck to mastcoat, she shrieked to her people to tell her what the shindy was about.

When the grey riot was a blinking, shivering shadow to leeward, with a thickness of rain upon the water all about, the sea opened to windward to a sudden glance of the sun, and the French brig, with her top-gallant mast gone, swam out clearly almost within hailing distance on



the ship's weather quarter, and they could see her people running about, some climbing the fore shrouds and some bustling at the braces, for those small French vessels go well manned. But where was the balloon? Not a shred of it could be traced; not a sign of the car, though the telescope disclosed the grapnel still fast to the stay in the cloth there and a length of line streaming astern.

"She blew adrift, and's gone down with her car and its people," said Mr. Dipp.

"Can't we find out?" asked Phyllis.

It needed but a very small manœuvre to bring the brig within hailing distance. Mostyn from the top of the deck-house shouted, "Brig ahoy!" But Phyllis was too full of excitement, and the sense of sudden and violent death, to admire the dripping fabric, with her chequered side and rain-shaded canvas, and the curtseying and the rolling which washed the brine bright to the headboards, and left them waterfalls to the next lift, which slanted the deck into a vision of caboose and long boat and tarry men in blue blouses and crimson shirts. A figure on the brig's rail flourished his hand and shouted something in French.

"Have you the men belonging to the balloon on board of you?" bawled Mostyn.

The man shook his head, not understanding. A row of heads, French fashion, studded the bulwark rail to listen and stare, but it was clear there was no English dictionary in that hooker's cargo.

"Who speaks French here?" said Mostyn, looking at his wife, at Benson, and Dipp.

Phyllis waited for Mr. Benson to speak. Benson, whose knowledge of the elegant and finely-edged tongue of Victor Hugo, Balzac, and Molière did not extend beyond the word *garçon*, sent a smile with his eyes through his eyebrows to his forehead, and said—

“If Mr. Dipp will not try them in French let him attempt German. Some of them may understand the language of conquest.”

“Modern languages is a dead broke joke with me,” answered Mr. Dipp. “If they was Greek now, or even Romans——” He chuckled and looked at Mrs. Mostyn to help him with a laugh.

“Ask this, Charlie,” said Phyllis; and she translated into the French, which she had acquired at Miss Loadem’s school for young ladies, High Street, Woolsborough, this sentence, “Have you saved the men belonging to the balloon?”

Mostyn parroted his wife’s sentence with a scoundrel Brummagen accent. But the fellow on the brig understood him, and yelled back simply “Non.”

“Repeat this, Charlie,” said Phyllis. And in graceful Woolsborough French, she said, “What has become of them?”

The Frenchman pointed to the water over the stern, and no further intimation was necessary, or perhaps practicable, seeing that the *Dealman*, which had sheeted home her light canvas, was streaming ahead out of speaking distance of the brig through the long ocean sunshine and through the little seas which curled in waterfalls under the brisk and pleasant breeze, and over the undulating shadow-islands painted by the cream-breasted clouds.

## CHAPTER IX

### BENSON'S CHAMPAGNE

THE tedium of life at sea in a sailing-ship belongs to that order of sameness which Sydney Smith was thinking of when he recalled his first cure of souls in the middle of Salisbury Plain. But this is true of human life only, whose index upon the ocean circumnavigates its dial plate of twenty-four hours with the heart-taming iteration of the tick of the pendulum. The monotony is not the sea's; her passions, her moods, her broodings are as fickle, tempestuous, lightly-winged, holily serene, or wickedly fierce as the heart of woman; it is the inner, not the outer, life of the ship that repeats the story of the relieved wheel, the growl over the mess kid, the malediction flung at the red-headed mate, the askant glance, blue as a bayonet in the Irish eye, red as the gory poniard in the black iris of the Dago, at the captain whose heart is as vermin-ridden as the biscuit his owners shipped for his men.

On board a Babel steamer, whose steel ceilings and walls resound the dialects of Europe, whose saloon, crowded with gorging and guzzling travellers, is swept along at twenty-five miles an hour, and spans the distance from Bristol to London before the last toothpick lurches for the smoking-room; in such a mail steamer as the *Babel*, whose voyage is of five or six days, the dulness of the internal life weighs upon the spirits of even a Yankee

professional joker, and men seek relief in cards, in lies, in tobacco, and brag. To the inhabitants of this water-borne city, an abandoned brig, with a frozen man lashed in her rigging, is a break, a diversion, a rememberable circumstance, something for the stuttering prose of the gaping reporter ashore, and it may season the fireside talk afterwards. A collision is another break, but, then, all must be well with the *Babel*; it is a three-masted vessel close-hauled, in charge of a Norwegian skipper, that must founder in a fog which thrills with the groans, cries, and shrieks of the drowning. It is something to talk about. This is the first time the *Babel's* captain was ever in collision. His behaviour was admirable. Mrs. Gamp forward, and Mrs. Chuzzlewit aft, affirmed it so. Without moving a muscle he heard that the fore-compartment was not full, and that his ship was safer than when she went into dry dock. He ordered two boats to be lowered, and the ship having disappeared, the *Babel's* syren set up its hideous iron throat, as though a man, after the Hogarthian theory, should saw through a signboard sitting outside of it.

Therefore, it will be supposed that the incident of the balloon and the brig was an interlude charged with all merit of rough comedy and hard tragedy.

"I don't suppose," said Mr. Benson, who stayed with the others on top of the deck-house, whilst the leaning ship, sparkling with the lights of the afternoon, streamed in a bed of soft, white, singing salt along the edges of the feathering surge, "that you'd have got more out of them had you signalled with the International Code."

"Not so much, perhaps," answered Mostyn. "What's more expressive than the downward pointing finger when the sea is under it?"

"Is it possible that a balloon could be kept afloat in

the air all this distance from the place it started from?" inquired Phyllis.

"Look here, Phyl," said Mostyn, "you saw it, didn't you?"

"Of course I did."

"Then Mr. Benson will tell you that an axiom, accepted by all philosophers, is this: if a thing has happened once it is established as a truth. If it never happens again, no matter. No man shall presume to say that what took place once can never take place more."

"Ay; but look here, capt'n," said Mr. Dipp. "Supposing a diver should sink three 'undred feet. It never happened afore. Gord knows what the pressure would be. He comes up as a show, and the doctors explain that he's made sorter fish-like. They find lungs that ain't like mine or yourn. They discover a belly hard as my helmet with muscle. Perhaps his blood mayn't be like yours or mine. Am I going to be told, because an onnatural man gets into a diving dress and lowers himself three 'undred feet, that soch another will ever again come upon the earth whilst she keeps on turning out people like you and me? If you says no to that, as I say no, why, then I says, says I, how does the circumstance of a thing happening once prove that it must happen again?"

"Might, I said—not must, Mr. Dipp."

"What my husband means, Mr. Dipp, is that the balloon, having been seen in the air yonder, existed, and, because it existed, such a phenomenon might happen again," said Phyllis, who was always amused by Mr. Dipp's play of expression when his mind was in labour.

"Take spirits, Phyl," said Mostyn.

She looked at him, astonished by his remark and its apparent irrelevancy. Mr. Dipp burst into a laugh.

"A two or three-finger nip, captain?" he asked, with an oily chuckle.

Mostyn viewed him sternly. He was master of the ship, and Dipp was diver, whose social horizon, whether ashore or afloat, was not sufficiently boundless to admit of his taking liberties. Mr. Benson sent a sidelong glance at the stern handsome face of the man whose eyes were upon Dipp.

“Take the question of ghosts,” said Mostyn, relaxing a little in face and tone. “Suppose three men, whose sanity is beyond dispute, whose intellect is of a high order, affirmed that whilst they were in company in the day or in the night they saw a spectral being, a something shadowy and visionary, a thing that seemed a thing, and that wore the likeness of what might have been the clay whose essence it once was. I should hold that these men spoke the truth, that they had not been misled by any fallacy of the sight, because they were all three agreed on one point, and they could serve no interest of any sort by conspiring against the credulity of vulgar and ignorant people. Their evidence to me would absolutely establish the existence of the thing called ghost, and since one was seen others might have been, and others continue to be, seen. But evidence about ghosts is so tainted by superstition, fear, blunders of the eye, prejudice, racial blood-convictions that no man of average mind will or could believe in spirits.”

He emphasized this last word with another stern look at Dipp, who was listening to him with the attention of a plain, sincere, illiterate man struck by another's fecundity of thought and breadth of vocabulary.

“Now,” continued Mostyn, “here is a ship full of people, all whom have seen the balloon, and whether such a sight so far out at sea was ever witnessed before matters not. It has been seen once.”

“That's good reasoning, capt'n,” said Mr. Dipp, who was busy again with a plug of tobacco.

Mr. Benson's gaze, in a furtive way, hovered over the face and figure of the young wife, in a manner to remind you of a wasp that hums with wings of electric tremors over a bowl of sugar before it settles. She well knew, without looking at him, he watched her; but there was nothing yet to render sapid the dry austerity of the thought, the fancy, even the fear which such a face and such a man must kindle in any woman to whom superficially he was but commonly courteous.

And what was the truth about that balloon? Had it depended upon the report of the *Jeanne D'Arc* it must have gone a-begging. In a word, the brig went down with all hands when she was two hundred miles from her port, and the people of the *Dealman* were obliged to wait until they returned home to supply a log extract to the newspapers which fetched this fact into print. At Rotterdam, Professor Heine and Herr Hoch rose into the air in the car of a balloon in the interests of the science of bacteriology. Their main motive was to make experiments, by the most delicate set of instruments ever contrived, on the effects of the atmosphere at any altitude on microscopic organisms. To what extent the observations of these intrepid voyagers of the deeps of heaven would have proved valuable must be left to conjecture. It was clear that a steady gale had blown them out of the sphere of knowledge into the region of terror, and that for days their experiments had been conducted, not with a view to improving their acquaintance with the bacillus, but to hooking on to a ship to save their lives.

When our grandmothers spoke of eyes or no eyes they merely signified all the world to nothing. For it is true that if you do not exert your observation your soul will wither within you, and the majesty and the splendour of God will be eclipsed to your life. I have known one who could not look upon a star, who could not muse upon

a daisy, who could not converse with a ploughman, who could not mark the restless heapings of the sea upon the shore, who could not view the motions of a fish in a bowl, or a bird winging down the breeze, but that he found liberal enlargement of his knowledge and a closer approach to the spiritual conditions of this miracle of universe. And I know one who has travelled all over the world, who has wealth and opportunity of observation, who remains what he was in the beginning, the greatest ass that was ever clad with human ears, who can tell you the several national drinks of Europe, and pay out a cable scope of yarn about a billiard match. But to him the meadow, grove, and stream, the earth and every common sight, assuredly wear no apparel of celestial radiance; the mountain towers to the blind eye, and the cataract blows its trumpet to the deaf ear.

Now, Phyllis had eyes, beautiful eyes, which she could employ to loftier ends even than looking love to love. She would have adorned one of our grandmother's tales as an observer. She had come to sea as the captain's wife, it is true, and was dwelling by his side through a tender and moving artifice; but she had also come to sea with the eyes of a poetess, who witnesses beauty in what to others is the commonplace, who can feel the pulse of human nature in the obscurest artery of human life, who, in short, being born a lover of nature, is loved in return, and receives in all variety of impulse, mood, passion, and feeling, revelations of meanings, and expressions of beauty, which are concealed from others not cast in her mould. Therefore the days were not to prove a monotonous routine to Phyllis. A ship was not to be a fabric of timber or iron, and spar and wing; she found this example of man's industry and amazing intelligence as much alive in its own way as the dolphin that flashed its rainbow through the green curl at the bow, as the



sea-mew which she sometimes mistook for a patch of the foam that freckled the hollow.

There is no good in going to sea for a voyage in a sailing-ship unless you carry Phyllis's mood and talent of eyes with you. She was never weary of overhanging the taffrail and watching the swell swooning into valleys, or the nimble flight of the foam-feather off the wake to the breath of the lateral breeze, and building down into the sea, visions of marble halls which at night would be gilded or lighted by mysterious stars of phosphor; and deeper yet would imagination penetrate, so deep that even the manifold experiences of Mr. Dipp ranged bald alongside the gorgeous and fantastic pictures of her mind.

You will suppose that her husband helped her nautical education. One evening, shortly after the ship had struck the north-east trades, he led her by the hand forward on to the forecabin to show her one of the glories of the deep. The sea was unusually phosphorescent, and the weather-bow of the ship shouldered the water into seething sheets of foam and fire, whose bulk raised the spectacle to the sublime. She watched the flame-lanced race spreading aft from the rejoicing roar of the cutwater. She looked up, and beheld the sails doing their work stirless as though from the sculptor's chisel. She put words to the music in the rigging; she found the wide night of keen-cut stars, sliding beyond the shadowy wing of trade cloud, repeated in the spangling of the mirror which the sea for ever holds up to the lights of heaven.

But the part of the life that interested her most was the part that concerned her husband most, and this side of the calling was the life of the crew. Mostyn in his day had lived with Merchant Jack, slung alongside of him, swallowed the poor fellow's nauseous pea-soup and shared in the sufferings inflicted by shipowners on the men who make their fortunes. Naturally Phyllis was

keenly interested in the ways, doings, and work of the sailors. She had sometimes read of seamen as people who in fine weather lounge ever the windlass ends, and smoke their pipes until it is time to dine or to go to bed. She was astonished to discover that the men of the watch, when on deck, were ceaselessly worked at every possible job the imagination of mate and boatswain was equal to. Her husband took her into the galley, and showed her the furniture of the ship's kitchen, the coppers, the dresser, the cook himself. She tasted some of the sailors' pea-soup, and honestly told the cook that it was disgusting.

"But what can a man do with peas like this, mum? Peas which was never growed in a garden nor in a field, but was cast in a shot tower, lady. Fit only to grind the grub in a hen's crop. And slush like this, mum?" cried the cook, showing her a handful of ships' peas, and pointing with his chin to a dollop of the fat of pork that was sweating like cheese in a temperature of ninety degrees.

"But they make good soup on shore, and tin it," said Phyllis. "Why do not they serve it out to the sailors? Would a shipowner allow his cook to send up such pea-soup as that to his table?"

But the captain stood by, and the cook durst not argue.

She desired to take a peep into the men's sleeping quarters, but Charlie would not permit her to show her pretty little Roman nose in Jack's den.

"I'm not afraid of sailors," said she, "they'll not molest me."

"I dare say not; who would? Some things must be left to the imagination, and the sleeping berth of the merchant sailor should remain an illusion with pretty young girls."

She wanted to know if Jack's life at sea is, on the whole, more comfortable than it is ashore.

"Well, you know, Phyl," said he, as they strolled aft, "some kind-hearted folks drown their kittens in warm water. Ashore or afloat is merely a question of hot and cold with Jack. Drowned he is, sooner or later. He may be drowned in hot water ashore by crimps who pillage him, by Sues and Polls who drug him, by professional agitators who plunder and then starve him. Certainly he has a hot time of it whilst going under. At sea it is all cold water, very cold. Could a husband tell his wife how Jack drowns ashore? The men who put the truth into books write in vain. Women shrink from the subject and men drop the narratives of brutal violence and the rest of it with loathing and doubt. Let's keep our idealism sweet. Let Jack remain the Jack of the song."

"I hate him in the song," cried Phyllis. "When he becomes a rover, a corsair, a heart of oak, a handy man, and goes to sea with Eliza Cook, and worse versifiers than even Eliza, he is the poorest creature in the world, a rolling, drunken, hitch-up-my-band, turn-my-quid, a-life-on-the-ocean-wave sailor, a fellow you'd not trust for three minutes at that wheel, who'd fall from aloft if he dared to climb, and who believes a sheet to be a sail."

If Phyllis watched the ways of the crew, she also watched the ways of her husband and his mates, and discovered that the situation of the captain of a merchantman is the most unenviably responsible in the whole catalogue of unremunerative posts. His owners send him to sea undermanned, and sail he must, or Captain Van Dunck of Rotterdam is perfectly willing to fill his berth for pounds a month less; and though his ship be undermanned to a degree that is not to be expressed in numbers, since three-fourths of the crew are foreigners who do not understand the language of the Red Ensign,

and are therefore almost useless, yet sail he must, for Mynheer Van Dunck is for ever present, and for ever eager to oblige. She learnt, by talking with her husband, that if the master of a British ship meets with a disaster, he may be tried by a man who is seasick if he looks at a wherry, and whose decision is wholly determined by the views of Royal Naval gentlemen (retired), who throughout their professional career had been protected from the inclemency of the weather by cones hoisted ashore, who could clap fifty men on to a rope when the culprit at the bar could not command the services of five, who could court-martial a man for an oath or even a look when the master-mariner in distress had no remedy but the official log-book, and a choice among any number of examples of nautical depravity at the first port he reaches, as substitutes for the offenders who have run.

But the interest she would have been glad to take in chief mates and second mates, was stubbornly resisted by Mr. Mill, the "first officer," as the occupant of this uneasy berth is sometimes sarcastically termed. I have elsewhere faintly glanced at him. He was a moody, gloomy man, in whose carcass years of salt experience had hardened his spirit, as the beef and the pork of the sailor grow harder and harder in the white pickle of the cask. Phyllis could not get near him, in a moral sense. Her policy—but it was her nature too—was to be kind, gentle, tactful to every man under her husband to whom she had anything to say. But Mill, I tell you, was not to be got at. His mental hide was thick; his sensibilities none; all his answers, all his statements were as brief as intelligibility would permit. He was a mule of a man, and dwelt apart; he did not betray a single characteristic, peculiarity, weakness, such as you will often laugh at in men who have used the sea for years. I have met old sailors who have argued like a missionary with a Zulu

upon the beauty, wisdom, and inspiration of the Bible. Others have held strong opinions on politics, and gloomily foretold that if the Government continued in office the country must go under. Others proved exquisitely diverting in the sea prejudice; they had given up the sea, and that possibly was the reason why they swore they'd sooner sign articles for a water-tank, and wash round the world in her, taking their chance, than sail in an iron vessel. Timber was intended by God Almighty to float, and sailors, from the flood down to a few years ago, knew this and built according; what notions, then, was they to form of the hintellectuals of the men who riveted iron plates, any one of which, if you dropped it into water, would sink like a slate off a house-top?

But if Mr. Mill thought at all, if he held a prejudice, or was governed by any sort of prepossession, he locked his ideas up in the safe of his mind, and was always the same surly mule of a man, more after the type of the longshoreman perhaps than the deep-water Jack, with a sullen eye for the weather and a sullen yelp for an order, and a sullen acceptance of the master's instructions, and a sullen walk in any lonely part of the after deck when he had charge. And yet, though he was one of those men who negatively tease you into a habit of aversion, he was perhaps the last man in the ship to suggest himself as equal to breaking out of the harness of the mule into lawless action. His was a face to decorate a bench in a Bethel. He would pass, he did pass, with Phyllis and Mostyn, as a sulky old salt who had or had not a wife and troubles ashore; who was chagrined by idle expectation of command; who abhorred the life he was compelled by hunger to follow; who was too proud for the workhouse, and too old for the middle watch, and who on the whole was, socially, to be carefully neglected and professionally endured whilst he did his duty.

The second mate was one of those colourless characters which memory identifies by some external symptom or label, such as a face of freckles, bandy legs, a cast in the eye. He sneaked into his watch and sneaked out of it, ate in the cabin when the others had finished, and exhibited a disposition to be familiar with the men, which Mostyn told Phyllis was the surest of all sea signs of a bad officer.

The ship had been about three weeks from port, and was in hot weather, with wrinkles of gold under the setting sun, and variable moods of wind and sky between, when it fell to the lot of Phyllis to discover, with no uncertainty in the perception, that Mr. Benson was in love with her. She could not have gone to her husband and told him this, because outside her conviction, which was not evidence, she would have been absolutely unable to furnish any proof. It was not her conceit; it was not the interpretation of vanity; quite the contrary, her discovery made her secretly unhappy, or at least very uneasy; it was the instinct of her sex, that gift of intuition which was Eve's bequest to the women of the earth: it was the mystical light which one soul has the power to fling upon another by which it reads the thoughts that are brooding there. She perfectly understood that Benson was in love with her. She also perfectly understood that Benson's love was that of a man whose passion is not wholly the animal's. For example, she felt that if Benson had met her before her marriage he would have fallen in love with her, proposed to her, persecuted her with the pursuit of adoration, and all this without the least reference to her father's ducats. She never by chance met his eye but that she felt, as it were, and felt with recoil and disgust, the heat of the hairy creature's heart, which was not, by the smallest sprinkling, the more well-flavoured to her because she felt that in its

elements, and even in its aim, his love was about as pure as a man's can be who covets something which the Bible would damn him for thinking of.

What was there to do? Charlie had eyes in his head, and was a young husband on his honeymoon, and jealous as Othello; but he seemed to see nothing; certainly he said nothing, and how could she begin? Besides, it was a situation that demanded the exercise of all the tact she possessed. First of all she would be acting faithlessly to her husband's professional interests if she brought Benson and him to high words and frowning brows. Next, a quarrel and its consequences must make the voyage distressingly uncomfortable, and what would be her feelings if news of such a trouble aft got forward amongst the men? She would never be able to show her nose on deck. If a fellow hanging in the rigging glanced down at her she would imagine he grinned in his sleeve, and the careless spit of the brown froth of his quid into the sea would carry to her fanciful sensitiveness a meaning it certainly must lack while things stood in their present posture.

The *Dealman* was still to the north of the Equator when one afternoon Phyllis and her captain, and Dipp and Benson might have been found seated on top of the deck-house sheltered by a little awning, for which the carpenter had fitted the necessary stanchions. It blew a small hot wind out of north-west, and the sails pulled with languor. The bright blue liquid heave, taking its hue from the turquoise eye of heaven, was scarcely brushed, and silence, which heat deepens, lay all about the ship, from the flash of her wet side to the hazy winding of the horizon, from the reel of the truck to the highest reaches of the infinite ether. But inside the ship was the ship herself freighted with human labour, moods, and passions, and so there was some noise, but not much. The tread

of the men's naked feet when they moved was as a cat's. The canvas hollowed in and out from its yards with slaps that would fetch a creak or groan from the fidded masts. A light blue haze hovered over the line of bulwark-rail, and one thought of steam and wet straw. A spun-yarn winch was clicking on the forecastle, and Prince made the dinner crockery rattle as he washed up the plates alongside the galley. Mr. Mill stood in the shadow of the mainsail, with a look of sour indifference on his face, and upon the coaming of his cabin door, without a collar, and in his shirt sleeves, sat Mr. Swanson, smoking a pipe, and manifestly, though furtively, exchanging from time to time a word with Prince.

There was a small show of good cheer on the top of the deck-house in the shape of a tray of champagne and light sweet wafer cakes. Mr. Dipp smoked a pipe. His head was sheltered by a white cap, such as the country milkman wears when, in midsummer, he roars his clanking cart from the farm to the town, with perhaps a cherry-cheeked charmer holding on for a lift as far as the dress-maker's. Benson was airily attired in an alpaca jacket, which, as he was built with a full run, as the shipwrights say, scarcely suited him so well as his city and suburban costume. He smoked a cheroot, a very mild Manilla, the vapour of which he would expel in gapes. Mostyn was also smoking a Manilla, the gift of Mr. Benson. Phyllis was dressed in white drill and the round straw hat of the seaside. She would have passed for eighteen years of age. I do not desire to go on praising God's gift of face, hair, eyes, and figure to this young wife, but it is sure, from what I have been told, that this afternoon she was never more fascinating, whether because of the glow of health in her cheek, or of the light of the sea in her eyes, or the smile of love on her lips. It was her honeymoon, and whenever her husband was by her side, though Mr.



Benson should be seated directly opposite, her mood was tranquil. The champagne and cakes were a slender expression of Mr. Benson's foresight for himself. He had gone to a universal provider in Bayswater and had selected for his private consumption during the voyage sundry cases of champagne and other wines, delicacies in china and in tins, cigars and other such matters, all which had been received by the mate when the ship was in dock, and carefully stowed. It was kind of him to share his champagne and other good things with Mrs. Mostyn and her husband. Fortunately Mr. Dipp did not drink champagne. When offered a glass he had answered that he was not a young woman. He preferred a glass of old Jamaica rum to the best wine the Continent can send to this country, and they were talking about this matter now, as we find them seated upon the deck-house.

"My own opinion is," said Mr. Dipp, "and I was told it by a publican of thirty years' standing, that there's no real champagne to be 'ad. The little that's made goes to the crowned 'eads of the Continong and the Far East, where the rupee's a-rolling."

"This is very good champagne," said Benson, lifting a bottle. "It's an honest dry wine. They charged me five pounds a dozen. If I'm cheated I don't want to know it. Mrs. Mostyn, another glass."

In his hairy way he beamed upon her, extending the bottle.

"No more, Mr. Benson, thank you."

"Half a glass."

Mostyn took the glass from his wife's hand and held it to the bottle, and Benson, with a smile which I have described, and shall describe no more, frothed it full.

"Now, captain."

He charged Mostyn's glass, and seemed perfectly happy in being kind to the young married pair. Dipp

sent rolls of tobacco-smoke through his nose. His palate appeared to be seated inside his nostrils.

"But I grant you this, Mr. Dipp," said Benson. "You'll find in the market a great deal of champagne that's no more wine than rhubarb's magnesia. Did you ever hear of Lambert the barge-owner?"

"A great corpulent man with a boy's face," answered Dipp. "Yes. He was once showed to me in the London Docks. The gentleman who pointed him out, said—'What I like about Lambert is, he's worth £80,000, and shows no side.' 'He shows plenty of belly, though,' said I."

"Well," continued Mr. Benson, "Mr. Lambert was in the habit of laying champagne down by the hundred dozens in his cellars. Some party in the city sent him a sample of champagne warranted as the finest. He forwarded the sample to an analyst, who reported that there wasn't a trace of grape, and that its constituents were in every chemist's shop. How d'ye like that cigar, captain?"

"It's a delicate smoke for a Manilla," answered Mostyn.

"They're very old," said Benson. "Ah, Mrs. Mostyn, give me the old," he exclaimed, with tepid enthusiasm, unconsciously paraphrasing Goldsmith's *Hardcastle*: "old books, old wines, old cathedrals, old friends, old paintings, and old slippers."

"And old women?" asked Mr. Dipp.

Benson looked as if hard of hearing, and Mostyn, with a laugh, said—

"When they're our mothers."

"How long have you been married?" asked Mr. Dipp.

"It happens that I never have been married," answered Mr. Benson, in a voice that made you think of

Pecksniff when that gentleman insisted upon blessing an acquaintance.

“And I’m not here to blame you,” said Mr. Dipp, looking at the bowl of his pipe. “You may talk sentimentally about ’usbands, wives, and children, but I tell you the experience of most men is that the greatest kindness they ever received came from strangers and ’irelings.”

“You and I must argue that point, Mr. Dipp,” said Phyllis.

“Oh,” said the diver, “nothing is ever true in particulars. The captain of course don’t agree. ’E allows that you showed him more kindness than ’e’s ever got from all his friends put together, including relations.”

“Not a word about relations—I hate ’em,” exclaimed Mr. Benson. “I know a stockbroker who married a Dissenter for the sake of her rich connexions. D’ye think they ever bought a pound’s worth of consols through him? No, sir, it was Jones, Brown, and Robinson of the street who enabled him to earn a living.”

Phyllis thought of her father, and Dipp of a brother.

“I’ve been admiring that there alpaca garment of yours, Mr. Benson,” said the diver. “I believe I’ve come aboard a bit too thickly clothed. Whenever the ocean’s talked about, somehow or other it’s always the North Sea that enters my head. This,” said he, pulling out a white-spotted scarlet pocket-handkerchief, with which he wiped over the whole surface of his face as though he cleaned a window, “is going to be a hot job, and if you’ve got another jacket like what you’re a-wearing of I’m quite willing to hand you the tailor’s price for it.”

“I have not such another jacket,” answered Mr. Benson; “but I shall be happy to lend you a washable linen coat. Certainly, if I were you, before I got into a jacket I should consider the feelings of others.”

“You don't set me any example in that line,” said the diver, with a grin at the chair which Mr. Benson's figure loaded.

“Your jacket's a good fit,” said Mostyn, hoping, by a faint sarcasm, to help the diver, whose honest, plain-spoken character he had at once, and now cordially, recognized and admired.

“It's a Cheapside fit,” said Mr. Benson, looking somewhat vacantly into the horizon, as though he could wish the subject changed.

“It has amused me,” said Mostyn, admiring the ammoniated white of the ash of Mr. Benson's cigar, “to think of a West End nob getting himself up, with the help of his valet, for a visit to the lady of title he hopes to marry. They are three hours in company with the cheval glass. His tie is exquisite; his coat Poole's; his waistcoat a dream; his boots have reached the topmost platform of Japan; his spiked moustache guarantees the highest quality of self-satisfaction; his hat, for silkiness and curl, might be the despair of every dude in Pall Mall; his gold-knobbed umbrella is furled into the dimensions of a cane; he fixes a glass in his eye, and, after three hours, departs, adored for his beauty by the valet who made him. He is scarcely in the middle of the road when a hansom-cab knocks him down; and now his hat resembles a ripe fig that has been sat upon, his choice umbrella is in halves, Poole is ripped down his back, and instead of being a nob he is a mess, which is picked up, washed, put to bed, and waited on by a doctor.”

“Your jacket, Mr. Benson, has nothing to fear from hansom-cabs,” said Mrs. Mostyn, laughing.

Scarcely had the words left her lips, when a man, who was standing on the sheer-pole in the fore-rigging, shouted in a voice that resembled the explosion of a nine-pounder—

“Man overboard!”

## CHAPTER X

### MOONSHINE

It is commonly believed that the most heart-thrilling cry at sea is "Man overboard!" This is one of those sea-propositions which have been parroted so often and so widely that, like many another fallacy, it is generally accepted as a fact. But, in reality, the most startling cry that can be raised at sea is "Fire!" and next, "Breakers right ahead!" or "Under the lee bow!" next, "A steamer's red and green lights right aboard of us!" Because fire at sea threatens the destruction of numbers by the most shocking of all deaths; and breakers right ahead is a menace of the crash of timber, the skating noise of rending iron plates, the inrush of water, the panic of fifties or hundreds, the capsized boats, and black figures of the drowning spotting the ghastly breaches of the sea as the grease-smooth water is pitted by the thunder drops. And the collision——!

But "man overboard" implies the jeopardy of one human life only. It startles, it is true, and it is a sad cry if the ship is steaming or sailing fast, and the man can be seen with white appealing face, and black hair, plastered like sea-weed on his forehead, stemming on the swing of the sea which rolls melting from the quarter, sliding the struggler, in a few heart-beats, afar in the trouble of the wake.

Who had fallen overboard from the *Dealman*? Mostyn could not see over the side from the top of the deck-house.

He rushed down the steps, followed by his wife, Benson, and Dipp, and, looking over the rail, they all saw Mr. Swanson, the second mate, clumsily struggling in the clear profound as he drifted past, shouting, "Help!"

Instantly Mostyn hove a lifebuoy. It fell close to the man; but he had neither the art nor the coolness to reach it. I speak of the clear profound. Over the side, the brine went for the space of a fathom burnished as a burning-glass, and you'd think you could see, God knows how deep, into the majestic secret. But a small fiery breeze sang like bees aloft, and the lighter sails gave the ship way, and wire-like ripples, harp-wise, widened off the cut-water, and had you looked over the stern you'd have seen little eddies and blue bubbles and tiny foam bells springing from the moving rudder and dotting the short, glazed scope of wake like snowdrops.

"Aft here, and lower away this starboard quarter-boat. Bear a hand, men, for God's sake, before that shark there gets him," shouted Mostyn, in a voice that trembled with the passions of the moment.

His quick sea-trained eye had descried, a little way under the blue surface, the trembling sheen of the back of a tigress of the deep, hung too low for the dorsal fin to signal the existence of the deadly monster by the familiar wet flash. If the unhappy man was to be saved, there was nothing for it but a boat. But Jack Muck is not Navy Jack. He may be willing, but he lacks the springing heel and, above all, the talent that comes from constant drill, which always was, and still remains, the bluejacket's incomparable characteristic.

The sailors of the *Dealman* sprawled aft. They slapped the deck with their naked feet; they floundered at the tackles of the boat; they were slow in releasing her from those bands of sennit called gripes, and then, even as the sheaves squeaked in the davits, a loud shriek broke from

the lips of Phyllis, and she fell fainting on the deck, mercifully preserved from further sight of the hideous orgies; for not one but three sharks had got hold of the wretch in the sea, and *now* nothing was to be seen but a star-shaped surface of crimson, red as the portals of the hell of the monks in the sweating glare of the sun; and *now* appeared a nightmare spectacle of headless trunk with a shark at each arm tearing furiously and whipping foam with a tiger-lash of tail. And *now* the purple surface spread smooth and unbroken, and so the tragedy of a few minutes sank out of sight, leaving the boat with men in her hanging over the water, every face as pale as heart-sickness could bleach it through the dyes of weather, and all turned into images of wood by this sudden confrontment of individual calamity, bloody and appalling.

Mostyn had carried his wife into the cabin. Benson was retching in spasms into the water. Who shall tell what was passing in Mr. Dipp's mind? Perhaps he wondered what would happen if three sharks should attack him in his diver's dress.

"Aft, some of you, and hoist this boat," sounded the sulky note of the mate.

And the boat rose slowly to its place, helped by the men in her who hauled upon the falls.

How did it come to pass that a man, seated, pipe in mouth, on the coaming of his deck-cabin door, should, in a few minutes, and without benefit of clergy, be sentenced, executed, and entombed under seals of voracious flesh? The unfortunate man had felt the heat; he rose from his batten-like seat with an idea in his head. He would seek the refreshment of coolness by lodging himself as close as he could to the surface of the sea, where the side of the ship would shade him from the biting daybeam. He climbed over the rail, exchanging a word all too familiar

with the man on the sheer-pole, and dropped into a narrow platform affixed to the ship's side, called the fore-chains or channels. Few ships in these days are thus equipped. The rigging is set up inboards with screws. The *Dealman* spread her shrouds as of yore with dead-eyes and landyards, handy for the carpenter's axe if the cargo shifts to the hurricane that buries the lee top-gallant bulwark-rail. The second mate may have dozed, and, dozing, fallen overboard to his destruction. This is how Mostyn summed the thing up, and sailors are commonly right when they turn their bull's-eye of conjecture upon sea affairs.

Phyllis came to presently. Her husband fanned her and damped her brow; but when she opened her eyes she witnessed the horrible sight again in memory's instant presentment and shuddered. It had been far worse than seeing a man hanged or guillotined, or garrotted or impaled.

"Did he suffer much, do you think, Charlie?"

"No," he answered, to comfort her. "One of them bit his head off, after which it was like tugging at the branches of a dead tree."

Here Mr. Benson came in, as black as night in the hair, and sallow as the dawn in the rest of his face. He held his hand tight pressed to his stomach, and presented a figure proper for the pencil of John Leech, what with his jacket and the round of his "run," as the shipbuilder calls it. In silence he took the decanter of brandy from a swing-tray, filled a liqueur glass, drank it, and sat down.

"You are now without a second mate," said he.

"I certainly am," answered Mostyn.

"What shall you do?"

"Find another."

"I am distressed that Mrs. Mostyn should have been an eye-witness of such a ghastly scene."



They suffered him to enjoy his distress without comment.

"I am often surprised that men should be found to fill the shrievalty," said Mr. Benson. "I certainly could not attend an execution."

"Would you like to lie down, Phyllis?" asked Mostyn.

"I'd rather go on deck. The cabin's very hot."

"If you want to attend to the duties of the ship, captain," said Mr. Benson, with a strain of sickness in his effort of courteous look and speech, "I shall be happy to see to Mrs. Mostyn."

"I think I can manage, thanks," answered the captain.

The two walked out, but Benson stayed to take another nip. He was glad that Mrs. Mostyn had fainted. He should have been ashamed of himself had she seen him vomiting. He was very much in love, and knew it, and meant it, and by no means wished that he could not help it; and as the young wife stepped out of the cabin, Benson's eye pencilled her shape and swaying motions upon his passion, and when she was gone he took his second glass.

I say that this unwholesome man, Benson, was in love with Phyllis; but what did he mean to make of it? What was he going to do? The husband was aboard—a handsome, stern, strong man whom she adored—who adored his wife with a honeymoon passion. What did Benson hope to reach? Did he ever dream that that dark blue eye would be lighted for him with a look which could never shine for her husband, who would go mad if he detected it? Benson was a chartered accountant. He was accepted as a respectable man in the city of London. He was wise in his own walk of life, and could audit the accounts of even an insolvent solicitor, yea, to the

production of a masterpiece of balance-sheet. You will suppose that the moral feelings of such a man had become so tautly complicated by the severe and chilling influence of mathematics that the intellectual part of him resembled nothing so much as a ball of twine, of which you must first get hold of the right end, and, when you pull, all is twine that comes. It is indeed difficult to imagine the spectacle of a chartered accountant kneeling with the sentiment of a poet at the feet of Venus. But he knows very little of human nature who shall predicate of any man a character he will work out to the final period of the prophet's conjecture. No image is truer than that of Holmes', the Charles Lamb of American literature, who says that you shall sometimes see a green flat stone lying in an old garden which, when accidentally turned over, reveals to the sunlight scores of wriggling horrors, nightmares of vermin and of scurrying bugs. It happens often that a respectable man is turned over, and then, as the Welshman says, "you shall see what you shall see."

What chartered accountants in general are capable of, who shall decide? But how Mr. Benson behaved himself, to what degree the devil inside of him was enlarged by the hand of passions never to be encountered in Thread-needle Street, to what extent he proved himself mortal, fallible, and disappointing as a respectable man and an ardent admirer of Bentham and Adam Smith, you shall discover, if your patience do not fail you.

The impression produced by such an incident as the destruction by sharks of the second mate takes some time to wear off aboard a small sailing-ship to the north of the Doldrums, where the breeze is inconstant, where the cat's-paw is extinguished by the sullen plash of perpendicular rain, where the watch brace the yards about five or six times in four hours, and where sometimes the ship sits

bewitched like the lady in Comus, transfixed in her liquid bed, with the sunlight on her canvas trembling in silver under her dark blue shadow. On board such a ship as this there is

“ Nothing to talk about,  
Nothing to hawk about,  
Nothing to make an old woman cry ‘lawk!’ about.”

There is no dance last night to serve as a topic, no dinner party, no new play. If you want excitement you must create it, and from such diversions as Mr. Swanson yielded to the spectators of the *Dealman* the mariner will mutter, deep in his gizzard, “May the Lord deliver us!”

But, in the course of another week, memory grew hazy, and even Phyllis found the thing passing out of her mind. At the end of that week the ship was in six degrees north latitude, and on the whole fine weather had been hers. Matthew Walker, the boatswain, whose whiskers and nose, lying slightly athwartships through falling down a hatchway when overtaken in liquor, formed a picturesque addition to the quarter-deck when he stumped it on the lookout, had replaced the second mate. Had it not been for Mr. Benson’s secret, though controlled, passion for her, Mrs. Mostyn would have accepted the voyage as a delightful yachting trip, with nothing to do but to admire what was glorious in the heavens and the ocean by day and by night, to sit and talk with her husband when his time was hers, to study the motions of the ship, to listen to Mr. Dipp’s recital of his own and the experiences of others, and to be entertained by his homely practical views of life. Indeed, it was one of her recreations to help her husband in the navigating part, and let no lady doubt my assurance when I tell her that, before the *Dealman* was up with the line, Phyllis could take an observation; grasping her husband’s spare sextant, she stood, a

sweet and charming figure of a young Englishwoman beside her man, and ogled the sun, and screwed him, with white fingers, down to the line of the sea, until the fiery monarch broke from the fascination, and sank from the soft, blue eye more divine than any dew-laden violet he shines upon ashore. And when eight bells had been made, she would enter the cabin with her husband, and work out the latitude by his books. Her figures were as true as his, but she never rose to the height of finding the longitude, and all the astronomical problems, which addle the brains of the apprentices when they go up for their second-mate's ticket, she wisely left to Charlie.

But Benson was always on board. He was like an atmosphere in the ship. He permeated everywhere and everything. It was Benson in the cabin, and Benson on the deck-house, and Benson at the table. And it was Benson who talked political economy, with an occasional hedge-school flutter in the direction of poetry and the fine arts, to please Phyllis. But he was no fool; he knew that his genius dwelt in the ledger, and his excursions in the direction of Shakespeare and the musical glasses were few. Had he been a common sailor on board, the length of the ship would have separated him from the young wife, and apparelled in a jumper, and a marline-spike, he must have surveyed her from afar. Had he been Prince, the steward, with access to her presence, his posture would have been harmless as a servitor. But he was Mr. Montague Benson, representative of the insurance office, more important on board than even the captain. The poor girl deemed him a power, and he was amazingly courteous to her husband, of whom he could report as he listed. Further, she was there by his consent, and she was obliged to him, she was his humble servant for *that*, for he could have sent her ashore had he chosen to do so, and if his not doing so was ominous on one side, it was

handsome and gracious usage on the other. Her husband sometimes spoke of it, and yet he had nothing whatever to say about any sort of attention Mr. Benson was paying Phyllis; which would temporarily disarm the sweet creature of her fears, though they recurred with Benson, and, as I have said, as an atmosphere in the ship he was always recurring. He sat over against her at table; he dragged his deck-chair to her side, and how was it possible for her to say aloud what she thought, "Go away, you ugly, black, hairy animal! I distrust you; your conversation bores me. But I dislike most of all the spirit of your manner, the expression of your eye, that smile of courtesy, that level voice of social converse which the passion in you makes painful even to your sneak's gift of plausibility."

We dare not avow to one another what passes in one another's mind, else this earth were soon a shambles, and the last man like a negro, "Adam in mourning," to quote George Colman.

The most difficult passage in the day with Phyllis was the evening, when it was time to go below and before it was time to go to bed. The interval must be filled with amusements, and Benson offered to teach her chess, which, on her refusing, enabled him to bag her at draughts. She found it unpleasant to sit at a draught-board with Benson, even when the skylight was wide open, and the heel of a wind-sail kept the atmosphere fresh with the "salt-sweet" breath of the sea. But Charlie seemed perfectly satisfied when they were thus together, and she must please Benson for his sake, and to hold the ship happy.

Mr. Benson was good at sleight-of-hand, and did really astonish her by his tricks at cards. Mr. Dipp would occasionally help the evening harmony by delivering a sea-song in falsetto. You needed but to look at his neck, and hear his laugh, to know that if ever he exerted his throat

in song it would be in the pipe of the boy or the maid. He found out that one of his three men strummed the banjo and owned one, and on several occasions he brought the fellow aft. This man's name was Brown. Small wonder he could play the banjo, for in his day he had been a nigger minstrel, with a corked face, broken white hat, Gladstonian collars, and continuations stitched out of the stars and stripes. He sang a good song, and was airy in his utterances, with the graces of those popular stages on the sands of Ramsgate and Margate, and the beach of Southsea and Brighton.

No quainter sea-piece was ever painted by a natural conjunction of fabric, colour, and human aspects of several sorts than the inside of the deck-house submitted when the cork-blackened man played and sang. The night had poured her lap-full of jewels into the velvet depths; the moon glowed in the skylight; the glances of the lamp touched this ocean canvas into life; the queen of the little floating kingdom sat beside her husband, and I cannot think of her without recalling Steele's description of a portrait: "She had an orange in her hand, and a nosegay in her bosom, but a look so pure and fresh-coloured, you'd have taken her for one of the seasons." The table was hospitable with Mr. Benson's cheer. Dipp was a dab at a bowl of rum punch, of which he sometimes partook too heartily; but the truth of wine was with him a proof of qualities which one liked the better as one saw into them deeper; his merriment of drink was without depravity; his laugh was frequent, his joke was candid, and never would his smile have been profounder than when he had become speechless, which, by the way, did not happen during this voyage. Mr. Benson was not far from Phyllis; but that, to be sure, was not his fault, for in that cabin they never could be parted by more than the width of the table. The corked man sang, and Benson smiled, in unconscious

illustration of Hamlet's thoughts—"a man may smile and smile and be a villain."

Mostyn was as well pleased with Dipp's music-hall songs as though he had been a schoolboy in a holiday, tipped by an uncle, and out on the spree. He laughed consumedly, and Phyllis's flute-like laughter timed his, for his enjoyment was hers, and she loved her man the more for his ingenuous display of the sailor's character.

For it is true that no man more relishes the trivialities of the earth—and what are its English comic songs but these?—than Jack who is fresh from a voyage in which he has heard no sweeter music than the curses of the mate, no funnier words than the mutinous extemporized doggerel of the "chanty." Mostyn was commander, but never went there to sea a fore-mast hand more soundly and rootedly a sailorman than he. On these few occasions of the fine tropic night, the humours of burnt cork, Dipp's lifting and falling glass of rum punch, the tallowy smile of Benson the hospitable, with eyes often askant on the fair face, the fair form of Mostyn's wife, had you peered through the open door of the cabin you would have caught a sight of the Jack Mucks of the ship in a shadowy heap about the main hatchway, listening, and often from that shadowy heap broke a growling laugh of delight in a song, a laugh reminiscent of the Liverpool, the Newcastle, the London East-end music-hall, with its pathos which fails to make strong men weep in spite of bad grammar, and its humour, which is always successful in shaking the ribs, and most especially the ribs of poor Jack.

The ship was in about five degrees south when one of these harmless evening festivities came along. At half-past nine (three bells) in the first watch, Dipp's man having drunk his grog and made his *congé*, the captain stepped on deck, and Phyllis went with him. Instead of mounting to the deck-house top, they passed along the

alley-way between the house and the bulwarks, and came to a stand at the rail out of earshot of the man at the wheel, if they did not raise their voices. The air was cross, and very scant; the yards were braced for a wind on the port beam; the countless suns of heaven sparkled in the indigo profound of the tropic night. The ship had way, but she made no noise, save when, now and again, the sleeping breast of the deep swelled to a larger suspiration as though the great mother dreamt; some sail aloft then cracked a pistol-shot into the silence, and the shrouds and rigging, counterfeiting the echoes of the shore, strained in a little confusion of tongues.

Hand in hand the young couple stood, and would have spoken, but utterance of thought was arrested in them by the sight of the rising moon, whose dawn was a blush which changed to silver as they watched. The moon is a symbol of death, and the companion of sleep. She rolls, airless and lifeless, along her course, and her lustre is the gift of the sun, who, in this image, may be likened to God. It is fit that that shining disc of death, which we call the moon, should purify and beautify into the fairness and tongueless eloquence of marble sculpture everything that her beam touches; whether it is the ship in full sail which the orb transforms into a vision of pearl and silver wire, or the noble cathedral which she whitens, and whose windows she adorns with silver stars, or the lowly cottage in a sleeping dell, whose ferns stand bleached as ostrich plumes; for she sweetens even the labourer's cot into a fairy fancy. As a symbol of death she does well; for she fables by her shining the power of death upon life, that uninterpretable power which purifies the spirit and frees it from the soil which the sun exposes.

"I've had my dose of salt-water, Phyl," said Mostyn, "but I'm never weary of that sight. It always carries me ashore, and I am walking under the stars, with trees about



me, and a bed to go to, and a fire for roasting chestnuts, if it's winter."

"That's the picture I've most often tried to create in thinking about the sea and what it means," she answered. "Look how the light shines under her, like the wake of a ship streaming farther the swifter she rises. Do you think she's inhabited, Charlie?"

"By what sort of people?"

"Like you and me. I can't imagine any other sort."

"She has no atmosphere, Phyl. D'ye know what that means to the likes of you and me, honey-bird?"

"Not a bit."

"No lungs, no voice, no digestion; in short, no nothing of all that makes you and me."

"We couldn't breathe, you mean."

"Nor make love even in whispers, dear. If you fired a cannon from a volcanic hill in the moon, which you couldn't, no thunder would follow. We are so contrived as to be in the unfortunate situation of not being able to manage without an atmosphere."

"Well, the one we have is sweet enough, with that moon to gild it."

She drew a deep breath of placid enjoyment, and looked at the moon, with a tiny moon in each of her eyes, as though the satellite was a manly sweetheart, who saw babies in what he peered into.

"I wonder," she continued, "what Adam Smith or Jeremy Bentham would have to say about such a picture as that. Is there any utility in it? Is it meant for the greatest happiness of the greatest number? If so, you and I seem alone in enjoying it. I don't see a sign of a man anywhere about whose attitude shows that he knows the moon's in the air."

She was right; and so was Jack, for there is constantly happening a great deal of watch on deck in Jack's

life, and a seaman would be talked of as a ship's idiot who chose to keep awake and admire the moon rather than nod out forty winks over his folded arms, ready, even in his crouching dose, for the call of the mate.

Her philosophic references brought Benson into Mostyn's head. Benson and Dipp were on the deck-house. Each blew a cloud and scented the air, and Dipp, who was slightly sprung, or cocked, or slewed, or muzzy, or boozed, or tipsy, or drunk—every cup has its shade of meaning, and the vocabulary of inebriety is more copious than its stages—lay down the law. Charlie must therefore talk low.

“If Benson, the utilitarian, has no eyes for a moon-rise,” said Mostyn, “I believe he knows a pretty woman when he sees her.”

“Don't let him hear you,” exclaimed Phyllis, turning her head to cast a glance in the direction where the law was being laid down.

“He greatly admires you, and who's to blame him?”

“I don't like to be made uncomfortable.”

“Has he once made you feel so?” he asked, with a curious sea-note of command in his tone, which augured ill for Benson if he had erred.

“Never once.”

“It would be impossible,” continued Mostyn. “Beauty is given to a woman for the admiration of men. She knows it, and she courts it, and she embellishes herself to keep it, and often to prolong it, until her charms become a vice in her old face.”

“Yes; all that's very true,” said Phyllis.

“I'm so much in love with you that I should be piqued if Benson did not admire you. You are my all—my sweetest all—and who likes his all, when it happens to be the choicest of God's works and gift, to be neglected.”

She watched the moon in silence.

“He was kind to let you stop. I don’t forget that. A man in my situation meets with little kindness at the hands of those set over him. Let his admiration proceed; it is a tribute; it is the natural homage of the male eye. How can it possibly expand to any degree that shall prevent him and me from keeping the peace? He may prove useful to me.”

“Yes,” she exclaimed quickly. “That thought, or hope rather, is always present.”

“If you were alone in this ship, going out to join me at Staten Island, and this man was with you—alone, I mean, with the power he enjoys; for the skipper and mates would of course be his humble servants—and he paid you close attention, I could understand your uneasiness.”

“I don’t say I am uneasy, Charlie.”

“No, sweet; and I don’t want you to work yourself by imagination into any mood of uneasiness. I am with you. I command here. Let his admiration illustrate itself by a very pleasant behaviour to me, by offerings of champagne, cakes, and cigars. As to his mind—who is it that says, God hides from every eye but his own ‘that hideous sight, a naked human heart?’”

“Young,” she answered. “It’s in the ‘Night Thoughts,’ I think. He was a parson, and how dared he write those words, knowing—for he wrote well, and thought wisely—that at root people are infinitely better than they seem, and that, as Tom Hood says, most of the evil that is wrought comes from want of thought and not from want of heart.”

“Poor Tom Hood was a sufferer who spat blood and puns all his life, and wrote the ‘Song of the Shirt.’ How shall a memory such as his be fitly honoured?” said Mostyn, looking at his young wife’s face, pale as a nun’s in the moonlight. “I’m not jealous, Phyl.”

She laughed.

"I'm proud that you should be admired. It's a natural effect, and if I miss it in a man I despise the wretch for his blindness. Don't let Benson tease you—that's all. Admiration stales with observation. Do you remember the old saying—

" 'For to dance without doors  
Is the way to be weary before we get in?'

Let the hairy Benthamite dance. We may pipe him to capers useful to us when we get home."

"Do you suppose he has influence?"

"His position in this ship shows that, and if the salvage be a success, and there is every reason to believe it will be, I'm certain he'll be glad to be useful to me."

"Capt'n," broke in the boozed voice of Mr. Dipp, "'ow 'igh is Table Mountain."

"Don't know, I'm sure, Mr. Dipp," answered Mostyn, who did not mean to trouble his mind to remember.

"I say it's all ten thousand foot," said Mr. Dipp, swaying slightly as he stood at the rail on top of the deck-house, "and Mr. Benson won't allow that it's more than five."

"Our minds think double, as our eyes see double, on certain occasions," said Mr. Benson, coming to the rail alongside Mr. Dipp. "Isn't that a charming prospect of ocean, Mrs. Mostyn?"

"How can it be charming if it 'asn't got nothing to do with perlitical economy?" said Mr. Dipp, with a greasy hiccough in the laugh that attended this sally.

"It only wants a vision of the Phantom Ship to make it perfect, Mr. Benson," exclaimed Phyllis.

"Look 'ere, Mrs. Mostyn," said the diver, talking down to her with a dusky flourishing arm, "folks may laugh at the Flying Dutchman, but I'm for believing

that yarn's as true as every hallegory should be. For ain't the Dutchman a curse whether ashore or afloat? Ain't he always getting in the road of people belonging to other countries? Ain't he turning out our workmen, clerks, and sailors? The very parson'll be a Dutchman soon, and so'll the beadles and the sextants. They're the ants who are going to whiten the bones of old England; and sarve us right," he continued, erecting himself with drunken dignity, "for standing by and looking on whilst they manufactures for us, and cooks, and waits upon us, and runs our ships and 'otels."

"You're thinking more of Germany than Holland," said the captain.

"I'm a-thinking of the men called bally Dutchmen. Excuse me, I'm sure, Mrs. Mostyn;" and here he laid himself over the rail and flourished his hand in tipsy deprecation of the adjective he had used. "But I'm an Englishman, and, when I think of them Dutchmen, my blood boils."

He jerked himself erect again.

"Did you say just now that admiration stales with observation?" said Phyllis, softly.

"Yes."

"Is that moon stale to you?"

"She is a thing of unchanging beauty. I refer to the admiration of what is beautiful, but passing and withering."

"As, for example, a woman's face, Charlie?"

"Yes, a woman's face, if you like that illustration."

"How long do you give me to grow stale?"

All this was spoken very softly, though some words which the diver was then dropping to Mr. Benson must have effectually sheathed the ears of both of those gentlemen, had the voices in the alley-way been louder.

"You are my wife. And is my love founded on your

face, do you think? We shall grow old together, and our admiration at eighty shan't be stale, though it won't be young. The admiration I meant was that of Benson——”

“Mrs. Mostyn,” sung down the diver, overhanging the rail like a wet hammock, “when I was a young man, I had a bootiful, powerful, tenor voice, and I might have made pounds a week by it if I hadn't gone to sea or took to diving. And what do you think was my favourite song? Although it was originally wrote, I've been given to onderstand, for what's called a basso—ain't that the word, Mr. Benson? Him that sings deep, you know.”

“Bass, Mr. Dipp, bass we call it in London.”

“What do you think that song is, or I should say was, as you never 'ear it now,”—and exalting his fat figure, he sang in his falsetto—

“There was a jolly miller once  
Liv'd on the river Dee;  
He work'd and sang from morn till night;  
No lark more blithe than he.  
And this the burden of his song  
Forever us'd to be—  
I cares for nobody, not I,  
If nobody cares for me.”

He burst into tears, with a loud exclamatory tipsy sob, that was like saying, “Yaw!”

Two or three sailors in the shadows forward murmured in laughter.

“You had better turn in,” said Mr. Benson.

“Who the devil are you addressin' of yourself to?” exclaimed Mr. Dipp, projecting his chest, cocking his head, and speaking with a boozed temper in which you heard no hint of tears. “Turn in yourself, sir. Why, it ain't ten o'clock. This 'ere night ain't a-shining for the

likes of you. Why," he continued, with a greasy chuckle, "I dare say that moon ain't 'alf so pretty to a perlitical philosopher as a bran'-new five-shillin' bit."

Mr. Benson descended the steps. Mostyn laughed secretly with all his might. But though Dipp had undoubtedly allowed himself to be overtaken by liquor, yet he had sung his little song well, albeit his pipe was a falsetto; and the ship had been silent whilst he sung those English words to their brave and hearty old setting, and Phyllis had been moved in this brief passage whilst she listened. Dipp's voice was echoed by the canvas; the sound of his notes died away in the radiant distance over the side. The spirit of home was strong in the song, and the stronger because the words came to her ears upon the wide, wide sea. She did not guess that Dipp blubbered because he was drunk; the sob of the man seemed the natural expression of a heart affected by memory. But Mr. Benson was approaching them.

"Light on the lee bow, sir," roared out a man on the lookout on the fore-castle.

Mostyn fetched his binocular glass and instantly distinguished the bright mast-head light and green side lantern of a steamer heading north about four miles distant.

"Let me look," said Phyllis.

The binocular, though each tube was long, was as easy in her hands as an opera glass, and, her husband's vision being hers, she caught the steamer in a moment; saw a little winking green eye and a steady stare of white light higher, a line of shadow, like a stretch of coast, dyeing the darkness. That was all; no funnels, no smoke, no mast, for the moon is a poor revealer of the secrets of the sea-night; she hints, she dissembles, it is too near or too far for the truth you get from the sun; she silvers a melting liquid ridge till the look-out's throat

tightens to the suppressed yell of "Breakers!" The steamer was moving rapidly; in a little while her green light was lost, and the white light vanished like a falling star.

Captain Mostyn was passing with Phyllis to the cabin. He stopped dead, and shouted, with his eye upon the sea far astern of the steamer—

"Good God, that's a rocket!"



## CHAPTER XI

### GOETZ'S SAFE

A ROCKET on any night, fair or foul, at sea will surprise even the most seasoned seafarer, and Captain Mostyn must be forgiven for ejaculating "Good God!" His eye had been upon the darkling space of water over the lee bow when he caught sight of a spark of light shooting, like a length of white-hot wire, into the star-clad heights, for an instant blowing like a scarlet rose on her stem, then dissolving in a rain of spangles.

He intently inspected the recess of sea whence the rocket had darted. Nothing was determinable; no shadow of sailing-ship, no light of steamer, no burning beacon in an open boat. In my own experience I have discovered that a powerful ship's glass will expose more in darkness than the finest lenses of the binocular or night-glass, and Mostyn, being of this opinion, fetched his telescope, and carefully searched the dusky surface on the lee bow. Absolutely nothing but the phantom tremor which the flat ocean at night casts upon the object-glass was the reward of his minute and critical inspection. He levelled the glass in the direction of the steamer whose lights had passed away. But she was sunk in the darkness, and gone to the human eye, no matter how aided. They all stood together, the captain, his wife, and Benson; and Mill, the mate, made one of them. Mr. Dipp remained on top of the deck-house, sucking a pipe, and silent in drunken thought.

“It must be a small boat that sent it up,” said Mostyn. “Something too little to see. Wheel there, let her go off three points. Check the weather main-braces, Mr. Mill.”

The watch came along and braced in the mainyards a trifle. The yards of the fore and mizzen served as they stood, for the ship was not to be kept off her course after she had arrived at the place out of which the rocket had sped. Whilst this business of braces was doing, a second rocket shot aloft exactly from the same spot, and broke in a faint flash like sheet lightning. Scanty as was the air, the ship found life in it, and shook some fire out of the sea round about her. Her pace might have been about three knots and a half, and they must wait an hour at least before solving this extraordinary problem of the first watch, unless the thing that fired the rockets helped time by approaching them. The moon shone bright on the starboard beam, the waters rippled in delicate lines of quicksilver under her. Her light extinguished the stars in a greenish silver glow round about her face, but her wake made the sea on either hand of it dark by contrast, and the darker the further it swept from that glittering walk.

“What do you make of it, Mr. Mill?” said Captain Mostyn.

“It’s a boat, sir,” answered the man, in his surly let-me-alone note.

“Why did they wait to send up their rockets until the steamer was out of sight?”

As the mate could not tell he did not answer.

“The steamer passed right over the spot where the rockets are fired,” exclaimed Mr. Benson.

“See! there’s another!” cried Phyllis, and a third rocket flashed in the sky, almost directly in a line with the flying jibboom.

Again Mostyn levelled the telescope. He overhung the rail, steadied the glass with a grip of the back-stay, and pored, one-eyed, upon the dusk ahead.

"What do you see?" asked Phyllis.

"Nothing."

"It's a boat, as Mr. Mill thinks," said Mr. Benson.

"Or an electrical disturbance," said Phyllis, "or the head of a submarine volcano sending up fireworks."

"Common rockets," grumbled the mate, "and there goes another."

"Some practical joke, I reckon, for our edification, left astern by the steamer," said Mostyn, who was nevertheless profoundly puzzled.

"Who pays the reckoning of such jokes," said Mr. Benson. "Rockets cost money; masters and mates run short; owners stick to business."

"Some fool of a passenger, perhaps," suggested Phyllis.

"An open boat, and a case of distress, I fear, Mrs. Mostyn," said Benson, who stood so uncomfortably close to her that she made a step nearer her husband.

"But why do they wait until the steamer is out of sight to send up rockets?" demanded Mostyn, fretful with helpless conjecture.

"Perhaps they couldn't wake up the only man who knew what to do," said the mate.

"There's nothing there, not even a boat, I'll swear," exclaimed Mostyn, with all the emphasis that superstition might give to speech, letting the telescope sink again after a long, dumb, and thirsty hunt.

Mr. Dipp, a-top of the cabin, began to sing in a maudlin way.

"Isn't it about bed-time, Phyl?" said Mostyn.

"Bed-time! with that mystery unsolved!" she cried, haughty with contempt at the suggestion.

"Blow, my sweet wind, blow," murmured Mostyn. "Mr. Benson, tell me the time by that scoundrel clock there."

"Ten-twenty-five," answered Benson, peering at the illuminated dial plate under the cabin pent-house. "Why 'scoundrel clock,' captain?"

"Because it robs us of time, Mr. Benson, and rings an infernal joy-bell at every hour it filches from us."

"But that clock don't strike," said Mr. Benson.

"Oh, what a fool is that man!" thought Phyllis, with a sigh of disgust; and she stepped close to the side to stare into the liquid gloom, which the moonlight left unvisited, and in which the stars were trembling like dew-drops on a wind-stirred bush.

"What's a-goin' on down there?" said Mr. Dipp, from the top of the deck-house; and his portly figure came, with a reel and a lurch, to the rail near the head of the steps.

"Somebody's sending up rockets ahead," answered Phyllis, who liked Mr. Dipp, whether in his cups or out, and was invariably sweet and engaging in her behaviour to him.

"Rockets, rockets," stuttered the diver. "What part o' the world's this? Anybody in want of a pilot?"

"There goes another," said the surly mate.

The spark broke and flashed.

"Extraordinary!" exclaimed Mostyn. "Here, give us another look through that glass. Nothing but black water, so help me God!"

"That wasn't no rocket," gurgled Dipp.

"What was it?" said Benson.

"A rocket in your eye," shouted the diver. "Is there ne'er a shooting star in all London?"

"He ought to go to bed," said Benson, keeping his voice to himself and the two or three about him. "He'll

be ashamed of himself in the morning. He has no right to drink, as a diver. Alcohol inflames the blood, and with that man's thick neck—he's our only diver, capt'n. He'll be expressing his regret to you to-morrow, Mrs. Mostyn, I hope."

"I hope he won't," said Phyllis, in a voice too low for Dipp's ear. "I liked his song, and I like the man."

If Mostyn had been away Benson would have rounded a sentimental period. Instead, he held his peace.

For the next three-quarters of an hour no more rockets were seen. Nearly all hands were on deck. The excitement and wonder forward was as keen as were those same sensations aft. The head-rails were studded with dark figures, every man eagerly straining his sight at the sea in obedience to the quarter-deck command to "keep a bright lookout, my lads, for anything resembling a boat." Very languid and tiresome indeed was the floating motion of the ship. From time to time she'd give a sleepy roll, and the slap of the cloth aloft was like a housemaid punching a pillow. Sail teaches patience; there is no speaking-tube in connection with the engine-room of the wind. You may hold up your moistened forefinger and whistle in vain. Mostyn laid his hands upon his wife's blouse to find if the dew damped it. Some blockheads contend that dew never falls at sea. I have slept through my watch on deck in a stark night-calm, with a small ensign for a pillow, and when a friendly kick disturbed my rest, I have arisen and found myself soaked and stiff. But Mostyn, who understood the theory of dew with scientific accuracy, was right in feeling his wife's blouse; the moonlight sparkled in wet along the rail, on the skylight, on the capstan head. Will the reader tell me whether the ship that night was cooler than the atmosphere, or the atmosphere than the ship?

Suddenly a brace of hurricane lungs almost burst themselves with the roar of—

“There’s a raft a cable’s length ahead, sir.”

Mostyn sprang to the side and saw it: saw a square, flat object, like the top of a dining-table, equipped somehow, but so mistily that the night-glass alone revealed an oblong, raft-like surface, with short stanchions and a life-line rove through them, and not a hint of a living creature aboard.

“Back the main-topsail; I must examine this,” shouted the captain. “Aft here, some men, and lower away the starboard quarter-boat. Starboard your helm.”

“Starboard it is, sir.”

“Where’s Mr. Walker? Call Mr. Walker.”

“Here, sir,”—and aft came the second mate or boatswain, just as Mr. Dipp, who had carefully descended half the steps, fell down the rest.

Phyllis sped to his help.

“No ’urt done—no ’urt done,” said the diver. “Thank you kindly.”

He got up unbruised and sound, and muttering, “Who’s been a-greasing of that ladder?” lounged through the cabin door, not too drunk to suspect that if he stayed after that fall he must excite mirth unseemly to his heroic calling.

The object—I cannot yet label it—floated at about twenty strokes of an oar off the ship’s bow. The ripple driven by the hot draught of air was light, the swell was scarce a pulse of sea, and the raft-like shape could be watched continuously. The moonlight shone bright, and it was easily seen to be a sort of huge box or locker, about twenty-five feet long by seven or eight feet broad, and drawing perhaps ten feet, with a freeboard of the height of a ship’s quarter-boat’s side when water borne. All along the top of this singular and inexplicable piece

of handiwork ran seats within the stanchions through which the life-lines were rove. At one end was a support for a bell, shaped like a horse-collar, and you saw the moonlight glistening in the bell, but the sea was so gentle that the clapper slept or swung without striking. Yet once, and whilst the men were busy at the boat's tackles, the bell struck one, a silver clear note, which, to a lonely man, would have been subduing to his imagination, combined as it was with the silence of the moon, and the ocean, and the limitless heights of calm made holy by the stars.

"Jump into that boat, Mr. Walker, and overhaul that queer fish out there. The rockets sprang from her, but how? I see a short scope of tube amidships with a white thing attached to it. Bear a hand, Mr. Walker."

The boat sank, the oars sparkled, the huge floating box was gained, and Mr. Walker, followed by another sailor, leaving three in the boat, jumped aboard it. Hardly had their feet touched the deck, or lid, when bang, whiz, flash, boom, went a rocket out of a little spout amidships, the mouth of which was instantly sealed by a heavy metal cap obviously operated by a spring. The man who followed Walker was an Irishman, who, shouting "Murder!" in the voice of panic, sprang over the life-lines and fell smash among his shipmates in the boat.

"Look out for another rocket, Mr. Walker," yelled Mostyn, from the top of the deck-house, whence he commanded a good view of the box in the moonlight and the proceedings of his people on it.

Matthew Walker was not only acting second mate, he was by trade boatswain, sailmaker, and carpenter, and, above all, an old shell, without a recoil in his body or an exclamation of alarm or surprise in his mouth. The weather had worked his face up into the aspect of a walnut-shell; his whiskers, which, when ashore, a barber

curled for him, at sea hung slack as a horse's tail; the instincts of the carpenter were his, and working at their fullest power, too, the moment the rocket exploded, and he cast his eye around. Here was human contrivance. Here was some enthusiast's patent. At first he took it to mean a deck-house intended to float off a drowning ship and save the lives of the people who had the good sense to sit upon those seats or crowd inside, and hold on whilst they waited. But no. This theory did not fit the carpenter's knowing eye. More was meant by this structure than a deck raft.

Bang, whiz, flash, boom!

Another rocket shot up within two feet of Matthew Walker's nose, and another yell came from the ship, and you heard exclamations in the boat alongside. Matthew Walker watched the metal cap shut down after the explosion, and, pulling out his knife, he sank on his knee, clear of the spout, but within reach of what proved to be a waterproof receptacle or envelope, a large square of white sheet-rubber, which he cut adrift and pocketed. Then he observed that he was kneeling on a little hatch fitted with a ring-bolt. He raised it, and peered into the blackness of a well.

"Send me a lantern, sir," he shouted.

The boat splashed to alongside the ship, and in a few minutes Mr. Walker was cautiously dangling a sparkling lantern just inside the square of hatch, with a man, but not the Irishman, out of the boat alongside of him, looking on.

"Hold this light, Bill," said Mr. Walker, and, grasping the coamings, he dropped his legs into the middle of the hatch and sank by the familiar sailorly expedient of lowering away by blocks in his arms called biceps. His feet grounded. The man handed down the light, and what Walker saw was this: directly under the spout was



a turret-shaped box, filled with the noise of machinery in motion, and even as he gazed he heard the stroke of the detonator, instantly followed by the explosion of the rocket, which signified to his acute perception as a skilled artisan that a belt of rockets, so placed as to be exploded in fours at intervals of time, was worked inside the box by machinery of a clock-like character. It was not for him to meddle with this turret-shaped contrivance, for he valued his life, and had no desire to be blown up whilst exploring the fruits of another's ingenuity.

"The man that put this together was a button short, I allow," said a Gloucester sailor in the boat alongside.

But if Mr. Matthew Walker had overheard this opinion he certainly would not have shared in it. This was no lunatic patent, but a clever device to preserve mails, specie, and lives, with an automatic signalman, warranted to keep his head in a panic. The lantern threw its light upon an interior divided amidships by a bulkhead. Walker easily saw that the contrivance was a model and an experiment, that no ship had foundered, that this box had been trundled over the side of the steamer that had passed out of sight, and that the water-tight bag he had pocketed would probably provide further and full information. So, handing up his lantern, he hoisted himself out of the hatch, put the cover on, got into the boat, and was rowed away to the ship.

"Mr. Walker," said Mostyn, putting his head over the side, "step on board. You men keep your seats in the boat."

Just then whiz, flash, bang! fled a rocket, making lightning in its explosion, and a gay firework in its gaudy cloud of sailing sparks. A great laugh went up from the ship. The sailors were beginning to understand the thing, and were diverted by these spontaneous and irresponsible appeals for help.

“Well, I think I can tell you all about it, Mr. Walker,” said Mostyn, beside whom stood Phyllis, whilst Benson was very close, and Mill not far off. “She’s an automatic signalling raft.”

“But who fires the rockets, and how many are there of them?” asked Phyllis.

Mr. Walker, in that slow if not nice conduct of tattooed arm which is a characteristic of the British merchant sailor, drew forth the waterproof letter and handed it to the captain, saying—

“This here was seized to the rocket spout.”

The captain pulled out a penknife, and slit one side of the white rubber open. The inclosure, when unfolded, was of the size of two sheets of foolscap pasted on end. The lantern was held up, and the captain read the paper. At the head of it was printed “s.s. *California*, from Melbourne to Liverpool,” under which was also printed these words—

“Goetz’s patent automatic floating safe for preserving life, mails, specie, and jewellery.

“Will the captain who picks up this model floating safe kindly communicate to—

“Gaspar Goetz,

“Muiderstaat 9 Amsterdam, Holland,

“1. How many rockets he counted discharged.

“2. The interval of time between the discharge of the first four and the next discharge.

“3. At what distance the bell was heard.

“4. The state of the weather at the time of falling in with Goetz’s patent floating safe for lives, mails, specie, etc.”

The rest of the paper was occupied by translations of the above into Italian, Spanish, German, French, Norwegian, and Russian.

"What's the hold like?"

"It's bulk-headed off into two."

"Anything inside?"

"Nothing but the box of tricks that fires them rockets," answered Mr. Walker, following, with a slow grin, visible by the mingled moonlight and lanternlight, the flight of another rocket, which was also attended by much laughter, that rumbled like groans along the decks.

"It is full of rockets," exclaimed Phyllis.

"I expect you'll find that the tube is loaded after the fashion of a Maxim gun," said Mr. Benson. "The last one can't be far off."

"She's lumber," said Mostyn, "and we have no room for the thing. But I'll take her in tow, and if it holds fair and smooth, Mr. Walker, you shall board her at sunrise, and give me a full report for an interesting log entry. Mr. Mill, get a line for towing that craft."

They got up a small wire tow-rope and paid the end into the boat, which rowed to the patent safe, and made fast, and the main-topsail was swung to a scope of tow-line which held the contrivance well astern, that her rattle of rockets should not drop amongst the sails and set the ship, as dry as hay aloft, on fire.

Phyllis stayed a few minutes to watch the picture of towing. The ship's paces on the moonlit heave of sea were the stealthy stalking of a ghost; she sneaked along the rain of moonshine and over the dimly gleaming surface as a silent sheeted spectre moves over the paupers' ridges in a walled cemetery. Such was the image that presented itself to the mind of the young wife. She yawned, and her husband said—

"Good night, dear."

"Good night to you, Mrs. Mostyn," said Mr. Benson. "I trust your dreams will not consist wholly of rockets."

She thought fit to laugh slightly, because she never

could forget that Benson was a power, though an inspiration of disgust and shapeless fear; and her husband took her into the cabin, gave her cake and wine, opened the door of her berth, kissed her tenderly, and returned on deck.

When she was gone Benson found himself weary.

“Hark!” said he, standing in the cabin door with Mostyn. “You’d think the ship was straining in a gale. It’s Dipp, snoring. How am I to sleep with the cabin full of that snore?”

“The sea’s a good nurse. She tucks a man up. She’ll cradle you to sleep, snore or no snore,” replied Mostyn, wondering if his wife would sleep, and talking to promote a hope of it; for certainly Dipp was not to be stopped. One knew what the result of man-handling him would be: a drunken splutter, a heaving over of a corpulent sweating body, a grasping grip of the bellows, and then the “music of the moon,” that poetical expression which Benson despised, and would not despise the less now because the moon was lifeless, and tuneless, and Dipp was otherwise.

“I hope he’ll not take to the drink,” said Mr. Benson. “I’ve observed a leaning that way. He began early with rum, I remember, and asked for milk. It’ll be a bad lookout for this venture if the only diver within thousands of miles takes steadily to the bottle. I don’t like to drop a hint; he resents things with an arrogance that’s offensive in a man of his position. You might put in a word. Why, the fellow might have broken his neck—he has much too much neck. You’re captain here, and he’s under you.”

“I don’t think he drinks harder now,” answered Mostyn, “than he’s been doing all his life. He has plenty of fat, which soaks up the liquor, and prevents it from attacking his head, beyond forcing him, I mean, to talk a little quaintly at times.”

"Listen to that snore," said Benson. "I object to strong language myself, but to me it's simply damnable."

"Take a three-finger caulker of brandy, and turn in, and the snore'll cease," exclaimed Mostyn; and he walked aft, thinking over his talk with Phyllis about Benson.

Eight bells had been struck; the starboard watch called; Matthew Walker was in charge of the deck. The safe astern almost stopped the ship's way, so light was the air of wind; but she was under command. The moon shone over the mastheads; her light was penetrating. The white fires of the stars sparkled as though fanned; the horizon had opened out, and there was a smell of salt weed in the draught. The captain looked into the binnacle, gazed at the thing they towed, swept the shrewd eye of the weather-wise around the glittering hall of the night, and said to Mr. Walker—

"Stand by for a breeze."

"Ay, ay, sir."

"Has that contrivance sent up any rockets since the last?"

"No, sir."

"How many rockets do you suppose are contained in the turret you described?"

Walker reflected.

"They are so arranged," he answered, "as to allow of a spell of time between their being fired in groups. It's difficult to guess how many there be. I allow there's a full twenty."

"Of which," said Captain Mostyn, after a pause, "sixteen have gone aloft. It's clever."

"Yes, sir; it's an idea, and it's been well thought out."

"It's so clever, and so useful," continued Mostyn, "that it will never be adopted. If it had been something guaranteed to go down with the ship, the Board of Trade

would probably insist upon its being used ;” and after giving Mr. Walker certain instructions, he went to bed.

At about a quarter before one the draught expired. The sails sank in with a sulky droop like the breast of a man after a deep sigh ; but almost immediately the water east-north-east darkened, and some wisps of cloud put out here and there a star, and in a few minutes Walker was shouting to the watch on deck to man the starboard braces. The first of the breeze had scarce more than the weight of a cat’s-paw, but soon there was a pretty bubble of water, a tropic melody of rippling like the madrigal of a brook over stones. It was all about the ship, and the visionary fabric aloft, chill and wan as a hill of snow glimmering through a Christmas dawn, heeled a little, and the cutwater began to purr, which is a good simile, for the ship’s stem was overlooked by catheads.

The noise on deck brought the captain out of the cabin. He had slept perhaps half an hour. No man on board a merchant ship has a right to self-ownership. He is the property of his employers. He signs articles for a working day which often travels twice round the clock, and this is as true of the skipper as of the boy. Mostyn immediately stepped to the helm to ascertain if the towage in the smallest degree influenced the government of the rudder. When he was abreast of the wheel a rocket soared, curving its line of fire with the wind, and the flash of its explosion was more vivid and lightning-like than that of any other which had burst before. The sense of the ridiculous was stirred by the spectacle of that oblong shape, which resembled a dumb barge in the moonlight, continuing to score the air with flaming appeals, ironical in their idleness and in their suggestion. The thing had not been made for towage. It wobbled like a traction-engine, man’s most drunken invention, with its stagger, lurch, and ludicrous air of lordliness. The ship was now

sailing, and the safe followed, and it lunged suds out of the mighty washing-tub till it looked to be awash. Mostyn watched her, and fell a-musing, but it was not Goetz, but Dipp, who was in his mind.

Benson's words had not greatly weighed with him. Nevertheless they rendered him a little contemplative. As master of the ship, he was deeply interested in the success of the voyage. If the whole foundered sum should be salved, he would do well. Dipp was the only peg on which the top could spin. It was true he had taken too much the night before, but on no other occasion had this happened. Mostyn did not think that Dipp would fall to hard drinking during the remainder of this outward passage. The point that more concerned him was the man's obesity, coupled with the addiction for liquor. The captain was one who, though comparatively young in years, and spending three-quarters of his life on the water, had pried a little into more than one condition of existence. Considering he was a sailor, he had read much and intelligently; but, better than that, he knew how to ask questions, and was not superior to intelligence in others and to retention in instruction. A friend of his commanded a Trinity steamer, which communicated with the lightships and disciplined by the sextant the errantry of the buoys. He had made holiday trips with this gentleman, and conversed with the divers, and particularly remembered the statement of a gaunt Scotchman: that full-blooded men with short necks should not dive, nor men who spat blood, who suffered from headache or deafness, above all, who were hard drinkers. He subjected Dipp to the Scotchman's recollected assurance, and found him too fat and too fond of rum. But, though he was commander of the ship, it was out of his power to order Dipp to reduce his fat before they arrived at Staten Island, nor could he possibly fasten a quarrel upon

the man for drinking. He drank, it is true, but certainly not to excess, and if Mostyn talked to him about drink, however cautiously, Dipp might "get the hump," or ask to be transhipped, refuse to dive, and so plunge them into a greater difficulty than if they suffered him to drink deeply and take their chance of his diving safely and sending up the gold.

Whilst he mused (which was not long, for human thought has a greater velocity than light, and will be walking with the risen dead at the Crucifixion or flooding the distant African trench with the blood of Britons, Boers, and beasts before the ray of a star, to be visible on earth some years hence, shall travel its first mile), he caught sight of a light on the weather quarter, and after a patient stare, distinguished the triangular lamps of an approaching steamer. The news was reported from the forecandle in a sleepy bray, and re-echoed by Mr. Walker. And in about ten minutes a large steamer, manifestly bound for the east coast of South America, loomed up in stately shape, a pole-masted steamer of about eight thousand tons with all lights out, save those of her needs, and her great black length slowing down to within hail, and showing like a length of Northumberland coast. The wind blew from her and brought with it the pulsing notes of the life-blood in her metal arteries.

How disdainful of the *Dealman's* noble show of canvas was the steamer's easy domination, her contemptuous reduction of speed to keep pace, her splendid capacity of swift departure that should owe nothing of conquest to the elements! Mostyn felt this as he stood on the quarter, waiting for a hail from some shadow or other behind the exalted weather-cloth.

"Ship, ahoy!" came the shout.

"Halloa!" bawled Mostyn.

"What ship are you?"



"The *Dealman* of and from London for Staten Island, South Pacific. What ship are you?"

"The *City of London*. Why have you been sending up rockets?"

As this question was put, bang, whiz, flash, boom! sped and burst another Goetz.

"What are you towing?" shouted a voice on the steamer, shrill with excitement.

Conversation was easy—the breeze was not hard; the steamer held her place on the ship's quarter, like a moon-touched stretch of rampart spotted here and there with sentinel lights.

"You may call it a patent box of crackers," cried Mostyn, in response to the question from the bridge.

"Why do you keep on firing those rockets?" shouted the shadow behind the weather-cloth above the wheel.

"They're discharging themselves, like sailors who run," bawled Mostyn.

"I don't understand! Who's aboard the rocket-box?"

"Nobody."

"Towing it out for Government?"

"Fell in with it."

Bang, whiz, boom! This final rocket, as it proved to be, made a fine light when it burst, and the big steamer glanced out as to a stroke of lightning, with a blue sparkle of brass work and glass, and an instant revelation of three figures on the bridge and a group of men on the fore-castle, and then the whole bulk of her sank back, wan and shadowy, into the spectral moonlight that was beginning to fly with cloud, coming and going like the radiant face of beauty which lifts and drops a veil of gauze.

"She'll set you on fire," came a shout from the steamer. "If she's derelict, cast her adrift! Good-bye, and farewell!"

The tongue of the engine-room bell was heard. So too was the throat of the bell of the safe astern, for the wobble gave life to the tongue, which sometimes struck one bell, and sometimes four, and sometimes eight, as though a phantom crew down there were keeping watches. The breeze was freshening, the white water streamed freely from the bows; the fruits of Goetz's imagination wriggled and lunged, flopped and swung, hopped and chimed; but the last of the rockets had fled, like the soul from Erin's harp. On board the steamer they had opened her out to her full speed—call it seventy-two revolutions—and in a few minutes she was out of hail of the *Dealman*, and in ten minutes she was a shadow ahead, and in twenty minutes the lip of the dusk had lapped her up.

It was a fine sailing breeze now blowing, and after looking at Goetz in tow, and considering within himself a little, and reflecting that he was in a part of the world where such winds of the night as now blew were as perfidious and capricious as the acted love of the ambling nymph, the diameter of whose horizon of passion is to the fraction that of the sovereign or golden pound of twenty shillings, Mostyn said to Walker—

“We'll keep all fast with that crackling joke in tow. I should wish you to overhaul her if the wind eases down into a smooth dawn. Call me if the breeze freshens.”

Again he turned in. Dipp's drunken snore had ceased; nothing made a noise but the ship and the seas she broke. Mostyn slept well. No lullaby pleases the ear of the wearied man in command of sail better than the songful rejoicing of the prosperous breeze and the seething of the mill-race under his port-hole. Mr. Mill had relieved Mr. Matthew Walker when Mostyn awoke and stepped again on deck. The sun was in the sky upon the sea-line, and the rich pink of his light graced the running waters with the hot glory of the tropic

morning. The breeze was a steady wind, and the ship rushed slanting along her course, and from royals to the hauled-up weather-clew of the main-sail all was pearl shot by the east with the lustres of the inner skin of the oyster shell, and softened at the edges by tender curves as of pencilled shading.

"Where's Guts?" said Mostyn, going aft, and looking over the taffrail.

"The second mate reported it gone at eight bells, sir," answered Mr. Mill.

The wire rope hissed like a snake in the wake; but the patent safe was ringing Goetz's ingenious chimes somewhere far out of sight, lost in the heart of the throbbing blue, which stretched with a windy face and a frost-like sparkle of breaking seas.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE WATERSPOUT

THERE seems novelty in the measurement of human passion by a method of reckoning like that you find a ship's way with — not by the log, but with latitude and longitude. This formerly could be practised. Now the sailing-ship is too few, and her passengers a negligible quantity. Steam is too swift for emotion—that steam for which the passenger pays—unless, indeed, it be love at first sight, which, being commonly a one-eyed sentiment, may afterwards prove as slow in developing ashore as though it was being tenderly nursed on board an old East Indiaman.

For in that sort of ship the griffin fell in love off Madeira, and Emma was beginning to return the eyes Henry made at her by the time they were up with the Equator; and in the latitude of Ascension Henry proposed one evening, right aft, when Aunt Sawbite was sipping port wine in the cuddy; and in the longitude of the Cape of Good Hope they quarrelled, but made it up again in the latitude of Ceylon, and were finally married on the parallel of Bombay, after five months of courtship and quarrel at sea.

The *Dealman* was a sailing-ship, and Benson's passion was determinable by latitude and longitude. The vessel had streamed in the flash of a wet squall out of the Polar limit of the southern zone of Doldrums, which in her

case happened to stretch to about four degrees south, when Benson, whose passion we have read about, hardened his mind into a desperate resolution. It is a difficult situation in human affairs for us to realize. Here was Mr. Montague Benson, chartered accountant, possessed of as much sentiment as an emu, and admiring the beauties of nature with the eyes of a goat, a creature whose only impulses were those of the ledger, the ruler, and the bottle of red ink—here was this unfortunate man, locked up in a ship with a prohibited woman whom he secretly adored, with whom he was profoundly, most dangerously in love, without being able to help or control himself in the smallest degree. Had they lived ashore he would have seen little or nothing of her unless he pursued her, in which case his conduct would have worn a menacing label, and husband and wife known what to do. But Benson was locked up with the charming young wife, and unless he sprang overboard, which he was the very last man to think of as a remedial expedient, there was no means whatever of his getting away from her company.

Did he wish to get away? Certainly not. He was a man of foul thought and dark design, but with so lively an interest in the safety and comfort of Montague Benson that he would not have run the risk of inviting Mostyn to put a bullet through his heart, no, not even if he had believed in the immortality of the soul, and had received an Archbishop's autograph-guarantee that the flight of his spirit after death would be a straight course for the open gates of the new Jerusalem. Passion will master prudence even in cowards; a lily-livered man will greatly dare and do, though his collapse may be awaited with grave confidence. Benson was prudence incarnate, dominated by the most powerful of the conquering passions of this "dim spot which men call earth." He was inwardly ill with his love, to give the thing a name, and the disease, without

wrecking his prudence, was so adjusting itself to that quality as to promise a solution of Benson's complicated problem, which, though it should leave much to be desired, should likewise yield much that he thirsted for with the pain of passion's thirst.

Still, I say, it is difficult to think of a man like Benson going, as we shall see, tragically wrong through the seduction of passion. He was a disciple of John Stuart Mill, and other master thinkers. Utility was the sentiment of his philosophy. He did not believe in the existence of the soul after death because he could see no use in his preservation. And yet this doughty thinker could stumble and fall over so very slender a filament as the single hair, with which, Pope tells us, beauty draws us men. This is the stranger because he was regarded by some members of his club, the City and Suburban, not far from St. James's Square, as a misogynist, which is a big word for a mean thing, that is, a woman-hater. He was frequently loud in his denunciations of marriage. He wondered that any man could be fool enough to yoke himself to a human being for life, as the policeman links the arrested to his wrist, though this twinship be of short duration; because, he would argue, you need but look at the painting of a man when he was a youth to observe how radical, if not organic, is the change; which image, if applied to human character, holds true: because we are moulded and governed by the thousand obligations and troubles we take upon ourselves as we march through life, and it is preposterous to suppose that the hue and aroma of twenty are to be the colour and flavour of sixty. He would contend that his argument would be as applicable to women as to men, providing that women were as independent as men, could earn their own living, and do men's work in the world, and, as he had never been married, his views were received without astonishment.

It is true, however, that on board the *Dealman* he was besieged by arguments he had no logic to resist had he been willing to oppose them. First, there was his constant association with Mrs. Mostyn, an association she found it difficult to interrupt from the breakfast hour till bedtime. Then, he was idle; and we all know that it is an easy passage from doing nothing to doing ill. Again, his was the privilege of constant inspection; if their eyes did not frequently meet, his eyes, in their furtive way, were seldom off her. Leisure enabled him to muse; he lived fatly, for he had taken care to liberally line his sea-larder, and the man was gifted with just enough imagination to enable him to indulge the sensual fancy, and colour the presentments of memory, and the soiling inquisitiveness of desire.

One critic, besides Phyllis, Benson had, of whose scrutiny he was too superior to be conscious. Men of the Benson type, when they are watched, sometimes conceive themselves admired. This critic was Prince, whose bayonet glance at the chartered accountant Phyllis detected, and afterwards watched for, and saw others interpretable by her who knew the truth about Benson. She easily judged that Prince understood what her husband seemed indisposed to see, or seeing, neglected to deal with, because there was absolutely nothing in Benson's conduct to justify an accusation or even to humour suspicion; for before all considerations Mostyn put this question: What can he do? Prince waited upon the company in the cabin. He was in the situation of a man who, looking on, sees the game. It is true he was in and out whilst fetching the victuals, but he often stayed long enough to detect. Once he found himself caught by Phyllis in the glance he had fired at Benson, who was speaking to her, and he slightly coloured.

There was something about this young man which

might have made you think he had a strain of quality in him. There was coarseness indeed, as I have said, in his good looks, yet, for all that, there seemed an element of the gentle in him. His coarse beauty eluded definition or description much as did that of the handsome actor who was barbarously assassinated near the Adelphi passage, and thus much for the present of Prince the steward.

It was not long after Mr. Dipp had tumbled halfway down the ladder that he and the others were collected at the dinner-table. It was blowing a pleasant breeze of wind from about east-south-east, and the ship, in that white raiment of the sea which the soot of the steamer's chimney is rapidly obscuring, was looking up, tall and queenly, with a regular dip of the bows in haughty answer to the leap of the surge which they splintered into spinning yeast and laughing lights of rainbow. Mr. Mill was looking after things on deck. It was the men's dinner-hour, for in that ship all hands dined in company, not by watch and watch, and foul weather made no other difference than delaying the mess (rightly called) of pea-soup, green pork, beef radiant with the crystals of pickle, and the horrible duff of the sea, duff like a man's footless leg from the knee, duff like a cradle pillow, and as nourishing, duff whose dark and thread-like texture could not be made alluring to a sailor's eye by even that most delicious of all sea sauces—the one condiment grudgingly conceded by the shipowner—treacle.

“Mr. Dipp,” said Mr. Benson, “you seem uncommonly fond of rum.”

“I love it,” answered the diver, who had just mixed for himself a second-mate's nip.

“Surely it's a very coarse drink,” said Mr. Benson.

“That's 'ow it may be,” answered Dipp, drinking.

“I make it a rule to drink very little spirits in hot weather,” said Captain Mostyn.



"A man can't drink water," said Mr. Dipp, who was fortified by the reflection that he had been guilty of one act only of insobriety since the ship's departure, a reflection which also occurred to Mostyn as they sat chatting.

"I was once nearly taking the pledge," said Mr. Benson.

"Haven't, perhaps, much resolution of hintellect?" said the diver.

"Pardon me," said Mr. Benson, with a demeanour which had reference to Phyllis; "I desired to set an example."

Dipp laughed. Phyllis's lip unconsciously curled.

"The ancients made Bacchus their god of the cup," said Mostyn, "and they did him small honour when they mated him with Circe, who responded by Comus."

"How noble is Milton's description," exclaimed Phyllis. "But, for my part, I believe the 'god of the cup,' as you call it, Charlie, is the devil."

"Do you believe in the devil?" asked Mr. Benson, blandly.

"Yes, in the name of wicked men," she answered, looking at him for a moment or two steadily.

"Don't you believe in Satan?" inquired the diver, with a stare at Benson, as he held in suspension a large mouthful of boiled fowl.

"Certainly not," answered the chartered accountant, with decision.

"Then, what are you going to do with most of your friends in the City after they've gone 'ome?" inquired Mr. Dipp.

"Produce me a single witness whose evidence would convict a prisoner before the most learned of our judges and a jury-box full of philosophic thinkers, produce me such a man as your witness of the existence of the devil,

and I'll believe in the devil," said Mr. Benson, in his amplest, most oratorical way.

"I'll do that for you," exclaimed Phyllis, with sweet gravity; and she rose, and entered her cabin, followed by the bewildered gaze of her husband, who, being a sailor, must have been superstitious enough to believe that she meant to bring the devil himself out of her berth to testify against the infidel.

She returned with a little book. All were silent as she seated herself.

"Now," said she, "listen to this: 'Two ships were bound for Newfoundland from the west of England, but, by stress of weather, parted; some days after one of the ships sprang a leak, and foundered in the sea, where every soul perished except one old man, who, being lasht on the main hatch, committed himself to the mercy of God and the sea, where he floated three days and three nights, in which time the devil, in the shape of a mermaid, starts up before him, and bid him be of good heart, for if he would but make a contract with him he would deliver him in twenty-four hours. The old man, being sensible it was the devil, said, "Ah, Satan, if thou can'st prophesy deliverance for me, know my God, in whom I trust, will deliver me without thy help; but, however, know, I will not comply to thy wiles. Avoid, Satan, avoid!" upon which he vanished. It happened that the other ship being in the same danger, the cabin-boy dreamed that night that such a ship was cast away, and all the men lost except this old man (whom he named), who was saved upon a piece of the ship, and floated in the sea; which dream the boy confidently tells his master, affirming it must needs be true, and was so impatient, that he received a check, yet he continued restless, running to the foretop-mast head, and then to the maintop-mast head, looking abroad, and at last cried out

aloud, "Aloo! there! I see him, under our lee bow;" so some of the men step'd up, and espied something at a distance, no bigger than a crow floating; the master stood away to it, and when they came near, found it to be the old man, as the boy had said, and hoisting out their boat, took him in, who was speechless and almost spent, but by the care of the master and chirurgeon, he, with God's blessing, recovered, and gave this account of his misfortune and wonderful deliverance: and the ship landed him safe in Newfoundland."

"Who wrote that rubbidge, ma'am?" asked Mr. Dipp.

"The devil as a mermaid! O Lord!" exclaimed Mr. Benson, in the note of a groan.

"Where the devil is, a woman's bound to be," said Mostyn. "That old man knew what's what. *Cherchez la femme.*"

"I've proved my case," said Phyllis, putting the book down, and going on with her dinner. "I have found you a credible witness, Mr. Benson."

Dipp picked up the book and glowered at it, then put it to his nose and snuffled.

"It smells of toast and nutmeg," said he, "like a Hindiemans' cuddy."

"It cost me fourpence," said Mostyn.

"An old man wild with shipwreck!" exclaimed Mr. Benson. "He clings to a spar like a frog to a frog sailing down stream. In one hour his mind goes to pieces. He sees something which never was and calls it a mermaid, and transforms it into something which never was, and calls it the devil. I can't compliment you upon your witness, Mrs. Mostyn."

His waistcoat expanded, and he looked at her with Benson's smile.

"What's your politics, Mr. Benson?" said Dipp, who

had been secretly chafing under the insinuation wrapt up in Benson's reference to run.

"Answer him as the ambitious Hebrew did," broke in Mostyn. "'So you want to get into Parliament?'" said his friend. "Yes," replied the Israelite. "What are your politics?" "That depends upon the vacancy."

Dipp laughed, not with the speaker, but at Benson.

"I'm a Radical," said Mr. Benson.

"Meaning Bradlaugh," said Dipp.

"He's dead and seed for nettles," exclaimed Captain Mostyn.

"I should have been proud," said Mr. Benson, "to have sat side by side with him, and fought side by side with him in the House of Commons."

"You'd have got on like my two hands," interjected the diver. "You'd have gripped each other, and washed each other, and 'elped each other all round."

"Bradlaugh," continued Benson, "was a man who thought and spoke what thousands think, but dare not speak. I drink his health in silence."

He melodramatically lifted a wine-glass and sipped it.

Mostyn and his wife went on deck, and in a few moments Benson followed, leaving Dipp to charge his pipe.

Whilst they were at dinner the breeze had slightly freshened, and clouds, like a mixture of smoke and steam, were floating up the sky off the edge of the sea, opening out their squadrons as they came, and the heavens were full of them, and their shadows walked the waters. The ridge of the surge was hard and flint-coloured till it melted, and the dye of the ocean had something green in it, reflecting the streaming lagoons aloft, which were greenish with the discoloration of cloud. A sail was in sight on the lee bow. Mostyn examined her, and found her a small topsail schooner bound north. She was hull

down at that hour, but her rig rolled clear in the object-glass.

The captain took his wife on to the top of the deck-house, and sat down by her side.

"I'm afraid," said he, "our companions bore you."

"Mr. Benson certainly would if you were not here," she answered. "As life goes with the ship, every day is a new pleasure. Was I not right in following you?"

The look he gave her required no speech.

"What a magnificent scene of ocean!" she cried. "On shore you have the hues of the garden, fields, and hills, but how tame is their beauty compared with the splendid confusion of the colours of the sea! Nothing ashore sparkles but water—rivers which would make narrow lanes through this horizon, lakes which half an hour of this sailing would measure, and ponds reflecting gobbling ducks. But all is sparkle here, the dyes of the rainbow, the sun-flash that lights a glory like the nimbus of a saint on the head of the foaming wave. If there is anything in this universe to turn thought into poetry it is the sea."

"Ask them what *they* think," said Mostyn, nodding in the direction of some sailors who were at work forward.

"I wonder how your father manages without you."

"Without *me*! He never needed me. He never made me feel as if that were so."

"He'll try to find out what's become of you."

"Not he. Yes; if I were a runaway mare, or a case of savoury tongues gone astray."

"Well, this voyage, Phyl, puts us on the high road to independence. I don't fear Dipp as a drinker. Certainly he takes more than he should; but he'll out-weather his thirst long enough to answer our purpose. You've found a great admirer in Benson."

"I wish I hadn't."

“Come, come; every woman likes to be admired.”

“Not by Benson.”

“How shall a woman know what are the thoughts of the man who admires her? Yet, let them be what they will, as black as Benson’s silk hat, she’ll desire his admiration.”

“Men profess to know so much about women, their feelings and ideas. Now, what do you know? You’ve passed your life at sea. You may be able to tell me what’s in that cask”—she pointed to the scuttle-butt—“or even arrive at a truthful conclusion about the character of one or more of your sailors. But women!”—she laughed satirically. “You were as shy as a girl when we first met.”

“As a girl! Produce me, to imitate Benson’s style, a *shy* girl.”

“That shows your knowledge of women is limited, and you should not know as much as you do.”

Is it true that young wives are sometimes jealous of their husband’s prenuptial experiences, and that even Mrs. Caudle will tease old Caudle into sleeplessness by retrospective surmises which do not relate to bonnets and servants?

“Phyl, does Benson make you feel uneasy in any way?”

“Charlie, it’s like this,” she answered. “He’s an unwholesome atmosphere, and I take no pleasure in breathing in it.”

“As how?” said he, looking into her soft, earnest eyes.

“Don’t force me into defining. You know how hard it is to convey sensations. A doctor asks, ‘How do you feel?’ and you don’t know what to say.”

“Surely,” said Mostyn, with a sudden gravity of countenance, “this man has never said or done anything

to you which you are keeping back from me in fear of a shindy and a capsizal of this job?"

"No."

"You are sure?" he exclaimed, somewhat sternly; and she easily saw that whatever was grim in his looks was meant for Benson.

"I said 'no,'" she repeated.

"I have never observed in him, in his conduct or looks, anything but admiration for you," said Mostyn, "and I, who am a man, and cannot help feeling as a man, as Nelson used to say, am not likely to be affronted by a compliment that is severely restricted by courtesy. But you don't like him, and this is the secret of a great deal of misunderstanding in this world. 'I do not like thee, Dr. Fell.'"

"Oh, I know those lines," she interrupted, with a note of petulance that could not but add another spice to the sweet cup, another odour to the lovely nosegay.

"Then," said he, laughing, "take a line that you may not bear in mind: 'Remember, when the judgment's weak the prejudice is strong.'"

"'Pray Goody' was amongst the first songs I learnt to sing," she said, smiling at him; "and I certainly do not think my prejudice is strong because my judgment is weak."

"This is not going to be a voyage round the world," said Mostyn; "and we're together all through it, anyhow."

"Do you think we shall arrive by Christmas?"

"I do."

"How long will it take to pick up the gold?"

"You must ask Dipp that question."

Here Mr. Benson came on to the top of the deck-house.

"I suppose," continued Phyllis, neglecting him that he might take the hint and descend, "that there's a

great deal of gold lying in the sea waiting to be dived for ? ”

“ I don’t think so, Mrs. Mostyn,” said Mr. Benson, standing before them on straddled legs to preserve a perpendicular posture by swaying. “ Whatever gold is known to be accessible ashore or under water is at once gone for.”

“ Yes,” answered Phyllis, “ ‘ thousands at *its* bidding speed ! ’ Gold is precious stuff.”

“ I’ve often thought, with horror,” exclaimed Mr. Benson, pulling out a sovereign, and holding it up betwixt his thumb and forefinger, “ that, for this contemptible coin, or button, or token, there are hundreds of men who would be glad to cut my throat.”

The ugliness of the idea was not diminished by the volume of throat which Mr. Benson’s open collars revealed, blue from the chin to the apple with the razor.

“ There has been much morality preached about gold,” said Mostyn. “ Nobody heeds it. Men will live, and live as well as they can, and pocket all they can earn or plunder. Strokes of fortune in this world are few ; but I do remember one. A man owned a little brig that traded in the West India Islands. She was lying in a port, I forget the name of it, when an insurrection broke out amongst the negroes. The white people barricaded their houses, and a number of them rushed, in a state of panic, aboard the brig, and asked the captain, who was her owner, to take charge of the money, jewels, and valuables which they had brought with them. They went ashore to defend their homes, and were murdered. The owner of the brig waited, but no claims were ever made. The value of the deposits were eight thousand pounds, and this laid the foundation of a great fortune.”

“ Captain Mostyn,” shouted Mr. Dipp from the alley-way, “ d’ye see that waterspout forming close against that schooner out there ? ”



By this hour the vessel, which Mostyn had held in his glass, had risen to her water-line, and as both craft were making good way, their mutual approach was fairly rapid. Ahead of the schooner, hung high in the sky, was a heavy black rag of cloud wearing the face of thunder—an isolated, local heap of vapour, past which the clouds of the wind were sailing. From the middle of it depended a spike, like an end of hose or piping rapidly paid out, and immediately underneath, the water was boiling and lifting until a perfect waterspout was formed and reported by a scarlet flash in the cloud.

“Why, it’ll swamp that schooner if she don’t keep away,” shouted Mostyn.

Phyllis, who had never before seen a waterspout, and who did not master the significance of her husband’s words, gazed with profound interest at a phenomenon which is always remarkable, no matter how familiar grown. She saw an object like the trunk of a blasted tree, rearing high a tufted head like a gigantic umbrella, its root infixed in a milk-white zone of cyclonic fury. It seemed to have grown and shaped itself out of the flying day in a moment, a fury of the deep, an embodied emanation of pitiless hidden wrath which of old was regarded on bended knees by the superstitious mariner as a demon, to be exorcised by an Ave, and the upholding of a sword with its hilt as a cross.

“Why don’t she shift her ’ellum?” shouted Dipp, at the rail.

But fallibility must fail somewhere, says the sage, and nowhere are the methods of fallibility more visible than on the ocean. Two steamers plough into each other at full speed in broad daylight, with a mate on each bridge and a lookout man on each forecastle, and by-and-by a court of justice scratches its wig over the rule of the road, and delivers judgment which is appealed from, whilst

seventy souls, including eighteen passengers, chiefly females, are sleeping the slumber of the dead on the ooze. A clever captain pricing the duty he owes his owner at ten thousand times the value of the duty he owes the men, women, and children who put their trust in him, steams with headlong speed through a dense fog, and never stops to fetch a single breath in a cast of the lead, until his forefoot grinds up some rocky incline amid a hell of escaping steam, of the shrieks of women and the bawling of men, and then perhaps the clever captain may be induced to take soundings over the stern. They are very brave, these gentlemen. When last seen they are always on the bridge. It would be well, perhaps, if they rendered the heroic virtues subsidiary to the natural and reasonable demands of the people whose lives are at their mercy.

Why that schooner did not shift her helm Mr. Dipp would not have been able to tell us. *Now* she was an airy and fragile toy, a little more than a mile distant, a white butterfly, winging with the aimless flight of that insect into destruction; two shafts of shimmering mother-of-pearl gracefully bending, striking the lightning of the sun off every green flickering peak she rose to. And *now*, whilst you might have counted twenty, she was drowned in the cataract of the sky—clean vanished in the haze of a torrential fall, and the cauldron seething of the sea to the pitiless stroke. And *now* she floated, ruined, black and reeling, with foremast standing and nothing more, not a rag of sail in the tubes which Mostyn brought to bear, a boat in halves at her port davits, a stump of mainmast barbed like a sheath of javelins, and an acre of raffle lifting and falling over her side.

“What an infernal idiot!” cried Mostyn. “There’ll be men killed there. Up helm!” and the ship drove down to that dream of mutilation, that corpse of fabric,

buoyant erstwhile as the summer yacht of the Solent, and airy as the clouds sailing over her.

Mostyn put his ship close to the schooner and backed the mainyards. She was a vessel of some hundred and fifty tons, with a swan bow, and a gilded cord along the length of washstrake, and every scupper was gushing like a hill-stream into a stone trough, and the five figures of men that stood upon her decks showed like field scarecrows after a thunderstorm. Small need to inquire as to the amount of damage done. Galley gone, long boat in staves, companion gone, wheel standing, but binnacle gone, and the rest we have heard of. How many tons of brine are contained in the revolving pipe of a huge waterspout? Find that out, and then realize the crushing roar and ruining bolt of that prodigious descent upon a little schooner.

“Schooner, ahoy!” yelled Mostyn. “Are you sinking?”

“No, sir,” answered a man in a billy-cock hat, the brim of which had sheathed his ears, and who held out his arms as though letting the water drain off. “We’re wrecked, as you see, and want to be taken off.”

“Anybody hurt?”

“One man overboard and drowned.”

“Can that boat in your starboard davits swim?”

“Her bottom’s knocked out.”

“Sound your well.”

Some soaked figures went to the pumps.

“How have they escaped with their lives?” asked Phyllis. “What an utter wreck!”

“I’d rather delay the voyage than take those men, if she’s tight,” said Mostyn to Benson. “I’d rather stand by till something comes along to take them home. We’re in the track of ships here, but the further we go south the fewer they’ll be, and we might have to carry them

to Staten Island, and I don't want five strange men aboard."

"You're right," answered Benson. "I too object."

Phyllis was amazed at the mess the schooner had made in the sea round about her—such stretches of black sail-cloth, such lancing of spars, such serpentine undulation of rigging! with the galley bobbing in the thick of the shuffle like a sentry-box, and several drowned hens coming and going in the hollows.

"Ship, ahoy!" shouted the man whom the waterspout had helmeted. "It was seven inches twenty minutes ago, and it's seven inches still."

"I'll send a boat," cried Mostyn.

He would allow no one but the spout-hatted man to return in the boat. The schooner was certainly not sinking. If danger there were, it might be coming, but it had not arrived. The boat sprang and spat, with Mr. Walker at the tiller, and five breasts of moss expanding and contracting at the oars. The sea swung its coils with rhythm, and in spaces which are safety to an open boat commanded by a Matthew Walker.

The man the boat returned with was a lemon-coloured fellow of forty, pitted with smallpox, and dim light-blue eyes, which squinted shockingly. When he parted his lips he exposed but two tobacco-coloured fangs in his upper jaw. He was clothed in a saturated sleeved waist-coat, soaked dirty drill breeches, stuffed into sea-boots which squelched with the water in them when he trod. Certainly he did not approach the type of Dibdin's manly sailor, and Phyllis could not help thinking, as she looked at him, that Jack on the whole was rather over-idealized in English song. He seemed subdued, as a man who, after the first shock of ruin, had expended his soul in taking all sorts of holy names in vain, and then sat down, figuratively, armed with that sort of

apathy out of whose repose the demon monarch of Milton's poem started the fallen angels.

"What's the name of your schooner?" said Mostyn.

"The *Milly Mine*," he answered.

"Where are you from?"

"St. Helena. We was blowed all this way to the westward, or we shouldn't 'ave come to that;" and his squint coloured his scowl with impiety as he looked at the schooner.

"Are you insured?" asked Mr. Benson.

"Yes, sir."

"In what office?"

"The Commercial Marine."

"Ship and cargo?" pursued the chartered accountant.

"Yes; and I'm sorry now I didn't insure the freight," replied the cross-eyed sailor.

"Are you the capt'n?" inquired Mostyn.

"S'elp me God, then, owner and capt'n too," he replied, bringing his light-blue balls of vision to bear upon Phyllis.

"Why didn't you get out of the road of that waterspout?" said Mostyn.

"I sung out, 'Down 'ellum!' meaning to go to windward of it, and afore she'd answer, it bursted through us, wiping the sticks out, flooding the deck rails high, floating all movables overboard, along with the cook," he answered, submitting a miserable wet, forlorn figure as he spoke.

"How came ye to keep aboard?" asked Mr. Dipp.

"Just as it bursted I yells out, 'Hold on, my lads,' and I went over the side with the end of the belayed topsail-brace in my fists."

"Well, what can we do?" said Mostyn.

"I must ask you to take us men off," was the answer.

“What’s your name?”

“Ogle.”

“And where were you bound to?”

“Gloucester.”

“We’re bound to Staten Island,” said Mostyn; “you don’t want to go there, I allow.”

“We wants to get ’ome.”

Here the conversation was interrupted by the captain calling to Prince to bring a glass of rum.

“There’s no room for you on board this ship,” continued Mostyn; “but of course I’ll receive you if nothing bound north heaves into sight before dusk. Is there no help for your craft?”

“If she’s staunch in her hull,” said Mr. Benson, “the insurers may give you trouble for abandoning her. I should certainly go to law over such an abandonment as that.”

Captain Ogle squinted at him suspiciously. He seemed to detect the words, “moves in financial circles,” writ in letters straggling amidst the hair on Benson’s face.

“I’d ask any gent, listening to me, if he believes the insurers would expect me to carry that schooner ’ome in her present condition.”

“Your foremast is standing,” said Captain Mostyn. “Couldn’t you rig up a spare gaff foresail, and flap along till a steamer’s willing to give you a tow?”

“I might be willing, quite willing,” answered Captain Ogle, “if I hadn’t a wife and four children dependent upon me for their daily bread.”

“Poor man,” exclaimed Phyllis.

“What are you insured for?”

“Three thousand.”

“There’s salvage-earning in three thousand,” said Mr. Benson; “besides, it’s characteristic of the English sailor to stick to his ship.”

“With all boats gone, galley gone, binnacle gone, jibbooms gone, and one lower-mast standing?” sneered Ogle.

“Are you an Englishman?” inquired Mr. Benson, which was like asking a dog-fancier the breed of a terrier.

“If being born in Bristol entitles a man to consider hisself an Englishman, then I’m one,” answered Ogle, turning his glass upside down and looking about him for a place to put it on.

“Upon my word, captain,” said Mostyn, “I’d think twice before abandoning that vessel. There are five of you, and I’ll send the carpenter and some men to clear away the mess over the side, get the foretop-mast out of the water, and send it aloft. You’re in the fine-weather latitudes, and will have plenty of time to make a jury job fit to blow you home, or in sight of some tramp that’ll give you a tow.”

“And you’ll get credit by so doing,” said Mr. Benson. “Three thousand is a large insurance for that schooner.”

The damp seaman squinted at his little ship, and there was a pause in the talk whilst he meditated. The four men aboard the schooner were staring at the ship over the rail, manifestly waiting for the return of the boat to take them off. This was so evident that Captain Ogle, suddenly rounding, exclaimed—

“Suppose my mates refuse to stay?”

“Suppose I refuse to take your mates,” said the captain, which was an unexpected condition to spring upon the dilemma; and Ogle was visibly abashed whilst he mused afresh, gazing at his schooner.

“By your leave, captain,” he suddenly exclaimed; “I’ll ‘ail ‘em.”

He sprang on to the rail, seized a back-stay, and shouted—

“Tom.”

“Ulloa,” came the reply; and the man that made it detached himself from the others and flourished his arm.

“Are you men game to stick to the schooner if so be the captain of this ship helps us with a jury outfit?”

The two vessels were so close together that conversation was easy in such bugling as the men’s lungs were capable of, and the easier for Captain Ogle, as the *Dealman* lay to windward.

“What sort o’ job are we going to be helped to? It can’t come to more than mucking about,” bawled the detached figure, brandishing his arms at the lonely foremast and at the spiked stump of the mainmast.

“Tell him to sound the well,” said Mostyn.

This was done, and the report that she was making no water was proof conclusive of admirable staunchness. This doubtless served to influence the views of Captain Ogle, who was already in his mind halfway through in his acceptance of Mostyn’s proposal. The *Milly Mine* was a new schooner; this was her second voyage; she was built on lines so graceful that the yards of Aberdeen never launched a fabric more perfectly proportioned, keener in entry, more dominating in her flair of bow, with a prettier swell of side as full of promise of buoyancy and stability as the breast of the albatross, and a run that assured the sailor’s eye that no quartering sea would ever drag *her* in the most meteoric of her flights. But there was something more than this: Ogle had built her with money earned out of a lifetime of peril and self-denial; he was her owner, and he also sailed her, and, though he squinted most horribly, he was a mariner with the feelings and passions of the deep-water calling, and he loved his little ship. Therefore, whilst they were debating on board her, he resolved to stop and save her if he could, for the tumult of mind which the blow of the water-



spout had excited was calmed ; he had passed successively through the stages of terror, blasphemy, then, in a sort of way, resignation qualified by a very strong yearning for life ; and now, under the influence of Mostyn and Benson, and his love of the little craft, he had made up his mind, and with the abruptness of impassioned resolution he shouted—

“ *Milly Mine*, ahoy ! The captain of this ship says he can't receive us ; so we must tarn to and do the best we can, helped by the carpenter and some men.”

Sailors are incomparable as posture makers. A merchant sailor will act mutiny to the life without speaking. He will mutiny by the humping of his back, by the scowling droop of his head, by the up and down hang of his arms knotted at the extremities into a metal-hard bunch of knuckles. The various attitudes of the men on board the schooner eloquently exhibited their several states of mind, and you did not want to overhear their illogical profanities to conjecture their feelings.

“ Is that ship a Hinglishman ? ” shouted Tom.

“ Yes,” bawled Ogle ; “ from London to Staten Island, where we don't want to go.”

“ Is the captain Hinglish ? ” yelled the detached figure.

Mostyn laughed, whilst Ogle replied.

“ And he means to abandon us men, who are all Hinglishmen ? ”

Ogle flourished his arm in a gesture which might have signified anything.

“ Send Mr. Walker aft,” said Mostyn ; and aft came the acting second mate.

“ Take four hands, Mr. Walker, and go aboard that schooner, and make the best job you can of her,” said Mostyn.

“ Got a tool-chest aboard ? ” said Walker, addressing Ogle.

“Yes, all you want, *and* spare sails, *and* spare tackles.”

The boat was lowered; Walker, Ogle, and four men entered her. One of the men, whilst the boat was making for the schooner, said to Ogle—

“Been to Gloucester lately?”

Ogle brought his squint to bear, and cried—

“Why, blame me if it ain’t Jim Farley. How’s your old mother, Jim?”

“First class.”

“Still at the little old dried-fish shop?”

“Ay, and doing well.”

“That’s a nice mess for me to fall foul of,” said Ogle. “If them watersprouts moved in a straight line—I tell’ee it warked like a hurricane of corkscrews, and I didn’t know what had happened till I climbed aboard agin.”

The boat swept alongside the schooner, and all the men in her scrambled on to the deck, where we will leave them, and watch their proceedings from the *Dealman*.

## CHAPTER XIII

### A NIGHT-SCENE

THE sun was still high in the sky and a long afternoon and evening of daylight still remained. The breeze was brisk and steady without a pause in its regular gushing through the ripe lips of Phyllis, which were often parted in deep draughts of that rushing sweetness of brine-flavoured air. The clouds were putting on a nobler face, and arraying themselves in the kingly attire of the sun. How glorious is the scenery of the sky, how grand in majestic mounds of white vapour, and delicate in cloud soft as snow that melts as you watch, and sublime in the tapestries of the recess, here black with a thunder scowl, there splendid as a reflection from the portals of heaven with spreading rainbow! In that south-west dimness you witness pale climbing configurations as of giants loftily treading at one another's heels as they lift their phantom brows; in that north-east sky shadows of vapour, wings like scythes, aerial shapes of horses, of the castle, of the spire, of the crocodile, of the avenging arm, of a woman's face with streaming hair. These phantasmagoria of interstellar space scale before the breeze, and the liquid blue of the sky looks down.

How many glance upwards at this vast and wonderful show with its infinite variety of shadows and lights, and its ennobling impulses to those who have souls to receive them? It is the habit of man to look around and down, down where the gold is, around where humanity is

warring for bread. But few in the thousand lift the sight to the unsubstantial pageantry of the air, whose gold cannot be minted, whose silver cannot be coined, whose delicate blues and greens, as peaceful as a baby's face in death, are worthless to commerce.

The little company of actors who tread the quarter-deck boards of our theatre of ship were seated on top of the deck-house, where some champagne and cakes of Benson's providing were also visible. The ship hung under the arrest of the sails of the main, and lightly bowed the seas like a horse's head straining uphill. The sea picture in paint is a refreshment to the eye, and though it be but a daub, it is pleasant with that potency of incense which is in reality the gift of the beholder's mind. But the daub that provides you, say, with a cottage and some trees, is dumb in suggestion, and those touches which express the artist's conception of the woodbine, yield no aroma to the spirit, because the land has not the power of the sea, which creates a fascination even for the portrayal that is ill done.

But how much finer than the uttermost skill of the artist is the realism and the romance of nature! And Phyllis found them both, in splendid plenitude, in the picture the ocean painted for her that afternoon. Yonder was a wreck: the butterfly had been blighted back into its early shape of chrysalis; its cocoon was alongside, wet and flashing, springing in lancings of yellow spar, darkling in serpentine folds of sea-blackened canvas. The spark of the sun in the heave of the metal sheathing was like the crimson wink of a gun. The broken toy was framed in foam, and its frolic was that of a smack which breaks the north-east surge off Ramsgate.

"They're right to get as much of that raffle inboard as they can," said Mostyn, watching the ascent of a spar to the drag of a tackle, made fast to the lower

masthead. "A winch and a capstan and ten men! They should not take long in making an end."

"Ay, but what's become of the capstan bars?" said Mr. Dipp.

"If they were secured as they should have been they'll be there," answered Mostyn.

"How will they manage without a compass?" inquired Phyllis.

"Of course, they carry a spare compass," said Mostyn, "and a make-shift for a binnacle-stand is easily knocked up."

"She is over insured," exclaimed Benson. "Three thousand on her! Underwriters venture anything in these days."

"Your trade lies in wrecks," said Mr. Dipp, puffing at his pipe. "Wrecks is the encouragement you offer. My opinion of underwriters is this: if ships were so built as that they never could go down of themselves, Lloyds' folks would bribe captains to beach or 'ole 'em."

"Underwriters are the most plundered persons on the face of the earth," said Mr. Benson, looking with the strength of temper in his eyes at Dipp.

"I don't believe," exclaimed the diver, slowly and deliberately, "that if you was to look all round the businesses of the world you'd be able to lay your finger upon anything more dishonest than what's called the shipping industry of Great Britain. Yes, I allow there may be one wuss; and that's purveyors of food, provision merchants, and the like of that."

Phyllis, with a smile, stole a glance at her husband; but with the natural taste of a seaman the captain was preoccupied by the business going forward on the schooner.

"Take," continued Mr. Dipp, "your one-boat company. How many parsons, old ladies, and other vegetables

has that job tapped and drained? Who but shipowners feed men on offal? Who but shipowners," he went on, warming up, "force sailors by brutal treatment to desert and leave their wages be'ind 'em. What's more reckless and shocking than the jerry ship, something that's been built at Sunderland or the 'Artleypools. I've knocked about in shops and yards in my time and could give you the straight tip about drifts and quarter 'ammers and blind rivet 'oles, particularly under the counter, where the plates are rolled, and the 'oles filled up with lead."

"Don't believe it—don't believe it," said Mr. Benson, looking at Mrs. Mostyn, with a sweep of his hand across the path of Dipp's utterance.

"Tell yer, then," persisted Dipp, whose unctuous delivery rendered argumentative iteration irritating, "that I myself, with these 'ere eyes, 'ave seen a vessel dry-docked, when it was discovered that her builders had lengthened her metal sternpost by a piece of wood, and the paint-pot was to give the proper colour to the lie. Yes, and I've 'eard of jobs which ought t'ave whitened the 'air of the Board of Trade and Lloyds' surveyors. Instead of which nothing but their noses blushed; and shall I tell yer why, Mrs. Mostyn? because"—here he held out one hand as though he were begging, and then, snatching up a bottle of champagne and holding it up to his face, he cried—"because, be your sight as keen as a vulture's, you can't judge of a shipbuilding job rightly through a medium like this."

"I'm afraid, Mrs. Mostyn," said Benson, blandly, "that this conversation is of little interest to a lady of your delightful tastes."

"You can't get away from the truth, any'ow," said Dipp, replacing the bottle and looking with something of contempt in his homely face at the chartered accountant.

"They're swaying that topmast aloft very handsomely," exclaimed Captain Mostyn. "I'm wondering how Walker's

going to make shift for after-canvas to keep her head up. He can do nothing with that stump of mainmast."

Mr. Benson was lying back in his chair contemplating the heavens between the masts.

"Mrs. Mostyn," he asked, "did you ever bring your mind to think of that inexplicable condition of the universe called space?"

"Who has not?" she answered out of mere politeness, leaning back her head a little and exposing a throat of snow, and sending from the violet depths of her eyes a glance into the lifeless blue above.

"What do you mean by space?" asked Captain Mostyn.

"The void in which every ball of sun, moon, and star is rolling," answered Benson.

"You can make nothing of it," said Mostyn. "I've sounded beyond the stars in the middle watch very often, and have come to the conclusion, with others, that the human perceptions and functions are a very limited liability company."

"Well, I take it upon myself to say," observed Mr. Benson, sitting up and expanding his waistcoat, "that I have annihilated space."

Mr. Dipp delivered himself of a grunt.

"How?" inquired Mostyn.

"By that simple demonstration in logic called a syllogism."

"Oh, lor, Mr. Benson," said the diver, "I thought you was a gent of one syllable."

"I put it thus," continued Benson, talking at Phyllis and for her admiration, and as though Dipp was drunk in his bunk out of sight: "*every form of existence conceivable by man has its limitations.*"

He paused to give Mostyn time to reflect.

"Matter is indestructible," said Mostyn. "Where do your limitations come in?"

"I think not," said Mr. Benson, with *his* smile. "But we'll deal with that subject presently. I proceed to the next term of my syllogism: *space as a form of existence has no limitations.*"

"I agree," said Mostyn.

"*Therefore space has no form of existence.*"

He spoke with a note of triumph, and his argument perhaps excused him for keeping his eyes fastened on Phyllis.

"You try to make out," said Mostyn, "that the space this earth rolls through does not exist."

"How can anything conceivably exist without limitations?" answered Mr. Benson.

"What about matter?"

"Ah," cried Benson, "indestructibility of matter was very well until the nebular hypothesis of the universe was proved and established."

"Not being able to swim, Mr. Benson, don't you think you're a-wading in too deep?" inquired Mr. Dipp.

"The nebular theory implies gas, and gas is matter, and the definition of matter is anything that occupies space," said Mostyn.

"The nebular theory means the cooling down of gaseous fires into worlds or suns," said Benson, "and these fires were originally so attenuated throughout space—"

"Throughout that which doesn't exist?" interrupted Mostyn, with a smile.

"—as to permit us to conclude that each was generated *sui generis*, which means finality at that end, which also means finality in their course of duration. And so I find you limitations for your matter, Captain Mostyn."

"Who kindled those primeval sidereal fires?" asked Phyllis.

"It must always come to that question," exclaimed Mostyn. "I remember talking to a medical man about



protoplasm. 'What is it?' 'Life,' he answered. 'No,' said I; 'it is the consequent of which life is the antecedent.' Protoplasm may be life, but what gives it life?"

"What did the medical man say?" Phyllis inquired.

"Nothing."

"Ain't this conversation a sight more interesting than the Shippin' Hindustry?" said Dipp.

But the most fascinating of metaphysical arguments must languish before man's commonplace, even trivial occasions. A waterspout had wrecked a schooner. The schooner was in the way of the *Dealman*, which was detained by her and obliged to watch her. Here was blowing a fine sailing breeze, and but for that schooner the ship must have shortened the voyage by forty or fifty miles ere sundown, and Mostyn, speaking to this effect, broke the metaphysical thread and the beads slipped off.

"How long are they going to take over this job?" the diver asked.

It was easily seen that the fellows were working hard. Probably the crew of the mutilated schooner had come into the business with ardency, perhaps because of liberal offers by the captain, or perhaps because they understood, since the *Dealman* refused to ship them, they would be left to their own shifts; and they were wise, therefore, to accept help for a jury outfit, since so wide is the sea and inconstant the apparition of vessels, that days, nay, weeks, might elapse ere their bruised schooner, with her broken boats, floating helpless, should be sighted and relieved.

A ship is like a woman—she needs fine clothes. This is painfully understood in the Navy, where the Admiralty theory of efficiency is believed to mean, not the capacity of the engines, the strength of the engine-room crew, the weight and power of the guns, but the paint-pot, and the oil-rag for the brasswork. The housekeeper is in command of the bridge, and the housemaids do the spitting

and polishing under her eye and at her expense, and my Lords praise the ship because of her very clean looks in paint, brass, and deck-plank. It is an old tradition. It has worked its way down through this century, but I certainly do not find much about spit and polish and the industry of the chambermaid in ships of the State of the eighteenth century and in times preceding. If Smollett be a credible writer, the ship of war in his day was scarce sweeter than a blind alley both to eye and nose. But she bore her part nobly. With little paint to speak of, and her 'tween deck and hold as noisome as a jakes, she valiantly maintained the flag of our country at the world's masthead—where it continues to fly.

How were they going to dress that schooner, the *Milly Mine*? I do not propose to burden your understanding with technical terms which sailors will not need, which ladies will not read, which the critic will not understand. They were striking two bells in the second dog watch aboard the *Dealman*, and the viewless hands of the breeze were drawing the purple curtains of the west about the couch of the setting sun before they had made an end of the schooner, and she then showed thus: the fore-yard had been left swinging at its truss by the water-spout; the men under Matthew Walker, after getting the fore-topmast out of the water, had sent it aloft with the topsail-yard, and bent the topsail, and they also bent the square foresail, which they furled. The fixing of the gaff foresail was easy to those many men, and they gave her two jibs. But how did they manage aft? Well, from the fore-topmast head they brought along a stay and set it up at the taffrail, and boused it taut with hanks ready for the big jib, which they bent to them, and this sail they hoisted.

Any yachtsman will see the picture—square foresail, and topsail, gaff foresail, and triangular canvas spreading

aft to the taffrail to take the place of the gaff mainsail.

"That'll do," said Mostyn, with the pleasure of a sailor in his critical survey. "It's well done. I confess 'tis a trick above my seamanship."

"She'll want a lee helm on a wind," said Mr. Dipp.

"Three, perhaps four, spokes, not more, you'll find," answered Mostyn.

"The insurers ought to be mighty obliged to us," said Mr. Benson. "I'm not sure I shan't advise the office to put in for a claim."

"Your office, you mean, I suppose," said Captain Mostyn.

"I represent the interests of no other," answered Benson, with his smile.

It will not be supposed that they had been sitting on the top of the deckhouse throughout the afternoon watching the schooner and nothing more. Phyllis had gone to her cabin, where she fell asleep over one of her husband's books and slept an hour. Mostyn had a small shelf of books, some of which consisted of works relating to navigation. Others were a little more interesting; he possessed representatives of Lytton, Tennyson, all Shakespeare, and the Bible, of course, and others (not many), including a few curious collections of sea narratives, from one of which, called "God's Tokens on the Deep," Phyllis had read, as you have heard, and over this same book she had fallen asleep. When she awoke she saw to her beautiful soft auburn hair in the little square of looking-glass, smoothed a wrinkle or two out of her skirt, and adjusted a little gold anchor brooch—the gift of Charlie—at her white throat, and entered the cabin for a cup of tea, where she found Benson, but also Dipp and her husband. Then, after another term of deck, they sat down to "supper," the last meal at sea, and were again

assembled on top of the deck-house when a man struck two bells.

The *Dealman's* boat shoved off from the schooner's side, and shot through the cream of the ridges with oars whose blades the sunset steeped in blood. She arrived alongside, and Mr. Matthew Walker came aboard. He was hot and weary, and, after saluting the captain, he said—

“It's the best I could do for 'em.”

“Have they fed you at all?”

“Oh yes; they have been lavish in wittles and drink. The work's been a bit delayed by two men—the schooner's men—mopping of it up too freely. They've asked for a boat, sir, and will pay for her.”

The *Dealman* carried four boats and a long boat. Mr. Benson was talking to Phyllis, and was telling her that he had never met any lady possessed not only of her capacity of witnessing the beautiful in nature, but of expressing her sensations; and Phyllis shuddered whilst she seemed to smile, for the least compliment from that man was loathsome to her perception of his thoughts about her, as the moist coldness of a toad's belly thrills the sensitive hand of those who hate toads.

“Mr. Benson,” called out Mostyn, “that schooner wants a boat, and has offered to purchase one. She has none, you know.”

Phyllis went to her husband's side.

“I don't know, I'm sure, how the law stands,” said Benson. “These boats are not our property. Have we a right to sell one of them?”

“The law expects humanity in captains,” answered Mostyn; “and I protect the interests of the owners by selling Captain Ogle a boat, whilst I am helping men to save their lives if trouble comes.”

“I leave it entirely to you—entirely to you,” said

Mr. Benson. "What value do you put upon one of those boats?"

"She'd be cheap with sail, oars, breaker, and mast at fifteen pounds."

"Don't drive a bargain, Charlie," whispered Phyllis. "Captain Ogle's a poor man, and if he can't afford fifteen pounds——"

"Mr. Walker," said Mostyn, "get that quarter-boat lowered, and tow it to the schooner, and ask fifteen pounds for it, and if he can't pay, close with any reasonable bid. They must have a boat. Have you shipped a binnacle?"

"Yes, sir; secured a piece of spare boom end in front of the wheel, and seized a spare compass atop of the flat with copper wire."

"Off now, Mr. Walker, before the dark comes on."

The sun, trailing his clouds of glory like the soul in Wordsworth's immortal ode, was no more than a fragment, a glowing ember upon the sea-line, when Mr. Matthew Walker and his boat's crew finally returned from the *Millie Mine*. The stars floated into light, the sea-flash was all about, a tender horn of moon graced the deeps of the north-west. You could easily see the schooner, as she hung out yonder, waiting for the *Dealman* to fill on her topsail before she proceeded. Mutilated, indeed! For how should so airy a structure as that vessel show, shorn of her mainmast and the wide white wings of gaff-mainsail and topsail? But all the same, the life of the sea was now hers again. She was on the port tack with shaking canvas, that her keel might stay, and she did not look so forlorn as a yachtsman might suppose.

"Swing the main topsail, *Mr. Mill!*" said Captain Mostyn, adding to his wife, "It's time for us to go."

And then Mr. Matthew Walker stepped up to him, whilst the boat rose to the davits she belonged to.

The sailors have a song for every rope, thought Phyllis, as she listened to the hoarse bawling of the men at the falls.

Mr. Walker held a chamois-leather bag.

"This is all the captain said he could afford, sir."

"How much?"

"Eight pound."

"Poor man!" exclaimed Phyllis.

"We shall put in a claim for the balance," said Mr. Benson.

"You horror!" thought Phyllis. "I wish you were alone in the boat!" Indeed, she hated the man so violently that she would have felt no concern had he been alone without food or water. The flower-soft hand of the sweetest girl will often project the tiger's claws from her finger tips, and there is more real danger and devilment latent in the heart of the gentle, chaste, and devoted woman than in the lady who nags, who lectures, who sits up for you, who hunts your side pockets for letters, and in a general way treads the path that conducts life's ill-assorted goods to the distribution of the divorce court.

"Ho, the *Dealman* ahoy!" was cried in the voice of Captain Ogle.

"Hallo!" answered Mostyn.

"I thank you for all your kindness, and wish you farewell and a prosperous voyage."

"The same to you," shouted Mostyn; and in a few minutes of silence, scarce broken by the sailors coiling down the braces over the belaying-pins, the two vessels began to sail.

Captain Mostyn watched the schooner intently, and strenuous was the gaze that honest Matthew Walker fastened upon her. A red eye winked at the schooner's bow.

"It ain't her quality of falling off that I'm afraid of," said Walker, who stood close beside the captain, and felt himself privileged to indulge in speech, seeing how serviceable he had proved all round that afternoon, "it's the luffing part I'd like to hear about."

"You will, some of these days," answered Mostyn. "But she's off and away, anyhow. What did Ogle think of that after-stay of yours?"

"He thought as I did, that there was nothing else to be done, sir. There was no making a dandy of her. But they'll never be able to show that head sail on a wind."

Mr. Benson stood close to Phyllis. "I have no doubt," said he, "that you are witnessing many beauties in this picture. But where are we to find a match for your eyes, Mrs. Mostyn?"

An observation which, as the reader will see, was a *double entendre*, to be taken by her literally as a compliment, by her husband figuratively as implying eyes for scenery. But the husband did not happen to be listening; he was attending with a sailor's interest to Matthew Walker's account of his doings. Phyllis, of course, must answer.

"The sea is a Royal Academy; its walls are well hung," she said.

"I am no judge of paintings," said Mr. Benson, in that level voice of courtesy which sickened the spirit of Phyllis by intuitive perception of the strain of the man upon the reins of his passions; "but I believe a great deal of rubbish finds its way into the Royal Academy."

"I was never there."

"Do you know London?"

"A little."

"Are you fond of the theatre?"

"I like good acting. It must be good. I do not like the acting that suggests the curtain which rises and sticks and exhibits a row of gaiters, or pumps or sandals."

“Very good, very good indeed. I quite take you, Mrs. Mostyn,” cried Benson, laughing so heartily that the captain turned to look at him. “I have much to thank you for. You have taught me to see what the dull routine of business life has kept invisible. The moon is something more than a moon now; I can find poetry in the stars.” He turned his hairy face up to heaven, and Phyllis averted hers to conceal her smile, which was dangerously close to a laugh. “And even so commonplace an object as a three-masted sailing-ship, which from the insurer’s point of view involves nothing but considerations of classification and other matters, becomes what I once heard you speak of as ‘a thing of beauty.’”

“What do you think of that sea-spectre of Walker’s creation, Phyl?” exclaimed Mostyn, as the acting second mate quitted the captain and descended the steps.

The wife was at her husband’s side in a heart-beat. Mostyn was pointing to the schooner that was floating off into obscurity in a pallid shade.

“She flits like a ghost,” he continued, “and every breaking head of sea is a sailor’s white tombstone for her to slide over. A good riddance and ably managed. You’ll find she’ll wash through it all right. What was Benson laughing at just now?”

His wife explained.

“But where’s the point?” said the captain. “A lifted curtain that sticks fast, and a row of boots showing under it, and nothing more.”

“Your mind grows prosaic in the atmosphere of Benson,” said Phyllis. “Not to catch my meaning! You’d understand my point fast enough if you were sitting with me by the river’s side under the full moon at Woolsborough. Suppose,” she went on in a note of pique, “I should ask you what you meant by a sea-spectre and the foaming head of a wave as a sailor’s



white tombstone! Oh, Charlie, what a fool you'd think me!"

"Now, my dear!"

"Even Benson," she exclaimed, breaking into a little laugh, "admits the influence of my poetical interpretations of scenery upon his mind."

"God help him," said Mostyn, sarcastically, looking at the man who was a shadow talking to another shadow called Dipp, at the after-end of the deck-house top.

"He finds the moon more than the moon used to be," said Phyllis, murmuring softly, but with continuous light laughter.

"You are writing what characters you will upon the virgin parchment of his mind," said Mostyn.

"Virgin parchment. Ha, ha, ha! Oh, Charlie!"

"Parchment, anyhow. Parchment for engrossing. Parchment for deeds. I should like to see the drawing of the moon you have made upon his mind."

They ceased to speak as Benson and Dipp passed them to go on to the quarter-deck.

"I hate the man," said Phyllis.

"So I observe. But you are judiciously courteous."

"Oh, it is such an effort, sometimes."

"Would you have come to sea had you known that this man was to be locked up with you?"

"Yes, yes, a thousand times over," she answered, passing her arm through his.

They began to pace the short scope of deck.

"It's a humdrum life for you, dear, and you are sweet to find pleasure in it. You make the voyage all sunshine to me, and even when I think you are most bored by Benson and the rest of it, I would not have you be ashore. But observe this, Phyl, should Benson ever utter a syllable when you are alone with him distasteful to your ear, or glance a look which might cause me to take

him by the throat if I saw it, you'll report the thing to me."

She thought to herself, "If he had but my eyes! But then he would have my sex. There must be a cleverness in the wretch to make me see and feel what Charlie is blind to!"

"Why don't you answer, Phyl?" said Mostyn.

"The man has done nothing to send me to you."

"Well, that's what I say. Whilst he behaves himself discreetly he may admire and be damned. I can't forbid him from admiring you. I can't go up to him and say, 'You hairy scoundrel, if you dare discover beauty in my wife's face, and for one instant of time presume to admire it I'll send you forward to live among the men and do boy's work.'"

"Could you do that?"

"I'm lord paramount, and can do anything."

"But he's only a passenger."

"He's in the service and pay of the charterers of this vessel, who hold me responsible for all that concerns her, and if I ordered Benson forward to do boy's work you'd find him at the spun-yarn winch in the morning."

"Do you think he knows that?"

"He knows that I am supreme in command, and *that* granted, the rest goes without saying."

She knew what a spun-yarn winch was, because she had seen it revolve, had listened to its castanets, had watched the fellow backing slowly with the yarns in his hand, and she burst into violent laughter at the idea of Benson in his short alpaca jacket, city whiskers, and suburban aspect winding the winch-handle like an organ-grinder.

"The schooner's swallowed up," said Mostyn, pausing to look astern, "and we are fifty miles short of our day's work."

“Can’t a captain be called to account? Can he do just exactly what he pleases?”

“At sea, I tell you, he is monarch of all he surveys. Jack, forward, knows that. So does Benson. He may act like a brutal madman, and then there are courts of justice ashore for his victims, if they survive. But the power of the shipmaster at sea is practically unlimited. An owner, for instance, will tell a captain to work a crew so infamously, to keep them at hard labour so unnecessarily, to feed them so starvingly, as to compel them to desert at the first port, and so save the wages. I was once in the smoking-room of a hotel in Melbourne, and heard the captain of a clipper ship boast that he had touched at six ports, that at every port his men had deserted, and that down to that moment of his bragging he had not paid a penny piece in wages to a single man of his several crews.”

“What a beast!”

“Such are the powers of the British skipper.”

“Are there no laws, Charlie, to help the sailor?”

“Not against scoundrels of the type I mention. The Consul always backs the captain. The British Consul is one of the worst enemies of the heaps which the unhappy merchant sailor numbers.”

“Poor Jack!”

“Ay, poor Jack, and trebly poor if you knew all, Phyl.”

Meanwhile, sunk some eight or nine feet below the pacing of our honeymoon couple, sat Dr. Faustus thinking of Helen of Troy, who to him was—

“Fairer than the evening air  
Clad in the beauty of a thousand stars.”

In other words, Mr. Benson was seated at the cabin table lost in meditation, with forefinger and thumb pressing the old-fashioned stem of a public-house tumbler.

charged but a few minutes before to a beaded brim with seltzer and brandy by Prince the steward. This young fellow was in and out of his pantry whilst he placed glasses and biscuits, and wines, spirits, and cakes upon the table for the cabin gentry when they chose to enter and partake of the refreshments. The steward's brief, but intense, gaze at Benson was extraordinary. He seemed like one who, having set himself a lesson in a language of which he scarce knows the alphabet, is bent with impassioned resolution to master it. And as this young fellow seemed already to have conquered some few of the Bensonian hieroglyphics he might have found it easy to follow the current of the thoughts of the hairy man whose eyes would be sometimes lifted to the skylight through which the murmur of talk on the upper deck could be dimly heard.

Benson sat at that table, and love, that with him was not the rosy little god of the ancients, but one of those spirits whose bed is sulphur, and whose monarch is the devil, had got hold of his heart and his soul, and there was but one refuge for him from his tormentor. But rest assured that things must be at their blackest before Benson took *that* step. How many men since the days of the Garden of Eden have been ruined by bad women and by good women? by beauty as treacherous as the half-frozen viper, which the husbandman in the fable warmed in his breast? by beauty chaste and cold as the moon, innocently luring, artlessly inviting, kindling a burnt-offering of a man's heart to the god of lust? Shall you tell me that the spirit of hell had any hand in the influence of Phyllis, who was pure as snow, over Benson? It is so ordered that innocence may lead to a man's ruin, and compel him into acts of madness which may result in the official receiver, or Portland, or the coroner's inquest.

Whilst Benson sat deeply and darkly meditating, too

hairy for any visibility in countenance of the state of his mind, Mr. Dipp stood smoking in the lee alley-way, also lost in thought. But Dipp's musings would be as clean and clear as the lucent depths in which he found a living. It is impossible to think of a diver as a doubtful character. He sinks sheathed from the brine it is true, but a pressure, ranging from eight to seventy-eight pounds on the square inch of a man's waterproof body, must in time inform him with the wholesome sweetness of the water he gropes in. The moral influence of the ocean, which is pure, is forced through the rubber overall and the pores of the skin into the soul, and I salute all whose trade is diving as honest men.

Mr. Dipp leaned with his back against the rail and sucked at his pipe, which he thoroughly enjoyed. He could hear the two talking overhead, but never heeded them a jot. They were husband and wife; their talk was theirs; they dwelt within the horizon of the wedding-ring. If his mind went to them for a moment it was with the gratification that all honest men take in the happiness of young wedded people. The ship was sailing fast and heeling; the water roared under Dipp, white and starry with the sea-glow, to the strain of the shouting canvas. The mate paced the weather-alley, and the man at the helm was a distinguishable surface of shade with arms stretched sideways, moving the wheel to and fro in steady obedience to the hints of the lubber's mark. Suddenly, Mr. Dipp grew conscious of a figure glimmering in drill breeches and a white shirt out of the deep shadow which lay upon the forward part of the ship. He was impressed by its motions. Its stalk was solemn, like a monk in a cloister poring upon some holy volume.

"What do 'e want?" thought Mr. Dipp. "What's he coming aft about? But Benson guards the cabin grog"—he stiffened himself and pulled the pipe from his

lips, for the figure continued to come along, always with the same stalking, ghostly pace until it arrived immediately abreast of the diver, when, halting, it pulled a revolver out of its breast and levelled it straight at the man at the wheel. With the swiftness of one used to emergency, Dipp struck up the level arm and the pistol exploded.

"Who fired that shot? What's happening down there?" roared Mostyn, releasing his wife, and rushing to the brass rail.

The report of a pistol on board ship at sea will send a thrill through the nerves of the stoutest. Have the crew mutinied? Has the captain been shot? Has the ship been seized? In God's name, what is it? All is alarm and, with the timid, terror.

Mr. Benson sprang from his seat, washing down the table with seltzer and brandy by throwing over his glass, and bolted to the cabin door just in time to receive the whole weight of the twelve-stone-four body of the surly mate who was running with all his might. The breath was shocked out of Benson who, believing himself attacked, could scarcely gasp "Help!" In hot haste a number of men came tumbling along from forward. Dipp had grasped the man by his shirt-collar and seized his pistol, but there was no struggling, no heaving and wrestling, as is mostly the way when the mood of the sea-life directs its attention to revolvers. The fellow stood upright, as still as the swing of the deck and the grip of the diver would permit.

"Bring him round into the cabin light," shouted the captain, and he bounded down the steps to the quarter-deck. "Who is it?" A dozen sailors had gathered in the sheen cast on the plank by the glowing globe that illuminated the cabin, and if real tragedy had been there the picture could not have taken wilder colours, what with the faces of the sailors tinted into ash by the light and

the curl of moon sliding amongst the ratlines and the savage seething of waters pitilessly rent and shattering in dim snowstorms among the leeward valleys of the sea.

Phyllis's hands clutched the rail, and she looked down with her figure stiff with fright.

"Who's the man?" said the captain, peering into the fellow's face as he stood fronting the cabin-door.

Dipp had let go of him. The fellow's posture was incomparable for the bewilderment it expressed. His arms hung up and down, and his fingers were curled like fish-hooks. He moved his head slowly, as one who gropes all over his brains for an idea. He was bearded, carried a hooked nose, his eyes were big and pale, and bare-headed he stood, with a quantity of black hair curling down his back.

"Where's the pistol, Mr. Dipp?" said the captain.

The diver handed the weapon to the commander, who, taking aim at the stars directly overhead snapped five shots out of six chambers.

"It's Jim Fry," said a voice.

"At what did he fire?" inquired the captain.

"At the man at the wheel," replied Mr. Dipp.

"S'elp me God, as I stand here I know nothing about it," exclaimed Fry.

"You come aft with a loaded revolver and fire at the man at the wheel, and know nothing about it!" cried Mostyn.

"I don't know where I am now," exclaimed the man. "I thought I had turned in."

"He's in the starboard watch?" said the captain.

"Yes, sir," replied the mate.

"Did any of you men know that this man Fry possessed a revolver?"

"Oh yes, I knew. He showed it to me plenty of times."

"And to me."

“And to me, sir.”

“Who’s at the wheel?”

“Turpin, sir,” the mate said.

“Had the two men quarrelled?”

“Quite the contrary. They was pals,” answered one of the men.

“S’elp me God, capt’n, I don’t know nothin’ about it,” said Fry, whose behaviour, as interpretable by the light, betrayed tokens of increasing agitation and distress.

“He walked in his sleep, Charlie,” called down Phyllis from above.

The conundrum scarcely needed the solution pronounced in the clear voice of the young wife.

“You’ll find that’s right, capt’n,” said Mr. Dipp, staring closely into the man’s face. “He’s a gorn sight the most scared of us all.”

“I dunno why I’m ’ere, I swear, captain,” exclaimed Fry, in broken tones. “I believed when I got into my bunk that I was turned in. I never knowed nothin’ about it till the blast of the pistol woke me up.”

“Will you ask him if he’s in the habit of walking in his sleep?” said Mr. Benson, standing in the doorway.

“Yes, sir, I do walk,” answered Fry.

“How d’ye know?”

“I walked overboard three voyages ago, and once I was found by a policeman in my shirt, looking at a church at two o’clock in the morning.”

“Where was that?” inquired the captain, convinced that the man spoke the truth, not by words which have no substance, but by voice and demeanour far above the art of the most masterful actor.

“Dover, sir, where my sister lives; and it was out of her ’ouse that I walked.”

“Loaded revolvers form no part of a seaman’s kit,” said the captain, sternly.



"It was a gift, sir, and I've carried it with me five year. After this I'll chuck it overboard."

"Have you more cartridges?"

"Yes, sir."

"Bring them aft."

The sailors slowly melted forward, talking low, whilst the man was gone.

"Don't you mean to put him into irons?" said Mr. Benson.

"No," answered Mostyn, stiffly. "We don't iron men for freaks of nature."

"He might have killed the man at the wheel," said Mr. Benson.

"But he didn't," was the rejoinder.

"How could you clap a man in irons for walking in his sleep?" exclaimed Dipp, with a note of scorn. "Sleep it was. He came to a stand abreast of me. His actions was those of a man in a fit. Iron him and you'd raise the crew, and then stand by, Mr. Benson."

The man returned and handed a small bag of ammunition to the captain, who immediately pocketed it and the pistol.

"I 'ope no notice will be taken of this, sir," exclaimed Fry, in a voice of real contrition. "Had I killed the man in my sleep and found it out I'd ha' killed myself too, for it's not in me to do such a thing."

"You can go forward and turn in," said the captain.

He called to his wife to come down, and they entered the cabin.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE CONVICT SHIP

THE captain stowed the revolver and ammunition away in a locker in his berth, and sat down beside his wife at the cabin table. They looked a handsome couple in that flattering flame of oil; he, brown, manly of feature, which might have been chiselled for delicacy, proportion, and shape; she, with her auburn hair, softened with suffusion of gold by the surging radiance, her eyes of liquid violet, her mouth which made you lament the extinction of the pledge when the sweet lady would send a kiss to her lover through her wine. Mostyn helped her to whisky and soda-water of his own stocking. He did not choose that she should be often a partaker of Mr. Benson's hospitality.

Prince filled Mr. Benson's glass afresh, and Dipp nursed a tumbler of rum and water. This was the disposition of our actors shortly after they had entered the deck-house.

"It blows a nice sailing wind, Mrs. Mostyn," said the diver. "Staten Island won't be fur off soon, if this keeps all on."

"I cannot imagine," answered Phyllis, "that humming-birds are found at any time of the year so near to Cape Horn as Staten Island."

"I'll catch one for you, Phyl," said Mostyn; "and you shall wear the little glory in a hat."

“Beautiful birds are not meant to be caught for women’s hats, Charlie.”

“I’m thinking of that fellow who fired the revolver,” said Mr. Benson, lighting a cheroot, after offering a cigar to Mostyn, but not to Dipp, who was plugging a pipe, for all three men smoked in that cabin, and if the young wife found Mr. Dipp’s cavendish more suggestive of dog-fleas, which may be destroyed by the liquor of mundungus, than a white rose or the lily which her neck excelled as the bright foam of the mid-ocean surge transcends in splendour the tarnished surf of the beach, she would still swear she loved the scent.

“I cannot help thinking,” continued Mr. Benson, “that he ought to be put into irons.”

Mostyn shook his head.

“A sleep-walker must be a menace aboard a ship,” said Mr. Benson. “That proposition is, I venture to say, irrefragable.”

“The man shall be kept under observation,” answered Captain Mostyn.

“Surely murder must be in his mind when he acts it in his sleep,” exclaimed Mr. Benson.

“How many men haven’t I suffocated in my dreams !” said Mr. Dipp, hanging his head to light his pipe, and dropping his words in the intervals of sucking. “A cube o’ cheese, a pork pie, a late blow-out of sausages will keep a man fit for the scaffold while he’s snorting unbeknown.”

“This man Fry,” continued Mr. Benson, “owns to a habit of sleep-walking ; it’s not, therefore, a question of cheese, or sausages, or pork pies with him.”

“Some one has written, ‘The wasp is harmless when the sting is drawn,’” said Phyllis. “As the revolver has been taken from him, what can he do ?”

“Oh, my dear Mrs. Mostyn,” cried Benson, “I’m

arguing quite as much for your sake as for the sake of others. What can he do!" he ejaculated, in a note of tender and benevolent surprise not unmingled with regret. "Why, there are such things as iron belaying-pins which fit loose in holes in the rails, any one of which he might whip out in his sleep, and so prove even more murderous than armed with a revolver."

"Lock your door," said Mr. Dipp.

"I quite understand your contention, Mr. Benson," said the captain; "but I am certain I should not be justified in confining, and therefore punishing, a man for walking in his sleep. They used to flog and chain maniacs. As we advance we grow more humane in our treatment of any sort of aberration. But he shall be kept under observation, and the two mates will receive my orders."

Benson pulled at his cheroot in silence. He was uncomfortable, and sometimes looked towards the door.

"I wonder how that there *Milly Mine* is getting on?" said the diver.

"Mr. Dipp," said Mostyn, "what do you think, in my opinion, is the finest stroke of seamanship in the annals of British sailors?"

"There's been a good many," answered Mr. Dipp, "and one was a club-hauling job, whole gale blowing, high sea, ship touching bottom with every fall, and rocks like a wolf's fangs close under the lee bends, but I forget the name of the vessel."

"In my opinion," said Mostyn, "the most remarkable feat ever performed at sea, by a British sailor, was Captain Rous' navigation of his rudderless ship H.M.S. *Pique* across the Atlantic. She sailed from Quebec September 17th, lost her rudder ten days later, and arrived in England safely October 17th."

"She was a man-of-war, with plenty of men," said Dipp.

“Ay, but think of the ceaseless anxiety, the constant attention demanded aloft by the shifting of the wind to keep her to her course.”

“Didn’t that there Rous become an admiral?” inquired Dipp.

“Yes, famous on the Turf,” said Mr. Benson.

“Captain,” said Dipp, “’ave you got your chart of Staten Island ’andy?”

“D’ye want to see it?”

“I should that, just a minute or two.”

Mostyn entered the berth occupied by Phyllis, and returned with the chart. It was one of those Admiralty charts which shipmasters are wise to take to sea with them, because if they put their ships ashore, they can plead the misdirections of the Naval hydrographer to the assessors, who are commonly naval men; whereas the “blue-back” chart, being an unofficial publication, avails nothing as an apology. Mostyn produced a chart of Staten Island, as surveyed by Kendal of the *Chanticleer* in 1828, and by Fitzroy and others in the *Beagle* in 1830. He laid it upon the cabin table, and Dipp hung over it.

This was the first time that Phyllis had seen the chart. She held her fair cheek close to the diver’s—closer by a fathom than she would have held it to Benson’s whisker—and gazed upon a sketch of an island mapped in the form of a distorted alligator. She saw shadings representing mountains, outlines of creeks and gullies, and then of course she was very curious to know in which of those shelters the *Dealman* would anchor.

“Here she lies,” said Mr. Dipp, putting his finger upon the chart. “Ten fathom deep. That means a pressure upon your ’umble of more’n twenty-six pound on the square inch.”

He fetched a heavy breath, and swallowed a large mouthful of rum and water.

“Is that the place where the *Conqueror* sank?” asked Phyllis.

“Yes,” answered Mostyn, who stood behind the two, looking down, and unaware, as Phyllis was, of the stealthy gaze fastened upon the young wife by Benson, who was alert as a rat in a leap to shift his eyes.

“Why is it called Port Parry?”

“Named after some officer, no doubt,” responded the husband.

“You are nearer to the chart than I, Mr. Dipp,” said Phyllis; “how high is that mountain marked?”

“Mount Buckland—three thousand feet.”

“There’ll be a fine view from the top,” said Phyllis, meeting Benson’s eyes, who instantly smiled his face into an expression as though this encounter of vision was accidental, and said—

“Captain, if it’s without snow or cloud, we’ll picnic on that mountain brow. It’ll make a pleasant honeymoon memory for you, Mrs. Mostyn.”

“Soundings shift very freely, I observe,” said Mr. Dipp. “One place is ten, and ’ard by it’s thirty. Appears to me as if the bottom was as ’illy as the country.”

“Is it inhabited?” inquired Phyllis.

“There’s been a talk of a light and a lifeboat station to be established somewhere near Cape St. John,” said Mostyn, running his finger along the chart till he came to the shaded point. “They’re both wanted. The overfalls are mighty dangerous with wind against tide. See this counsel;” and he read from the chart, “‘No ship should pass within ten miles of Cape St. John.’”

“A romantic island to choose for a honeymoon,” said Mr. Benson.

“Why is he always a-talkin’ about their ’oneymoon?” thought Dipp.

"But you can't call it a vast solitude, either. What's that there?" Benson exclaimed, pointing to the chart.

"A piece of South America," answered the captain.

"It's too close for the romance of solitude, Mrs. Mostyn," said Benson. "Is the coast visible from Staten Island?"

"From an elevation, no doubt," answered the captain.

"The more I look at them soundings," observed Mr. Dipp, "the more I'm sorry they didn't stow the gold in five thousand pound boxes. One thousand in each box makes forty boxes to sling, and yer can't call it eight or ten times more work, because working under water rises in physical henergy in the ratio of the drag of a plane surface through water, which means the multiplication of the pull by the square of the verlocity."

"Are you sure that's so?" asked Mr. Benson; whilst Phyllis was pleased to find that Dipp's knowledge of the English dictionary was not so limited as she had supposed.

"Oh yes, cocksure."

"Is it so in the pressure of water per pound upon you?" inquired Mostyn.

"No, sir. I've told you it's eight pound at twenty feet, and eighty-eight pound at two hundred feet, which is a sight too deep for me."

"But you'll sling the boxes together, and send them up in fours or fives, which'll come to the same thing," said Mr. Benson.

Mostyn rolled up the chart and put it away.

"Same thing to you, perhaps, but not to me," answered the diver.

"But, my dear man," exclaimed Benson, "you seem to forget that a chest of five thousand sovereigns is dead weight for a one man job, and whether you dive for it, or whether I dive for it," and here he smiled at Phyllis,

“I’m glad to remember that the cases contain one thousand sovereigns each.”

“All I know is,” said Mr. Dipp, in a voice that hinted dislike of Benson’s opinion—that is, the opinion of a man whose experience of being under water was restricted to his bathroom, or a cautious wade from the steps of a bathing-machine—“that a diver named Lambert, in the employ of the first firm in Europe—I allude to Siebe, Gorman and Co.—sent up seven boxes of Spanish gold coin, worth seventy thousand pounds, and if that don’t prove the weight was ten thousand sovereigns in each box, what do?”

Benson nodded. Certainly his policy was not to irritate the diver on matters connected with his own calling.

Had he been a holy man, with an angel with a drawn sword as a sentry at his cabin door, he could not have slept more securely that night, so far as his life was concerned. Not once did any sleep-walker, armed with an iron belaying-pin, attempt the invasion of his berth. Yet he had been visibly nervous when he went to bed, insomuch that Mr. Dipp, taking the captain apart, proposed that he should thunder on Benson’s door in the middle watch, and make as though he were trying to break in, groan a little, and cry, “I’ll get at him,” and then rush back to his own cabin. But Mostyn would not permit any practical joking aboard his ship, least of all with such a man as Benson, who, as the representative of the insurers, and a person who could make good or ill report of the voyage as it pleased him, was entitled to something more than the consideration due to a first-class passenger. In fact, the skipper would have put on some air of sternness if he had not perceived in the oily twinkle of Dipp’s eyes that the worthy fellow had drunk a drop too much. So if Benson did not sleep well that night it



was not because a sailor, in a state of unconsciousness, armed with a terrible bludgeon, wanted to get at him.

The *Dealman* was sailing through that zone of feathering sea-lights, sudden sunsets, the light blue ocean, whose gentle surge streams with the grace of a swimming girl, white with the lace of foam—that zone, I mean, which Tennyson calls “the summer of the world.” It was ten o’clock in the morning. The cabin breakfast was ended—a good breakfast. Prince had found some new-laid eggs in the coops; and Phyllis thought of her last breakfast at Woolsborough, when the steward set a dish of eggs and bacon upon the table. Dipp had done well on brawn and cold brisket of beef. Benson had fared heartily on curried fowl, and Mostyn pleased himself with the same dish. A good breakfast is the foundation of the day’s work, and sometimes of the day’s content, and certainly the stevedore of the table will understand that to insure a seaworthy stow the hold must be struck at the dunnage.

Now, the four of them were on deck on the cabin top, Phyllis in an American chair, with a volume of plays in her lap, her husband smoking a pipe in a chair alongside, waiting for her to read to him, whilst Benson walked to and fro with a cheroot in his mouth, dropping a sentence from time to time to Dipp, who was seated over against the standard compass. Never did a fairer day smile in heavenly sweetness upon the sea. The breeze was a light air upon the port quarter, and the ship was showing port stunsails to it, and a triangular lower stunsail that would have maimed her airy grace and lofty carriage in the eyes of one accustomed to the swinging boom. The sky of a bluish silver was lofty, with a network of frost-like cloud, that held and fascinated the gaze by its prismatic glances. The climbing canvas lured the eye to that miracle of delicate tracery, and Phyllis, lying back, held her sight

bent upon the sky with the rapt expression of one who adores.

Her husband looked at her as she lay thus, and so did Benson.

It is proper in the interest of my art to insist a little upon this young wife's good looks. It was necessary for the existence of Benson that Mostyn's wife should be pretty and more than pretty. Had she been homely, as the Yankces term it, the story of the recovery of gold from the wreck of the *Conqueror* might have been fully and easily related in eight or ten lines in the *Shipping Gazette*. Therefore I beg you will pardon me if I occasionally pause before the lady, and invite you to consider her.

Work was going forward quietly on deck. The men seemed a contented crew, they understood each other, for they spoke English, and they had Englishmen over them as captain and mates. You'd see a fellow in the fore-shrouds busy at a ratline; some were mending a sail on the main-deck; a couple of men in jumpers were painting a part of the bulwarks; two ordinary seamen were at work at the bottom of the long-boat. Dipp's three men loafed near the galley door; and the scene was one of shipboard life far away upon the sea, of breathing canvas, of the motions of the helmsman smart in toggery for his trick, and the glint of the sun in the brass circle he controlled, whilst for outboard variety there lurked in the shining blue recess bearing west sou'-west a square of light which all knew by this time to be an oncoming sail, standing north-east, and crossing the *Dealman's* bows.

"Read a little, Phyllis. It's a fine drama. Sir Giles Overreach in the hands of a master should tread close as a creation on Richard the 'Third,'" said Mostyn.

His wife brought her eyes away from the snow-soft vision that floated high over the pendulum-swing of the

trucks, and smiled as she opened the book—one out of her husband's meagre collection, containing an infinite amount of trash, and a hundred pages of noble work, and a sample of Shakespeare, ruined by a writer whose prose was as good as Steele's or Gay's, or even Arbuthnot's, and better than Pope's—Colley Cibber. Try his "Apology," which yields a thought: that the only two "Apologies" in our tongue are, one by an actor, the other by a priest. Though Mostyn lacked the gift of declamation, he was no humbug—that is, he was not so intolerantly in love with his wife but that had she read aloud as ill as he did he would have stopped her. As a matter of fact, she read with spirit and vivacity; she knew what was good, and put power, pulse, and passion into it. She believed she understood everything in English poetry but "In Memoriam," the closing passages of which were absolutely unintelligible to her. The art of reading aloud is more useful than the art of playing the piano or the fiddle. The clever reciter agreeably kills an evening; the clever pianoforte player very often nearly kills the listener. Every boy should be taught to read aloud, and to make rhetoric of the written word. The congregation would then say Amen! with the fervency of conviction to the vitality which our Liturgy needs to render its harmonies more sublime than a mass by Mozart or Gounod.

The play Phyllis had begun to read to her husband was Massinger's "A New Way to pay Old Debts," one of those jewels which "sparkle on the forefinger of old Time." She was at the second scene, and when her husband asked her to read she began:—

"I much hope it.

These were your father's words: 'If e'er my son  
Follow the war, tell him it is a school  
In which all the principles tending to honour  
Are taught, if truly follow'd; but for such

As repair thither as a place in which  
 They do presume they may with license practise  
 Their lawless riots, they shall never merit  
 The noble name of soldiers.  
 To obey their leaders, and shun mutinics ;  
 To dare boldly  
 In a fair cause, and for the country's safety  
 To run upon the cannon's mouth undaunted ;  
 To bear with patience the winter's cold  
 And summer's scorching heat ;  
 Are the essentials to make up a soldier,  
 Not swearing, dice, or drinking.' ”

“That would be good advice to give to sailors too, Phyl. You read well. It is strong and good.”

“The ruggedness of this sort of rhyme,” said Phyllis, “seems a lost art. The breaks give power to the idea as heights of rock to a landscape.”

“When you get ashore, Phyl, you shall earn five shillings a week by writing reviews.”

“Oh, my dear, there is no greater mistake than to suppose that because we admire we can produce.”

“What's the next speech ? ”

She was about to read, when Dipp interrupted by calling to the captain—

“Just take a look,” said the diver, “at that craft there.”

He handed the telescope to Mostyn. After a long and silent spell of staring in the one-eyed fashion of the glass, the Captain exclaimed—

“That ship doesn't belong to this century.”

“What do you mean ? ” cried Phyllis, shutting up Massinger with a slap, and springing from her chair.

“Did you ever see the like of her, Mr. Dipp ? ” said the captain.

“In picture books, and 'ere and there in a sailor's 'ospital or asylum, but nowhere else, s'elp me Joseph.”

"Kindly hand me the telescope," exclaimed Mr. Benson.

"After you," said Phyllis.

"After me!" ejaculated Mr. Benson, with *his* smile. "Shall I hold the glass for you?"

"No, thanks; my husband will do that."

"You'll have to kneel, Phyl," said Mostyn.

He laid the telescope along the rail, and the sweet obedient creature knelt upon the plank that was hollystoned into almond whiteness, and between them they would have furnished a charming picture for a whole page of an illustrated journal. Only, even if the artist had been Seppings Wright, Brangwyn, Wylie, and Cooke rolled into one, this federation of genius could not have conveyed to the reader's eye the shimmering of the girl's hair, the light of the sun upon the sea, the life of the spirit of the deep embodied in the ship as she serenely swayed along her course, jewelling the water in her track and whitening it into silver under her bowsprit.

But as before so now: Phyllis held her left eye closed with her hand, and there was no magic in the violet of her right eye to detain the object that flashed in and out, up and down, yielding no other idea than that of the ancient mariner—

*"There was a ship!" quoth he.*

"I can't catch it," she exclaimed, in a note of mortification. "Why do they make telescopes so small? They should be as big as a drum for women."

"She'll be showing plain to the naked sight in 'alf an hour, ma'm," said Mr. Dipp. "Whenever I feel myself growing impatient I recall the advice an old aunt once gave me—'It's like a procession coming along a street, says she; 'why do you risk your neck by shoving half your body out o' window? Sit still, and it'll pass.'"

The strange ship was close hauled on the port tack,

and when she had fetched a part of the waters about two points on the lee bow of the *Dealman*, she was thrown into the wind, and lay rolling with shivering canvas. At this hour she was easily distinguishable by the unaided vision. Certainly her appearance was calculated to excite the astonishment of Mostyn, Dipp, and all others aboard who saw things through the eyes of the seafarer. Her hull was black, and along her sides ran a broad red band.

She was scarce more than a tub in shape—short and squab—her length, perhaps, three times her beam, her bows like an apple, her stern tall with a poop; but she carried no topgallant forecastle, and the head-boards curved to the figurehead like the tusks of a boar, creating a sort of beak as a stemhead, with a hollow between big enough for a ship-load of men to bathe in.

This astounding apparition carried three small brass guns of a side which gleamed with black tompions in ports in the bulwarks. She was rigged after the style familiar to those who are acquainted with the plates in old collections of voyages such as Churchill's. Her bowsprit was steeved at an angle of forty-five degrees, and with its jibboom looked like a mast arrested midway in its fall. She was a full-rigged ship, saving that she did not carry royals.

But the most surprising feature to the eyes of the seamen of the *Dealman* was her crossjack yard, which was fitted after the manner of the past century—that is to say, like a lateen, which made the sail a triangle. On the taffrail was to be seen an iron gibbet for the hanging of a poop lanthorn by night. A more perfect study of the marine antique could not be imagined. Some of the sailors forward gazed at her with consternation, and often directed their eyes aft to observe what effect she was producing on the mind of the captain. Were they thinking of the *Flying Dutchman*? I do not believe that in this age

there lives a man who credits that yarn, though some sailors will feign belief as the perfervid actor blacks himself all over for Othello, that by a plausible credulity they may seem more thoroughly sailors to those they converse with than they are found to be by the captain and mates they serve.

No man aboard the *Dealman* believed in the *Flying Dutchman*, but yonder was a ship that might very well have been her sister, a fabric which, had she stolen past wan in the moonlight, her sails tintured into gossamer by the pale night-beam, her deck as silent as a midnight cemetery, might have justified any agony of superstition even in the minds of those who thought boldly in sunshine.

"Is she very extraordinary?" asked Phyllis, who, not understanding anything about short topgallant masts, the crossjack of the last century, the immensely wide channels, huge round tops and massive hawser-like shrouds of the days of Captain Cook, naturally failed to grasp the reason of her husband's and Dipp's astonishment.

"I never saw anything like her before except as a hulk; nothing like her under sail, and away out at sea as she is," answered Mostyn.

"She evidently wants to speak us," said Mr. Benson.

"It's some masquerading job, I allow," said Mr. Dipp. "It's the same as meetin' a man in Fleet Street dressed up like George III. If the ocean was perliced she'd be taken into custody, and charged with misconducting herself."

"There must be some object in the thing," said Mostyn, carefully exploring her for the twentieth time through the telescope, and observing a number of people apparently idling about her decks, and three men walking the poop abreast, wheeling with the swing of soldiers when they arrived at the shadow painted on the planks

by the large red ensign sluggishly flapping at the crossjack peak end. "Men don't send such a ship as that to sea, and go afloat in her, without a motive."

"Perhaps some lunatic asylum's been burnt down," said Mr. Dipp.

"No, there's too much method yonder to serve that idea," said the captain. "She's clearly bound for Europe. From where? She must be a hundred and fifty years old. Would they venture the Horn in her?"

"Isn't the Cape almost as bad?" inquired Mr. Benson. "Off Agulhas you get seas which become historical."

"What's she doing so far to the westward if she's come Cape-wise," said Mostyn, "unless she shared in the breeze that gave us the company of the *Milly Mine*?"

"She don't want no coaxing to go to leeward," observed Mr. Dipp, narrowly observing the queer craft, which grew more barbarous and grotesque in every detail of hull and equipment the closer she was approached.

"Is she so old as you think, Charlie?"

"I should say to a week. Never in all my going afishing have I fallen in with the like of this experience. You're a lucky girl. The sea gods grace your liquid road with interests perfectly new to me who am an old hand. There you have the simulacrum of the *Phantom Ship*, that great tragedy of the sea. There you have in living colours, lighted by the sun and rolling upon the ocean, a ship that was making voyages when Nelson was in petticoats; such a ship as Nelson, when a boy, may have made his voyage to the West Indies in. What the devil is she doing out there?" All this in his wife's ear. Then to Mr. Dipp: "Look at that huge standing jib. How can a bobstay guy such a steeve as that bowsprit's? How sweetly she rolls! Within how many points of the wind do you think she'd lie?"

"She'd break off at nine," answered Mr. Dipp.



“A beam wind with us means a head wind with her,” said Mostyn, laughing. “How in the name of blocks, davits, and dead-eyes, of lee helms and square bows, of wearing by sending the men into the fore-shrouds to spread their coat-tails—how, Mr. Dipp, I ask you, did the old chaps who manned such craft as that contrive to wash about to their ports in safety, and return to end their days in Stepney or Poplar, and smoke pipes on more silver than is needed for bread and cheese?”

The question was so difficult that the diver could reply only by a fit of silence.

The *Dealman* floated down to the grotesque memorial of the days of the pigtail, that lay without way with shuddering canvas and wallowing sides, flashing sunfire from her polished cannon, and when Mostyn backed his main topsail, the following conversation ensued. But first I must tell you that the figure who shouted answers from the poop of the old ship was dressed as unromantically as Benson, when he sheathed his precious ribs in the city and suburban attire. The man wore a billycock hat wreathed by a muslin scarf, and his dress was a brown linen jacket and blue cloth trousers held by a belt. His companions—they were two—were similarly prosaic in aspect. No hint of the *Flying Dutchman* in them: no long grey beard divided by the breeze, no vulture-beak of nose nor hawk's eyes under brindled beetling brows, long curling Dutch pipe, and sea boots to the knees. Just the other way, in fact; you could see that all the men in the forward part of the ship were common-place fellows of the bully-in-our-alley type, men of the dungaree breech, and a hint of the pierhead jump in their shirts and head-gear.

“Ship ahoy!” shouted Mostyn. “What ship is that?”

“The *Sir John Dean Paul* from Sydney to London, one hundred and seventy-two days out.”

"Just so," mentally ejaculated Mostyn, whilst Dipp delivered a laugh like the *cheep* of a sheeve on its pin. "Is that ship as old as she looks?"

"She was a convict transport in 1800, and was built in 1777."

"What did I tell you, Phyl?" exclaimed Mostyn, who next shouted, "What's your object in navigating her?"

"We're taking her home as a show," answered the man.

"Now I understand," exclaimed Mostyn.

"I should very much like to go on board of her," said Mr. Benson.

"Does she hang together pretty well in a sea-way?" bawled Mostyn.

"Ay; with pumping four or five times a day, but the leeway she makes is terrible. We've been blowed to this part by a breeze, and should be thankful to know the correct Greenwich time by your chronometers."

"You shall have it," and Mostyn bawled out the longitude, which the other immediately made a note of.

"Have you any preserved vegetables to spare? We are clean run out of spuds."

"I'll send you some tins of spuds and carrots along with the Greenwich time, and should be glad if you'll allow this lady and these gentlemen to pay you a visit."

"With the greatest of pleasure, and they'll see more than they'll expect to find," was the reply, and the ships were so close together that the companions of the spokesman could be heard laughing.

"But you'll come, Charlie?"

"I never leave my ship, Phyl. You're safe with Dipp, and the sea's smooth enough for a Thames wherry."

Some red cases of preserved spuds or potatoes, and a number of tins of preserved carrots, were broken out of the

stores in the lazarette. The potatoes and carrots were then stowed in the boat, a gangway ladder for Phyllis dropped over the side, and five men pulled the party of three aboard the marine relic.

Though but a few strokes of the oar were needed to measure the distance between the two ships, yet the moment the boat shoved off a sinking feeling of loneliness possessed the young wife. It took her like one of those shudders which make you say, some one is walking over my grave. A world of sensations and emotions may be packed into a minute of time. The girl-wife kissed her hand to her husband, who, standing in the gangway, kissed in return. The desolation of the mighty girdle was hers, because the sea was between her and her husband, and she was alone, despite two ships, one of them the quaintest of floating arks, despite Dipp, yea, even despite Benson. But, yet, in that brief oar-swept passage, the *Dealman* graced the hall of her memory with a fresh and beautiful picture. Of course she had never at any distance seen the ship from the outside. There lay the sea-home, that had brought her thus far, lightly inclining her tall heights as though in civil inquiry to the astonishing figure to leeward: not less elegant aloft with backed topsail than had it been a full breast; the topmost canvas glowing like moons; star-bright lustres trembling off the violet shadow she rolled upon. She needed, indeed, the life of the wind, the splendour of the bow-shattered sea; the hissing mill-race of wake dominating the yeasty ridge to half-way the horizon. But as she lay in the halt of her topsail she must be a memory, a clear and rich embodiment of a fabric that down to now was known to Phyllis only in stretches of deck and in protecting walls of bulwark.

It was impossible for her to climb the short flight of steps that was thrown over the side of the convict ship,

Although the movement of the *Dealman* marked but a very delicate and long-drawn pulse of swell, yet this antique monster hove her tub-shaped sides into the water as though she were a cask in a freshet. There was nothing for it then but a chair and whip. So a block was made fast to the main vard-arm, a line rove through the sheave-hole, and an armchair secured to the end of the line. In this way Phyllis soared like an angel without, perhaps, the feelings of the blessed; for it is no joke for a weak stomach to be swaying like a boy on a swing half-way betwixt the sea and a spar that now takes aim at the sun and now at the brine which reflects his light. In fact, in the few moments that compassed her boarding the ship, after all had been made ready, she was horribly afraid, and thought herself lost. But they lowered her handsomely, and she descended like a goddess that bestows the light of her beauty upon the very spirit of Eld.

Benson also gained the ship by the chair, as he said his waistcoat was too tight for that short ladder; and whilst they were being hoisted aboard the ship, Dipp hung in the boat alongside, hugely admiring the gross ungainly proportions of the craft, her swelling buttocks which sent the water squelching each time the lift of bow soused the counter, the seams into which you could have put your little finger, the massive channels and rusty chain-plates, and enormous dead-eyes with lanyards stout as shrouds, setting-up shrouds as thick as tow-ropes; and then the tops, with their ancient furniture of sprawling cat-harpings. It was not for the imagination of a Dipp, but of a dreamer of dreams, to vitalize that platform towering overhead with the figure of a sailor of the days of Commodore Dance, his loose breeches trembling, the back of his jacket supporting a tail of hair which, when he reaches Wapping, Nan will carefully comb out for him, the sharp of his hand against his brow whilst he eagerly

gazes at the apparition of the *Dealman*, whose proportions and rig, had they been set down on paper before him, he would have declared impossible as a sea-going fabric.

Then Mr. Dipp scrambled into the great mizzen channels, and clambered on to the poop. One of the three who had been remarked walking up and down, soldier fashion, was a short, square man, with his face full of little veins, and eyes charged with tavern memories. This was the man who had spoken the *Dealman*, and he is, therefore, costumed. A second was a lanky fellow, of a type the caricaturist makes us acquainted with when he depicts the Yankee. Here was the long goatee hanging at the chin of a long yellow face, and here legs like a radish.

The third man showed a round, veal-coloured figure-head, adorned with a little imperial and moustaches.

"I am in command of this ship, ma'am, and my name is Captain Peak, and it's truly a pleasure, it is, to see a lady aboard after months of being out," said the man with the muslin scarf, in the politest tone of the ocean, to Phyllis. "What do you think of this vessel? Did you ever see anything more curious? But before we make the rounds of her will you let me offer you and these gentlemen some refreshments?"

"Not for me, thank you," answered Phyllis, staring about her with eyes magical with light through wonder and other emotions.

"Don't give yourself any trouble about refreshments, capt'n," said Mr. Dipp. "If this ain't refreshment enough there's no virtue in freak-shows."

"Good, sir! ha, ha!" laughed the man with the veal face and moustaches. "I believe this will be one of the most popular shows in England."

"When we get there," said Captain Peak.

"Towage all the way from Sydney too costly, I suppose?" said Mr. Dipp.

"We should have been figuring in the *London Gazette* before our arrival," answered the gentleman with the moustache, whose name shall be Mr. Showman.

"She rolls very heavily," said Mr. Benson. "Will you take my arm, Mrs. Mostyn?"

"I can manage very well alone, thank you," she answered; and, indeed, her feet took the heave of the old tub with a grace that made you think of a crystal ball airily poised on the jet of a fountain.

They formed a procession and went the rounds of the ship, Captain Peak leading with Phyllis, and explaining, Dipp and the goatced man, Benson and Mr. Showman following. They stopped abreast of the first brass cannon, and Mr. Dipp said that he thought the Chinese Government would offer a handsome sum for "them arms."

"I suppose you are paid a handsome screw for this work?" said Mr. Benson, with the familiar, knowing air of the shrewd man of business.

Captain Peak ran his gaze over the figure of the chartered accountant, kept his right eye closed whilst you might have counted three, and then went along the deck with Phyllis.

"Who's that man, missus?" said he, in a low voice.

"The representative of an insurance office."

"Looks as if he'd been reared on onions and black lead," said Captain Peak. "This is the caboose."

He halted before a deck structure wearing the device of a unicorn curiously carved on the side that fronted the poop. The galley was divided into two compartments. One had been for the use of the convicts, the other for the officers, crew, and military guard. The convicts' division was strangely embellished. Upon hooks and other supports and shelves were suspended or arrayed huge beer-cans for cocoa, baskets for biscuit, rows of tin

plates neatly overlapping one another, and numbers of tin mugs slung on hooks. Here also were short lengths of deal board for the cutting up of meat on the mess-tables when the convicts went to meals, bags for knives, tubs for "salt horse" or pork, and nets for potatoes.

Mrs. Mostyn, Benson, and Dipp peered about them, Phyllis with profound interest, the others with emotions I will leave you to figure. It was an illustration of the black side of a life that is happily dead, pregnant to the meanest intelligence with all significance of pathos and tragedy. In a time before any of the visitors to this convict ship was born she was sailing over the sea filled with miserable felons, many of whom were under life sentences; and in those days they transported a man for stealing a horse, or forging a signature (if they did not hang him for this), or for crimes or blunders which, in this age, are visited with a few weeks' imprisonment; so that men of gentle blood, clergymen, attorneys, doctors, members of the professions, along with the scum of the provincial slum and the metropolitan alley, were cooped up under the main hatch, watched by soldiers through loopholed barricades, ready at a moment to fire should the need arise. And then the voyage! The interminable days occupied by such a ship as this in measuring the great oceans of the world; the fierce seas, the torn sail streaming in hair from the yard, the fabric leaking like a basket as she fell roaring into the midnight hollow, the hatches battened down on three hundred felons whose names were written on their backs in figures, breathing an atmosphere in which the flame of the lamp stank through an unsanctified halo of miasmatic poison!

There were other things than the galley to look at and to wonder at, and Mr. Showman critically watched the faces of the visitors. *Ex pede Herculem*. He might judge by the effect produced in them of the impressions

upon anticipated thousands per day. So sanguine are Showmen.

Dipp particularly inspected and admired all the forward part of the ship, the curling head-boards, the well into which the heel of the bowsprit sank, the old-fashioned slide in the forecastle hatch, and the venerable capstan by which the sailors wound the anchor to the bows.

"It is quite worth seeing, Mrs. Mostyn," said Benson. "I hope you are enjoying the visit."

"I am, thank you."

They walked aft to the break of the poop, where the old-fashioned wheel was fixed, and in front of it the binnacle-stand—things that might have been dredged up after eighty years of ooze, but still as good as the newest, so faithful was the workman to his job in those days of heavy sea-scantlings and walls like those you find in Bloomsbury.

"Is this the original compass-card?" inquired Mr. Dipp.

"Only ask yerself the question! No, sir, and I thank you," answered Captain Peak. "Five points of lee-way in an onconsiderable breeze on a bowline, and you expect me to find my way home with the original card! No, sir, I thank you."

"No offence, capt'n."

"Let me show you the cuddy, ma'am," said Captain Peak; and he exchanged a glance with Mr. Showman, whose expression hinted, backed as it was with the face of the goated man, that he held a trump card up his sleeve.

The cuddy front resembled a little country cottage, with its door and two windows on each side draped with short scarlet curtains looped back. A table went down the interior, and on either hand were cabins.

"Here the captain and mates slept," said Mr.



Showman, "and the superintendent doctor and the officer of the guard. Sentries were stationed at the foot of each ladder outside. The barricade that shut the convicts off from the quarter-deck will be erected on our arrival. It is the original barricade."

Captain Peak disappeared.

"What a wretched hole to live in during a long voyage," said Phyllis.

"I reckon you're about right, ma'am," said the man with the goatee. "You want your handkerchief handsomely tasselled to stand it. I was blamed sick of the show before we was up with the Cape, and here we are off the west coast of South America."

"I could not have believed she'd have sailed so badly," said Mr. Showman, in a note of pacification.

"Is this your speculation?" inquired Mr. Benson, addressing Mr. Showman.

"Yes," was the answer.

"Is it going to pay, d'ye think?" added Mr. Benson, in a discomfiting tone and with a discomfiting look.

"I reckon on netting ten thou.—that's all!" said Mr. Showman, replying to Mr. Benson in a sneering way.

"Are you insured?" asked the chartered accountant.

"Who'd take the risk?" was the reply.

"Try the Hocean Alliance," exclaimed Dipp, with a greasy chuckle.

Benson's eyebrows slightly changed their expression.

Just then Captain Peak stepped out of the coffee-coloured den in which he had hidden himself, and said to Phyllis—

"Would you like to see the 'tween decks, where the convicts lived and slept?"

"I should indeed."

"Get the man-hatch covers lifted," said the captain to the man with the goatee. "'This way, ma'am."

A foot or two in front of the old-fashioned binnacle was a small square man-hole known as the booby hatch. The descent was difficult to Phyllis. The ladder was perpendicular, and the captain went first to help her. This he did with so much delicacy that, had he been the first gentleman in Europe, he could not have made the task more easy to the lady. She found herself in a space of the ship that was bulkheaded off from the greater portion of the 'tween decks. The light was dim, for the square of hatch was almost eclipsed by the pent-house or overhanging ledge of the poop.

“What are those holes for?” asked Phyllis, pointing to a row of six holes in the bulkhead, each just big enough to admit of the passage and sighting of the barrel of a carbine.

Here Mr. Showman took up the tale.

“This part of the ship was called the barracks. The soldiers who guarded the convicts lived and fed here. Their accommodation has been dismantled for convenience's sake; it will be correctly restored on our arrival. Those holes served two purposes: if an insurrection broke out amongst the convicts they could be fired upon. They were likewise useful to enable the guard to see what was going on within without being observed. Do you think the hatches are off, sir?”

Captain Peak put his eye to one of the carbine holes.

“Right,” he exclaimed, and stepped back with an odd smile which went twisting about his face in a very wriggle of secret amusement.

Mr. Showman stepped to a low narrow door of massive scantling, and studded, as was the rest of the bulkhead, with arrow-headed nails, and drawing two bolts, threw it open, and asked the lady and her companions to step in.

Scarcely had Phyllis advanced two or three paces when she recoiled with a light shriek, which was accompanied by a greasy “Ulloa! What's 'ere?” from Mr. Dipp.

The 'tween decks were full of convicts, sitting, standing, lying, one at a table reposing his head on his elbow, lost in thought, one standing with his hands clasped and his head depressed, two seated together facing aft, their wrists linked by handcuffs. There might have been fifty or sixty, and the limited space they occupied, and the light flowing through the hatch with its rolling waltz of shadows, bulked that little population by deceit of the vision into the proportions of a large crowd.

Phyllis stood rooted with astonishment and alarm. Benson stared with enlarged nostrils. But how motionless were those felons! Never a roll of the eye, nor a turn of the head, nor the faintest gesture of arm. Dipp broke the spell.

“Why, Lord, now,” said he, bursting into a laugh, “they’re wax! A floating Tooso’s, and ain’t that Gladstone, and ain’t that old Goschen?”

Wax figures all, and incredibly life-like! Wax effigies of men of distinction, in arms, the arts, science and philosophy, clothed as felons!

“Upon my word, it almost took my breath away,” exclaimed Mr. Benson, boldly walking up to the table at which Mr. Gladstone was seated with his hands resting upon his knees clothed in the grey striped stuff, stockings with white rings, and shoes, and striped shirt of the convict of an early date. The likeness was incomparably to the life; so too was that of Cardinal Manning; of Lord Salisbury, who was handcuffed to Mr. John Morley; of Herbert Spencer, who stood opposite the bench upon which Mr. Joseph Chamberlain was seated; whilst hard by Sir Henry Irving seemed to be submitting a metaphysical puzzle out of *Hamlet* to the Reverend Joseph Parker, to whom he was chained by the leg.

All these figures, with others, such as Archdeacon Farrar, Millais, General Gordon, Lord Penzance, Dr.

Temple, Tennyson, and Michael Davitt, were adroitly secured to the deck, whether sitting, standing or recumbent, by leather thongs or belts with buckles, and their fixity was that of the ship's figure-head.

"Those gentlemen will thank you for making convicts of them," said Mr. Dipp, who kept on laughing as he went the rounds, peering into one wax face after another with every manifestation of provincial admiration.

"How do you like it, madam?" said Mr. Showman.

"It frightens one at first," answered Phyllis. "You expect them to get up and speak or walk about."

"Won't it lead to political riots in this ship?" said Mr. Benson. "Will the Liberals suffer Mr. Gladstone to be made a show of as a convict?"

"And what'll the other party say to Lord Salisbury?" exclaimed Dipp.

"A riot would prove the very advertisement I pray for," answered Mr. Showman. "But our convicts will be watched by armed warders dressed as the guard was, and they'll knock any trouble on the head fast enough."

"I know how it will go," said Captain Peak. "The Liberals, pointing to Salisbury, 'll say, 'That's how it ought to be;' and the Tories, pointing to Morley, will declare, 'It's a sight too good for him.'"

"And then comes the shindy," said Mr. Dipp.

"Easily quelled," exclaimed Mr. Showman, laughing, "and better than an advertisement on the dome of St. Paul's."

"The captain will be expecting our return," said Mr. Benson.

"What made ye choose this lot, mister?" exclaimed the diver, casting his eyes round the various figures, which were so far ludicrous in that some of them were graced with beards, moustaches, and long hair, which, I believe, are not often to be seen on convicts, though their

life-like attitude and appearance continued to exercise a subduing influence upon Phyllis and even Benson. It was, in short, like walking in the crypt of a cathedral and being stared at by embalmed shapes made awful by mysterious writings on the wall.

“Take them ’eads you see in ’airdressers’ shop windows,” continued Mr. Dipp, “wouldn’t the likes of them answer?”

“This lot happened to fall in my way,” answered Mr. Showman, with a flourish of his hand round the scene. “It was a travelling show from England, and it went stone broke in Melbourne. I went to Melbourne and made an offer, meaning to carry on the show myself, but I also got the notion of a convict ship as a show in my head, and the ship was lying in Sydney to be sold for a song, and so I combined the two undertakings”—and then putting on a theatrical face, he fixed his eyes on the diver, and declaimed in a note which should have proceeded from the effigy of Sir Henry Irving—

“’Tis not in mortals to command success,  
But we’ll do more, Sempronius, we’ll deserve it.”

“And I sincerely trust you will meet with success,” said Phyllis, and bowing to Mr. Showman and to Captain Peak, she added, “I thank you for the treat you have given me.”

She was now to be got on deck, and this was contrived with the same manly delicacy which had been the feature of her descent. She lingered a moment or two at the gangway to look aloft and around her, for the figures below had imported a new element into this old-world picture of a convict ship, and her mind was not in the least degree confused in the real issues of her vivid imagination and her capacity of realization by the circumstance of the convicts, who were sailing home, including a prime minister and the founder of a city temple.

## CHAPTER XV

### IN HIS WATCH ON DECK

It must be admitted that Mrs. Mostyn was seeing life—that is, the life of the rolling sea. It is a life of infinite variety, and very little observed, as literature assures us. On the other hand, Mrs. Mostyn was also seeing life of a form which ashore has infinite variety also, and very much observed indeed, as books, and especially novels, tell us. I refer to that side of life of which, on board the *Dealman*, Benson was the exponent; a microscopic organism in a mighty universe of waters, but, I regret to say, representing hundreds and thousands of like organisms scattered all over the globe.

To figure this thing in a straw or soft hat, alpaca jacket, or city and suburban coat, possessed by a passion that was devouring his character and transforming it by the ordinary intellectual digestive processes into a condition that, when society discovers it, is remorselessly shunned, when the law discovers it, is piteously punished, seems ludicrous. But the spectacle is funny to those only who are not concerned. The boys found sport and the frogs death in the stones. If I laugh at Montague Benson, it is not because I entirely despise him, but because I find in the stricken wretch a quality of tragic pathos which comes very close to my sense of humour.

There can, indeed, be no darker luck for a man than to be the victim of a diseased and hopeless passion.

The ship had not long felt the weight of the south-east trade wind in her canvas, with the large swell

and the cataractal roar of foam day and night at her weather bow, and the wide white sheet of the lee spume seething aft, by day in sun-touched glory, by night in star-coloured faintness, when Phyllis grew sensible of a change in Mr. Benson. He seemed to her to have shrunk into himself as you close the tubes of a telescope, as the snail withdraws into its shell. Heretofore he had proved himself a garrulous man, fluent on most subjects, chiefly on those he did not understand, as witness his syllogism on space. He had come aboard a lover of the monosyllable, but had enlarged his vocabulary as the ship progressed, employed words which astonished Dipp, and his voice, of all at that cabin table, was the most often to be heard.

But suddenly a silence of reserve fell upon him ; it was as though he had dreamt a tremendous dream, to which his whole soul gave credence, but of which his common sense and his dread of ridicule arrested the relation.

It is strange that God, who made man the stronger mentally and physically, should suffer woman to subdue his nature and spirit, by the inspiration of her beauty, to the complexion of a character which neither the shape of his head nor his early rearing and experiences in life's struggles in manhood warrant. The very last man in our judgment to be subject to impressions and influences which all know are as fleeting as the life of the rose, as the lively tints of the sunset, often proves the first to succumb, and we detect his delinquency with astonishment. Benson, you would have said, was one of these very last men : level-headed ; strictly Bensonian ; a business man, whose philosophy was utility ; a man of figures, who never made two and two five ; perfectly well enough acquainted with human nature to know that he was making an ass of himself, and that he must be undone, wrecked, defamed, obliterated from the social page if he persevered.

Of course Phyllis was the first to witness the change in the man, and her penetration and sagacity, as the woman that was wanted, enabled her quite easily to assign that change to the right cause.

But she could not own to her husband a truth which she hated to admit to herself; she could not have said to him, "The reason of that man's change from talk into reserve, from intrusion into retirement, is because his hateful and disgusting love for me has wrought a transformation in his nature." How could she say this even to her husband? Could she adduce any evidence that Benson was dangerously in love with her? Might not such a confession alarm her husband's mind with a suspicion of hysteria, since his own senses yielded him absolutely no testimony to the truth of such an affirmation?

And how did this alteration in Benson manifest itself? In fits, apparently, of morose meditation whilst he leaned over the ship's side or sat at table turning the leaves of a book which he did not read. In spells of silence at meal-times. In absent-mindedness, so that, when addressed, he would start and beg that the question might be repeated. In studious withdrawals from the company of the husband and wife. To which may be added a sullen indifference and insensibility to Mr. Dipp's conversation.

Certainly love, whether holy or unholy, works variously and often strangely in men. One it makes shy, another bold, a third poetical. It forces the sloven to wash himself and put on a clean shirt, the sluggard to rise betimes; it affects the health, and through the physical structure modifies the moral nature. It will slip a murderous heart, inscribed with the word jealousy, into the gentle bosom of the bland. It will make actors and actresses of men and women, more especially of women, and I have seen a romping, laughing girl suddenly rush to a chair and sit



demure. Why? Because the sweetheart, the man to be married, has knocked at the hall door. The student will not wish me to refer him to Burton's "Anatomy of Melancholy" for many chapters of large statements on this subject, nor is it a book that one would like to see one's daughters reading.

The ship was still in the full thunder of the south-east trade wind, roaring towards her destination, when Mr. Dipp, seeing the captain walking alone to and fro in the port alley-way, joined him, and they strolled together.

"This is good work, sir. In three weeks I shall be busy groping."

"She does very well," answered Mostyn. "When I saw her in dock I did not dream she had these heels."

"But you don't spare her."

"I never spare a ship; I carry on to cracking-point, and I never make a foul wind. What's the good of jamming a ship into a luff that backs half her upper canvas and gives you three or four points leeway? Full and bye! no matter though the wind be dead ahead of the course. The long-leg points off, and the short-leg points off, will, in a day's reckoning, put your ship in a position which will leave the wind-jammer topsail down astern, though both ships be equal in sailing qualities."

"Well, sir, I think a ship's like a 'orse. Every one 'as its own character. A coachman told me that if a 'orse once gets the bit 'twixt its teeth and bolts, it'll do it again fust chance it gets. I'm not the sailor you are, capt'n, but I'm not for letting the ship get the bit betwixt her teeth by letting her go when a taut luff will keep her close to her course."

"I never quarrel with a man for holding an opinion," said Mostyn. "Why shouldn't your opinion be as good as mine? Even if wrong it may contain a grain of truth, and is, therefore, valuable to that extent. Whereas,

if I closed your mouth or declined to hear you, I might miss something that would be good for me to know."

"If every man thought like you, sir, there'd be few squabbles in this 'ere world of popes, parsons, lawyers, and old women. Don't you think Mr. Benson's growing a bit sick of this voyage?"

"He seems to have fallen a little dull. He misses the city; he can't get Cornhill out of this," said Mostyn, with a glance at the horizon.

"He don't seem to have any arguments left," said Mr. Dipp, "and pays no attention when I speak to him. If he were married, I would say he was pining for England, 'ome, and beauty."

"The very last man to pine for anything," said the captain.

The diver darted an askant look at him. It was as impressive in significance as one of Prince's glances at Benson.

"No man," continued Mostyn, whose fatuity I should lament in a landsman, though I smile at it as traditionally consistent in a sailor, "is able to pine whose opinions are those of Benson. His mind, as a piece of reading, is about as lively as 'Fenn on the Funds.' I should say he is a man to sit unmoved in a theatre when, to use the words of the newspapers, strong men are weeping. He is not a bad sort in his way. He was kind to allow my wife to remain on board; he has been very polite and obliging to me, and uniformly courteous to Mrs. Mostyn. He is not a sailor, and has little to talk about outside his vocation. We have been long enough cooped up together to travel over one another's minds, and if he finds nothing more to say I don't wonder."

Mr. Dipp did not look as though he were much interested in Mostyn's opinion of Benson. He wore the face of a man who listens to something which he either

differs from or does not understand. But a sight was coming along that was to change the current of their talk. It was a large, full-rigged ship on the lee bow, topping the rim of the ocean with so bright a surface of canvas that you would have thought the *Dealman* was heaving a snow-covered mountain into sight. The contrast between that glittering frost-like heap and the sapphire of the surge of the trade trending in plume-clad procession north-west, and the azure of the sky up which and down which the familiar cloud of the commercial wind was sailing in the homeless way of driven vapour, provided an ocean picture that was too good for Dipp and Mostyn merely, even for Mr. Matthew Walker, who was mate of the watch, and so Phyllis must be called.

Mostyn stepped into the cabin. Benson sat at the table writing in a diary.

“Here’s more colour for your notes, Mr. Benson, in a ship that will be abeam soon. She takes me back to the days of my youth.”

“Which way is she going?” inquired Mr. Benson, listlessly.

“Home to New York or Boston; steering large, as the ancient mariner used to say. Stunsails to the royal yardarms, and a Yankee or Nova Scotiaman to the very root of the fibre out of which her cotton has been spun.”

He passed on to his wife’s cabin, and Benson continued to write. There had been a time when he would have been in a hurry to see, for the dulness of the sea-life sits upon the spirits, and any break comes as a blessing and a memory. But his was the dulness that is invincible by the most royal of sea-shows, and he kept his seat and table and went on writing.

Phyllis was lying in her bunk reading.

“What is it, Charlie?”

“There will be a big American ship passing us shortly.”

“Oh, I must see her,” she cried, and away went a volume of Shakespeare, containing *Romeo and Juliet*, and she took the deck from her bunk with the easy grace that owes all to the discipline of the heaving plank; a grace denied to ladies and gentlemen who abhor salt water and pay high prices for cabins in fleet steamers, which every passage break their own record by minutes and sometimes by hours.

It was the early summer of the south, but let the thermometer stand as it will, when the breeze is a fresh wind with anything of the east in it, it will be cool, and presently uncomfortably cool, on deck, and so Phyllis put on her jacket and crowned her pretty head of hair with a sailor hat, which she secured by long pins; no longer to her husband's secret diversion, for he was now accustomed to seeing a lady dress. When they went out of the berth Benson was still writing in the cabin.

“Have you heard the news of an approaching ship, Mr. Benson?” said Phyllis.

“Yes,” he answered, “I shall hope to make one of your party in a minute or two;” and he bowed his black head and tallowy brow and ebony whisker over his diary and went on writing.

“Dipp and I have just been talking about him,” said Mostyn, as they passed through the cabin door; “he's evidently sick of the voyage, misses his club, his lunch in the city, the congenial companionship of average adjusters.”

Phyllis made no answer, and they ascended the steps to the deck-house top.

Dipp joined them.

“Ain't Mr. Benson willin' to view this sight?” he exclaimed, with a greasy chuckle and a glance at Phyllis

which struck her as a dim revelation of the man's perception of the truth as she knew it; vague because, perhaps, the transmission was dulled by rum, or by that sort of liquid film with which the habit of rum overspreads the human eye. Nevertheless, by that glance she intuitively grasped the surprising fact that this plain, homely, illiterate, good-humoured, and rather drunken diver was master of Mr. Benson's secret.

She felt the blood in her cheek, and turned her head away.

"Who," continued the diver, "is to explain the beauties of this show, if it ain't the gentleman whose knowledge of perlitical heconomy is able to make plain that what yer can see don't exist?"

He screwed his eye up at the heavens.

It was evidently not Mr. Benson's intention to serve as showman. It is true he quitted the cabin, but went no further than the lee bulwarks, over which he could be seen taking a view of the passing ship.

A tall Yankee clipper rending with knife-sharp fore-foot the brine that lifts its salt-white thunder to the round ears of the hawse-pipes: urged by a power as Titanic as steam, but beautiful, romantic, graceful, as steam is not, by merit of snow-white canvas shouting in triumph with the spirit of a force that is viewless though clamorous in each strained, violet-shadowed, marble heart, whose clews arch in pinions with the loveliness of the curve of the sea-gull's wing to the yardarms; a long, black shape of hull, flinging to the foaming swirl alongside the wet glories it catches from the stroke of the sun; the whole with that human look of yearning which a full-rigged ship will somehow take when she is homeward bound, interpretable in the impassioned tension, that seems like soaring, of the three full-breasted heights which compel her, of the jibs and the staysails and the studding sails from the swinging

boom to the royal yardarm, with skysails floating like moons under each golden ball of truck, as though this sentient goddess of the 'sea, this noble and faultless miracle of man's handiwork, was for ever seeking to catch a glimpse of the well-loved home that lies beyond the sterile line ahead. I would ask you, lady, you, who in spirit stand behind my heroine as she gazes, would you admire such a picture as this? Would it appeal to you with the irresistible eloquence of a richly dressed draper's window? Would you see in it only a very little of what it really means—centuries of thought, of calamity, of experience, of wisdom gained by high-hearted audacity? Is that ship sweeter than the last new thing in hats? Is there aught in the sea-life that you, as an English woman, with salt in the blood that blushes in your charming face, would give a snap of your white thumb and forefinger for in such a sea-piece as this?

For whom, then, is this fragment of ill-coloured canvas intended? Is the sea interesting to boys only? and shall her wrath in tempest, and shall her splendours in sunset, and shall her divine revelations in sunrise, and shall her innumerable voice singing softly in the ripples of the summer breeze, and shall that jewelled mantle which the great unseen Hand draws over her by night to quicken her tropic slumber into a life of dreams by the mirroring of the planet or the spacious silver walk of the moon, and shall the tireless procession of man's genius embodied in timber and in steel, in canvas and in engine,—shall these things, *do* these things, address themselves with the appeal of their deep central spirit to boys only?

The flag of the United States stood like a painted board at her peak; the red flag of Roast Beef floated at the mizzen peak of the *Dealman*. Neither made her number. The ship thundered past, and the full quartering gale of the south-east trade wind swept her, and the

wash of her wake fell with the foam of a mountain cataract from her counter.

"That's what I call a 'andsome vessel, Mr. Benson," shouted Dipp down to the alley-way.

Benson turned his head, looked up and nodded, and then re-entered the cabin.

"The Yanks build well when they do build," said Mostyn. "They've been always the first to try in ship-building. It put us to our trumps to sweep their China clippers off the sea; they gave us the divided topsail. Best of all, they gave us the sailors' working song, the windlass chanty, the sea ballad for the brace or bowline."

"D'ye mean to say," said Mr. Dipp, "that English merchant sailors sang no songs when they got their anchors or hoisted their topsails afore the Yankees taught them how and what to sing?"

"I do mean to say that most emphatically," answered Mostyn. "There may be sea chanties of English birth since the earliest of the American—not many, I guess—but the best are Yankee, the most melodious are Yankee, and you may read in sea-books in vain for a hint of a working song in the British merchant service prior to the growth of American shipping."

"Well, sir, you're a scholar, and of course know what you're talking about."

"Why is that ship's canvas so much whiter than ours?" said Phyllis.

"Because it's made of cotton duck," answered the diver, whilst Phyllis still strained a gaze of enthusiastic admiration at the receding ship, which, as she diminished her proportions, slowly brightened out to the sunbeam until she glowed upon the sea like a burnished silver ball. "I know something about that canvas," continued Mr. Dipp. "Down to about heighten thirty-six American sail-cloth was made of Russian or Holland flax.

Then they tried their 'ands at cotton, which answered so nicely that every American ship took to it. Of course we copied them, or tried to, but gave up the experiment, and improved the quality of our flax canvas instead."

"What merit has cotton beyond flax?" asked Mostyn.

"Flax stretches, gets what they call *limpsey*, though it looks nice in the piece or when the sail's new. Cotton don't expand; it keeps its shape; and I don't doubt myself it's the best of all stuffs for sail-making, bar paper, which may some day come in."

Phyllis, who had turned her head to attend to Mr. Dipp, suddenly uttered an exclamation whilst looking aloft at the sails of the *Dealman*.

"Do you see that shadow round the sun, Charlie?"

Mostyn looked; Dipp looked; neither could see it, nor when Phyllis again upturned her sweet eyes was it visible to her. But the interposition of the corner of sail that, when she saw the shadow, had screened the sun from her eyes, again eclipsed him to her, and the shadow stole out, a vast visionary purple disc, dome-like in aspect, in the midst of which the sun was hanging with the look he wears when he flames upon the forehead of the approaching storm.

"You must protect your eyes from the sun to see," said Phyllis; and then her companions immediately witnessed the phenomenon.

"It's not a storm ring, though it may portend storm," said Mostyn. "I never saw anything like it before."

Its diameter was about twenty degrees, and it was fringed with a very delicate light of rainbow, which seemed to indicate that it was dew or moisture held in suspension; an isolated, immense atmosphere, saturated but tearless till the night fell, going with the sun as he moved, of a dimness not so dense but that you might see the trade cloud flying through it.



Mostyn put his head into the skylight. Mr. Benson was not to be seen. The captain shouted his name, and a faint hallo proceeded from Benson's berth. The chartered accountant came out and stood under the open skylight.

"Anything wrong?" he cried, looking unusually ebony by the projection of whisker and recession of brow as he turned up his face.

"A sign has been hung up in the heavens that you might like to see," said the captain; "perhaps you may be able to explain the meaning of it. My wife was the first to see it."

He stepped from the skylight, and at Phyllis's side gazed again at the phenomenon.

The sails of the ship interposed, and the whole circle was not therefore to be compassed by the eye; but at least two-thirds of the shadow was clearly defined when the sight was shuttered from the sun, and it was easily guessed that the whole mysterious shadowy surface with its ring of rainbow would be apparent from aloft or from some place where nothing intervened between it and the beholder.

Mr. Benson arrived. He was taught how to look, and of course he had an explanation.

"To judge by the light," said he, "I should say it was a partial eclipse of the sun, and what you see is a visual deception as space is to those who can't think."

"But don't you see the rainbow that defines the ring, Mr. Benson?" asked Phyllis.

"I see a circle of tints," he answered. "But why is it that the shadow goes when you look at the sun?"

"Why is it that you can't see the wood for the trees, Mr. Benson?" exclaimed Captain Mostyn, laughing at him.

"It's a hatmosphere of dampness hung up," said the diver; "it'll fall in dew when the sun's gone."

“Why should everything manifest itself in circles?” asked Phyllis. “The horizon, the sun and the stars, the flight of the world and of other worlds, the rainbow which is part of a circle, and which I suppose would show itself as a perfect circle if the rain were so shone upon as to reflect it—the whole universe, indeed, seems based on circles.”

“Time’s a circle,” said the diver; “look at the clock!”

“You may carry your idea further, Phyl,” said Mostyn. “Human life is a circle. We begin bald and end bald, and our march is through the seasons of our growth. Vegetation is a circle, and the tree and the flower, like human life, go the rounds.”

“Mr. Dipp,” said Mr. Benson, “you just now referred to time; may I venture to inform you that there is no such thing as time.”

He spoke in the old plausible self-gratulatory, somewhat condescending way. He was Benson himself again for the moment, and the subject of metaphysics was strong in as much as you could see of his face.

“Git out, Mr. Benson!” exclaimed the diver. “You’d know whether there was time or not if the dinner-hour didn’t come round.”

“I can assure you, Mr. Dipp,” continued Benson, avoiding Mrs. Mostyn’s gaze with that sort of neglect which directly addresses the listener it shuns, so subtle are the workings of human manners, “there is no such thing as time. Arrest the revolutions of the sun, the moon, and the earth, and time ceases. We employ the clock merely to mark the passage of these celestial orbs. Time is no condition of their revolutions. If the sun and earth stopped it would be all day or all night with us, and presuming human life to continue, there would be no time for it to take account of. We should be born, grow, decay, and die without a birthday, because the growth of

our bodies does not depend upon time, but upon life, which is quite another thing."

"I am wholly of your opinion," said Captain Mostyn.

"Well," said Mr. Dipp, looking puzzled, "I'm willing to allow that the sun makes time."

"And if the sun stops, time stops," said Mostyn, laughing.

"So, Mr. Benson, you extinguish eternity, which means endless time, as you have extinguished space," exclaimed Phyllis.

He slightly glanced at her, and with that glance he bestowed upon her one of *his* smiles, then went away.

The gigantic circular shadow was still hung up high in the heavens, and you could see it very plainly with its margin of coloured lights if you protected your eyes from the sun. There was something very solemn in its apparently motionless stare when contrasted with the giddy flight of the trade cloud, strenuously trailing north-west like driven sheep.

"I'll send a note of that to the Meteorological Society," said Mostyn. "They'll work it up after the manner of the scientific gentleman in 'Pickwick.' But *there* it is," said he, steadfastly regarding it; "and whether it spells local or widespread, whether it means storm or dew only, we must wait, Phyl, to find out."

So saying, he stepped into the cabin to look at the barometer. A fall: to which significance would be imparted to the experienced eye by the concavity of the surface of the mercury. Benson came out of his berth whilst Mostyn was inspecting the glass.

"Do you find bad weather in that ring?" he asked.

"There is a fall."

Benson looked at the mercury.

"Is any faith to be placed in readings of the barometer?" asked the City man.

"I have met men able to smell weather coming along, and see weather twenty-four hours ahead, and feel weather when all has been as fine as a lady's yachting day. But I, who have no talent of bone, or nose, or eye, stick to that discovery," said Mostyn, with a jerk of his head at the glass.

"How long do you give us now?"

"Three weeks."

Benson silently computed, and said—

"That works out to Christmas Day."

"Just so, Mr. Benson; and we have tinned plum puddings on board."

"Well," said Mr. Benson, with a slight shrug, "it will be cheaper than steam were it a year."

"You find the voyage tedious."

The other looked hard at him with those eyes of his, which were ever on the alert to slide aside from the object they reposed on, and answered, after a moment's reflection—

"It would be unchivalrous to admit it."

"I told you at the start you would find little to amuse you, but I think we've managed very well. I've little fault to find with my crew, though if Staten Island were a port I should be glad if some of them would run."

"We shall start diving at once, I presume?"

"Without an hour's delay, unless it should be Christmas Day, which will find an excuse," Mostyn said, with an unconscious note of sarcasm in his voice as he looked at Benson, "to offer thanks to God for watching over us."

Which, as the reader will see, signified that Divine service was not held on Sundays aboard the *Dealman*, though Phyllis found an altar in her bunk, and her Bible and prayer-book were on her chest of drawers.

"We are especially watched over, I suppose," said

Benson, ironically, "that you should think it necessary to return thanks?"

"I believe in God," said Mostyn; "and I do not consider myself superior to Nelson, and to crowds of great sailors and soldiers and others, who never omitted to entreat and then to thank."

"I shall be glad," said Mr. Benson, "when the gold's in the hold, and we are sailing north."

"Pray for it," said Mostyn, lightly, and went into his berth.

That night in the middle watch, which runs from midnight till four, it was blowing a strong wind, and when the captain had left the deck at eleven o'clock the ship was shooting through a high sea under single-reefed topsails and main top-gallant sail. When at one o'clock Mostyn turned out to take a view of the state of the ship and the weather he concluded that things were as he had left them, as the mate had received his instructions to call him if a change happened. The ship was filled with noise. Everything complained of the high sea in its own voice. The lamps swung dimly in the cabin, and when Mostyn stepped out of his berth he saw the figure of a man seated on the coaming or piece of wood which it is customary to affix in doorways or around hatches to stop the inrush of water. The figure filled the little doorway, and the captain did not need to peer hard to discern that it was Mr. Mill the mate.

Sleeping in your watch is the most unpardonable of offences at sea, and Mill was not only asleep but contemptuously asserting himself as a sleeper by a strong gushing snore which was a distinct strain of sound in the night's chaos of clamour.

The captain struck the man heavily on the shoulder. He started to his feet in a plunging way, and a heavy lee lurch flung him as though he had been hit over the head.

Mostyn guessed he was drunk. Mill got up and picked up his cap, and Mostyn saw he was not drunk.

"Are you in the habit of sleeping in your watch, sir?" shouted the captain, letting himself go in a sudden tempest of wrath, excited not more by the enormity of the crime than by the uniformly sullen boorish deportment of the man.

"I was not asleep," answered the mate.

"You're a liar. I heard you snoring. Do sailors of your experience fall down when a ship rolls?"

"I'm not here to be called liar," exclaimed Mill, in a growling voice more dangerous perhaps than Mostyn's impassioned note. "You don't call me liar twice."

"If you say you were not sleeping in your watch, I'll call you liar twenty thousand times over," roared Mostyn. "You cuckoo!"

His hands were clenched and he waited the onslaught, well assured how it would fare with the other, whose temper did not blind his foresight; so Mill stood still, a square shadow with a glimmering face swaying with the heave.

"You're a precious specimen of an officer for men to serve under," said Mostyn, taking a step or two forward, and speeding his gaze over the hooting fabric on high, and at the dim white fangs of the headlong crests storming the ship a point before the beam.

"I've got the rheumatics and sat down one minute," said the mate, in his surliest way.

"You were sleeping in your watch, sir, and if you deny it again you are a liar."

The mate was silent. A few men catching the loud voices of a quarrel came in shadow to the main hatch to enjoy the row. I cannot imagine any sort of entertainment more beloved by Jack Muck than a shindy and strong words between captain and mate. He sucks in

every syllable as though the oath was pure melody, and the wilder the language the sweeter the tune.

Foam flings a light into the midnight wind, and the captain saw these men, whose presence helped him to a resolution. He walked right aft and posted himself beside the man at the wheel, and after asking one or two questions which he could not put to the mate as matters stood, he watched his ship in silence. She had no more sail than she could bear, but she wanted no more. She was racing through it with the speed of steam, and many an ocean screw tramp would have been dropped hopelessly astern by her. She took the dark slants of the sea with her weather bow and burst them, and you heard them seething like a blowing safety-valve. It was still the trade wind, though nearly half a gale. The flight of the faint white clouds under the stars, which glowed clearly and in several dyes, flung a new spirit of speed into this rushing night scene, and at no moment in her various postures did the ship report her eleven knots more decisively than when, having spurned the weather surge into an acre of yeast, she leaned to the lifting fold of water alongside, bringing the soft, faint, rushing smother within a hand's reach of the lee top-gallant rail, where you saw the foam blown in snow-storms out of the heart of the creaming yeast by the hollow guns and shrieking squalls sweeping from the concavity of the mainsail under its iron-taut curve.

A man, no matter what be his state of mind, will often find his passing passion teased by a tune, or threaded by a jingle of rhyme. Mostyn, without heeding the words, mentally muttered—

“ But we woggled on like a bale of hay,  
And we set our teeth, and we pumped with groans :  
And when we got to Boston Bay,  
Our arms were stretched to our ankle bones.

Hands were the size of Lincoln hams,  
Eyes bulged out like the horns of rams,  
We humped like monkeys bound for war,  
And every man had a raw, red paw.

Ker-daw, Ker-day!

And we beached the tub—and then we saw——”

The sweep of the wind was so full of wet you would have said it rained. Glass, brass-work, all that reflected, winked in dim sparkles with the rolling of the ship, and the decks were dark with moisture. Was this in justification of Mr. Dipp's theory of dew in relation to the great circle of shadow that had been observed. It mattered not. Mostyn had other fish to fry. A still small voice inwardly sang a song whilst in a mood of wrath he turned the question of the mate and the situation generally over in his mind.

Saving Mostyn, Mill was the only navigator aboard the ship. If Swanson had survived, poor as he was as a creature, Mostyn, for such an offence as sleeping in his watch, would have made nothing of breaking the mate and sending him forward. But suppose the captain of the ship fell ill, who was to navigate her? The dislike he had long nursed towards the mate, which Mill had exerted his talent of moroseness and let-me-a-loneness to heighten and inflame, was now in a blaze, and he felt that he could give his hand if Matthew Walker would but step on deck charged with Norie's Epitome from brow to heel. He had noticed that the mate never said "sir" once. Nor is it possible in cold type to express the consumingly irritating manner and tone of the man after he had got up.

But Phyllis was aboard and the ship was to be left as safe as he could keep her.

He watched the ship until three in the morning, giving orders in that time for the reef to be shaken out of



the upper main-topsail, and when he went below he said stormily to Mill—

“I would recommend you to keep awake, and you may out reef in the fore-topsail, and set the t'gallant sail, and make sail if the weather moderates, and hand my orders on to Mr. Walker.”

At half-past eight that morning all the cabin people were at breakfast. The weather had moderated into a royal breeze, and the ship was streaming through it under all plain sail. Mr. Mill's watch on deck had again come round, for in the merchant service in sailing-ships it is watch and watch with the mates, four hours off and four hours on, and the lady who may be reading these lines will exclaim, “And Captain Mostyn expected poor Mr. Mill to keep awake!” Yes, madam; for supposing you had been a passenger on board the *Dealman*, would you have found solace amid that riot of sea, straining timber, hooting canvas, and shattering surge, in the knowledge that the officer in charge of the vessel was sound asleep in the cabin door? “Why not then give the mates, who should be three or four, eight hours off and four on?” It should be so; but the British shipowner, if mates should ask him for an opportunity when at sea to obtain the rest that is essential not only to lead, light, and lookout, but to health, will answer that he can lay his hand upon foreigners who would be glad to stop awake all night for smaller wages than the Britishers ask, and so it stands.

The cabin wore a yacht-like colour with its white damask table-cloth, breakfast crockery, the lights of the morning and the nosegay presence of Phyllis, to whom the sea had imparted its beauties; to her eyes the liquid lustre of its dark blue surface; to her cheek the delicate faint pink of its early sunrise; to her face the vivacity of its frolicsome life; and to her smile and laugh the spirit of its belted freedom.

“A very unpleasant incident happened this morning, Mr. Benson,” said the captain, when breakfast was nearly over, and Prince had gone forward.

“What was it?” And Benson looked grave, as most people at sea do when unpleasant incidents occur.

“I found Mr. Mill fast asleep in his watch, and it was heavy weather.”

“In the Navy,” said Mr. Dipp, after a pause, “he’d be court-martialed and dismissed his ship, and serve him right. Asleep! with men’s lives and a ship’s value in his hands!”

“What do you mean to do?” asked Benson.

“I’ve officially logged him.”

“You couldn’t have done less,” said Mr. Dipp.

“I like this man so little,” said the captain, “that in the interest of the insurers I should be glad to get rid of him. What do you say, Mr. Benson, if we touch at the Falkland Islands? We might find a man there.”

“I don’t think deviation desirable,” answered Mr. Benson, “particularly as you might not find a man.”

“But the law,” exclaimed Mostyn, “does not hold us seaworthy as we stand.”

“How’s that?” inquired Benson.

“This ship is above one hundred tons, and she has only one mate.”

“What do you call Mr. Walker?” asked Benson.

“He’s not certificated,” was the answer, “and by his own admission he’s utterly ignorant of navigation.”

“The ship is safe enough with Mill as Only Mate,” said Benson.

“But he’s not an Only Mate,” replied the captain, exchanging a glance with Phyllis. Mr. Benson’s advocacy of Mill was surprising him.

“You have officially logged him,” said Mr. Benson, “and of course know that your official entry means that

you intend to prosecute him, or enforce a forfeiture, or exact a fine, and as there is no court of law at Staten Island, and no British Consul, he must be carried home."

"But who's going to turn in comfortable with a mate on duty that falls asleep?" said Mr. Dipp.

"It has not occurred before," said Benson.

"I don't know about that," whipped in Mostyn.

"But in any case," continued Mr. Benson, "we don't want to delay the voyage by deviation when we have at least two skilful navigators on board in you and the mate."

"If disaster happens," said Mostyn, "will the insurers hold this ship seaworthy with one mate on board only?"

"Yes."

"I doubt it," said Dipp.

"I am perhaps better acquainted with the law than you, sir," said Benson, with some expansion of manner, and a large patronizing expression of face. "We are on a voyage to Staten Island. We lose our second mate by misadventure. It is impossible to replace him at our destination, and deviation is undesirable as the occasion cannot be shown as urgent. What is there in this to vitiate a policy? It has happened hundreds of times over. Do you see my point, Mrs. Mostyn?" he added, unbending, and smiling at her.

"I see your point," she answered; "but my husband is a sailor who understands his business, and if he hasn't confidence in his mate how can he trust him? And if he can't trust him, he must do his work as well as his own, which is much too much for one man, and in that sense your ship is unseaworthy."

It was Portia reasoning with Shylock. Mr. Dipp rolled out a few greasy chuckles. Mr. Benson modestly bent his gaze upon the table-cloth. He was not the man to trust himself to look at the young wife when admiration

in him was impassioned beyond all power by suppression in the eye whilst Captain Mostyn sat hard by.

“You reason cleverly,” said he, “but I think you strain the point. Have I your permission, captain, to speak seriously to Mr. Mill on the subject of his watch-keeping?”

“You may say whatever you like to him,” answered Mostyn, with ill-disguised contempt and impatience. “But if I choose to foresee trouble with that man as the mate of my ship, then, if that trouble comes, may I take it on your written assurance that my employers will hold me irresponsible?”

“So far as the conduct of the mate goes, certainly, and if you will grant me three minutes you shall have the written assurance you require, witnessed by Mr. Dipp. Will you follow me?” said he to the diver; and they both went into Benson’s cabin.

“He pleads for Mill as if he liked him,” said Phyllis.

“The fellow made me feel as mad as a soused cock,” said Mostyn, “when I found him snorting on that coaming there. We nearly came to blows.”

“He will hate you for putting him in the log-book,” said Phyllis, with an anxious look in her face.

“Let him! *Oderint dum metuant* was Nero’s saying. Benson’s quittance will be all I want.”

“I wish we were as near home as we are to Staten Island,” said Phyllis.

“It’s all right, my honey-bird. *I’ll* look after the ship. Mill shan’t catch *me* nodding.”

They sat in conversation until Benson and Dipp came out, and Benson handed to Captain Mostyn a sheet of writing attested by Dipp which ran thus:—

“December, 189— Ship *Dealman* at sea.

“In consequence of the loss of the second mate Mr. Swanson by death through misadventure, I, the

undersigned, representing the interests of the Ocean Alliance Insurance Company, hereby accept all responsibility for prosecuting the voyage with Mr. James Mill, chief mate, as only mate, holding that the interests of all the parties concerned in the issue of this voyage will be best promoted by the mate's retention and by the recognition of the impossibility of obtaining the services of an uncertificated second mate without considerable deviation, which might jeopardize the object of this voyage.

“MONTAGUE BENSON.

“Witness, STEPHEN DIPP.”

Mostyn read this precious document in silence.

“I am satisfied,” said he.

## CHAPTER XVI

### STATEN ISLAND

THE people aboard the *Dealman* spent their Christmas Day at sea, in spite of Captain Mostyn's expectations. But disappointment was not to be greatly reckoned with, since the skipper's computations promised that the bold, iron-bound, snow-crested land of Staten should be reposing in shadow next morning on the horizon ahead.

Christmas Day at sea, celebrated in the midsummer day of the south! Those who have stood shadowless under the sun on Christmas Day have found turkey, roast beef, and plum pudding conditions of festivities hard to realize, harder perhaps to digest. But the *Dealman* had penetrated far south, and the parallel under her forefoot was nearly that of the Horn; the weather was cool if not cold, cool enough to render a tinned plum pudding and brandied sauce seasonable. It was cool enough, also, to improve the graces of Mrs. Mostyn, when on deck, by a jacket trimmed with fur, and a fascinating turban hat trimmed with fur to match. Never, during the outward passage, had she looked so winning, had her eyes glowed with a brighter spiritual light, had her cheek blushed with a more perfect indication of health. Benson was irrecoverably lost and damned. She was the most beautiful woman in the world. Carefully and skilfully as he had dissembled his passion from Mostyn, in whom a natural jealousy would make scrutiny a dangerous weapon to Benson, he had not, so far, triumphed in his masquerade of

impassive chartered accountant as to blind the captain's eyes to the circumstance that the man's admiration for Mrs. Mostyn was decidedly stronger than was proper.

At last! and Phyllis had smiled when her Charlie had one day said to her—

“Upon my word, Phyl, I believe you're right. Benson's admiration is distinctly ahead of the average Grundy sentiment. I believe he's as much in love with you as he dare be. But what can I do? What can you do? What can he do? He can't help himself, and, like poverty, helplessness is no crime. Let him stand well clear of you so that he shall never empower you to report something to me—which of course you would”—he paused, viewing her with a strange gaze of command and tenderness—“something,” he went on, “that must oblige me to take him by the nose.”

She had answered, “Now that you have judged for yourself, I am satisfied. His society is extremely disagreeable to me. But he is to be endured, I suppose. I have supported the animal's veiled attentions for nearly two months, and must hope to survive another two or three months of it.”

This Christmas Day was made memorable, not by the fore-castle good cheer of canned meat and plum-duff, into which the sailors drove their sheath knives, nor by the conversation or behaviour of the people in the cabin—indeed, Benson, at table, was unusually quiet, and Mostyn was thinking too much about the entrance to Port Parry to talk, and most of the conversation that passed was between Phyllis and the diver; I say this day would not have been rememberable but for a little incident, but for one of those mysterious etchings which the mariner sometimes falls in with as his ship's keel turns the pages of that mighty folio, the ocean.

It was in the afternoon, and a pleasant afternoon; the

breeze was right aft, and the canvas breathed like a sleeper's breast as the vessel bowed the swell. The eternal sea girdle was flawless, save that here and there some jutting peak of cloud relieved the eye from the stress and strain of endless continuity.

Suddenly a man on the fore-castle-head sang out—

“There's a raft, with something on it, close under the starboard bow.”

All rushed to the side to look, amongst them Phyllis. It was a large raft, made up of a ship's spare booms, and whatever else in the shape of battens, deals, and the like which sailors, toiling for their lives in the terror and hurry of some deadly disaster, would make compact, and launch. And on it was—what? The dead body of a little baby—that and nothing more!—secured by turn upon turn of line.

The raft passed so close that the infant lineaments were easily discernible, and Phyllis shrank. It might have been washing about for a week. Unless the survivor reaches home and tells the story, who shall solve the riddles of the sea, be they tragic or comic, be they as that little child or a stowaway monkey fallen from a vessel out of sight and picked up chattering with rage?

“Oh, how sad!” exclaimed Phyllis, with the full heart of a woman in her throat.

No need to ask if the child was dead. Death is a cunning artist, if time be granted, and no man could miss the meaning of that visage of infantile clay.

“I wonder the sea-birds have not devoured it,” exclaimed Mr. Benson, contemplating the receding sea-bier over his folded arms, humped high on his shirt front. Probably the sentiment he drew from the sight was utility, and he might have been thinking of guano.

“It's a story easily read, I think,” said Mostyn, somewhat pensively. “A captain, his wife, and their baby, and



a few men ; the boats have been stove or made off with. One by one they are swept off the raft until one only is left, and there it is."

"A manger's not a raft," said Mr. Dipp, "but this is Christmas Day, and that little 'un seems to fit it somehow."

He spoke reverently, for Dipp's was the simple faith of ancient minds.

Next morning, December 26th, 189-, faithful to the prognostications of Captain Charles Mostyn, Staten Island hung in shadow right ahead. "Land ho!" was the fore-castle cry, and, from Phyllis in her cabin to the cook in his galley, all was life, the pulse of excitement which the presentment of even a shadow of land will put into the blood of man whose natural element is earth, whether you call him sailor or tinker, after weeks or months of the horizon of the sea.

Captain Mostyn was on the deck-house top, scrutinizing the shadow through a telescope, when Phyllis arrived.

"Is that cloud Staten Island?" she asked.

"Yes."

"Good gracious, what a wonderful navigator you must be to have brought it into sight right on a line with the bowsprit!"

"That's a young lady's compliment," he answered gravely, working away with the glass. "D'ye see that white speck this side the shadow? It's a schooner, and I dare say a sealer."

"Is the land clear in the telescope?"

"No ; the haze of the morning is over it. It's about thirty miles distant." He glanced at the passing water, pulled out his watch, and added, "We ought to be close in at two."

The ship was under all plain sail, and the gush of the breeze had power enough to dart white feathers into the heads of the little running seas. It was a very fine

morning, spacious with high cloud, and Mostyn considered himself extremely fortunate in making the land in such weather. You could see the sailors on the fore-castle staring under the sharp of their hands at the shadow, for the pink glory of the sunrise somewhat baffled the view if you looked with unsheltered vision. There was gold in that island; they knew how much; Dipp's men had told them that long ago. Forty thousand pounds in the *Conqueror* steamer, and the significance of opulence beyond their humble dreams of avarice was in that distant shading of the sky.

Dipp and Benson joined Mostyn and his wife.

"I beg to congratulate you on your skilful steering of us," said Benson, addressing Mostyn with strenuous effort of courtesy.

"I am much obliged to you, sir."

"Now my job's going to begin," said the diver; and professional anxiety clouded his face as he looked at the shadow. "Is that a sail this side of the island?"

"Yes," answered Mostyn; "probably a Yankee sealer. The gains of that trade are growing very small this way. It's the season of the year when the female seals come ashore attended by their lords, and the fights are bloodier than a bull-ring. The Christian fishers have almost extinguished the poor beggars. They come closer to human nature than the monkey. Nothing that is animal loves its young so passionately well as the female seal, and if you fracture the skull of one you'll find an identical indent on the skull of its offspring. Which shows a sympathy that would be wonderful in human beings, and makes the murder of the seal, to my mind, fiendish sport."

"But the ladies must have sealskin cloaks and jackets, captain," said Mr. Benson, who was suddenly resuming his natural behaviour, though, once having met the

captain's eye after his own had been upon Mrs. Mostyn, he carefully refrained from even glancing at her.

"That's the north side, of course," said Dipp; "and Port Parry will be about amidships of it."

"Yes; I shall heave to and send you in a boat to sound. It would be stupid to bring up right over the wreck," said Mostyn.

"Rocks at the entrance are marked down on the chart," said Mr. Benson.

"Oh, I know, I know. I'm not afraid of them. I want to moor the ship clear of the wreck in good holding ground. The sealers warp in and secure theirs fast to the rocks. If it is hard bottom we may have to do something of that sort."

"How long is it going to take you, Mr. Dipp?" said Mr. Benson.

"Oh, my Gord, Mr. Benson," cried Dipp, in a groaning note, "what a question to put to a man afore he knows where he is! Wait till I've found the wreck and taken a view of her."

Phyllis gazed at him with admiration of the heroic possibilities his speech conveyed.

People, unless they are gorging Germans, do not commonly linger over a meal when land is in sight and a crisis in the voyage has come. All four at breakfast that morning were visibly excited. Captain Mostyn was full of Port Parry and its anchorage, Dipp of his business when his short iron ladder should be slung over the side, and Phyllis wondered what Staten Island was like, if any sort of strange flowers blew there, and marvelled at its immense distance from Woolsborough.

Benson's mood was scarcely conjecturable. Was he excited? He represented the interests of the insurers of the gold, and the proximity of that gold and the uncertainty that must attend Mr. Dipp's labours should

reasonably fill his mind and create that sort of tension of nerve which produces the sensation called excitement. Why is it that some people will unconsciously assert themselves physiologically, with a distinctness so beyond their natural front, that you view them, though familiar, as something fresh? Dye, by accentuation, might produce this effect; but dye is artificial. The presentment I mean is that which a man submits, say, at your breakfast table, and he shall not look exactly like the same man who shook you by the hand last night.

This gift of facial assertiveness was Benson's, in whom it acted unconsciously. He never looked so profoundly Bensonian, as though a more decisively Benson mask had been fitted to his countenance, as he did at breakfast this morning. Phyllis thought so when, from the violet heaven of her eyes, she plunged into him the lightning glance of the abrupt storm of disgust and dislike which swept her, spite of herself, every time she looked at him.

"I notice that Mr. Mill don't seem much helated by the sight of land," said Dipp, in the course of the talk at table.

"A surly dog! On board a vessel like this," said Mostyn, "when there is harmony aft, a captain unbends and exchanges congratulations with his chief officer. Would to God he were out of the ship!" The steward was not in attendance when this was said. The captain turned to his wife. "There'll be no theatres for you, Phyl, not even a church or that old Joe Miller sign of civilization, a gibbet. You must catch fish for breakfast and dinner. I'll bait your hooks."

"I would rather watch Mr. Dipp diving than hear the best opera company in Europe," said Phyllis, sweetly smiling at Mr. Dipp and bowing to him like a lily in the breeze.

"It's mighty kind of you to talk like that," said the

diver, with an incommunicable grin of gratification. "I only wish there was two divin' suits aboard, that I could take you down and show you what being under water's like." Mostyn laughed. "I'm paid," continued Mr. Dipp, with some energy, "to find as much as I can of forty thousand pounds in sovereigns in boxes. That's all." Mr. Benson gazed at him. "If," he continued, "I meet with anything that shall be in the smallest way acceptable to you it shall be yourn, ma'am;" and the diver contorted his figure into a bow that again made you think of him as under water, fluctuating.

"What do you expect to find?" said Mr. Benson.

"Ah! say the captain had his wife with him and she left a brooch. I'll 'ave a 'unt, anyway," said Mr. Dipp, who was evidently incensed by Mr. Benson's question, "and outside the gold anything that comes my way is my perquisites."

"I don't suppose your claim will be disputed," remarked Mr. Benson.

"I wish that schooner was heading for Port Parry," said Mostyn. "She's bound more westerly than we; perhaps for Franklin Bay."

He left the table. His wife, who was clothed for the deck, followed him. Dipp went into the waist and talked to his men. Benson, lighting a cheroot, leaned over the side and contemplated the island.

By noon the soft, pink-touched, violet vision of the morning had sharpened into distinguishable lineaments, and Phyllis amused herself with studying it through the telescope which her husband fixed for her, and which she was able to use by keeping the lid of her left eye closed with her finger, as the surface she surveyed was large and brimmed the object-glass with constancy, and the ship, as she floated onwards, swayed slightly to the long-drawn heave of the swell of the mighty Pacific. She saw

mountains whose peaks sparkled like sugar. They were clothed to their snow-line with vegetation of a deep rich green. She witnessed amidst this growth many white patches which she mistook for snow, but which afterwards proved to be intersections of pure milk quartz as delicate in light as the foam that crumbled at the cutwater. She could discern ravines and gullies and open spaces which might mark the mouths of creeks, and once there slipped into the lens the toy-like shape of a little schooner, wide-winged, heading for the westernmost extremity of the island. When she removed her eye from the glass it was but to watch the flight of some albatrosses which were sailing round and astern of the ship. Those swans of the sea touched into loveliness the wide scene of cloud-domed air of island and of ocean. They swept on wings which might have measured fifteen feet from tip to tip, and their eyes sparkled gloriously. Their flight was a revelation of poetry in motion, a suspension of an aerial shape beautiful and noble in outline, which seemed to owe nothing of its maintenance or progress to the tremorless pinion.

Staten Island is about thirty-three miles long, and nine miles broad. Though comparatively close to the ice-girt coast of the Horn, it stands upon the waters, when approached from the north, with an isolation that could not be more complete if it were Tristan d'Acunha, Amsterdam Island, or St. Helena. All the majesty of ocean loneliness is in this little spot of land, lifting its score of peaks, crowned with everlasting snow, whence the eye sinks into valleys as bright in hue of flower and tender in green of tree as any dreamer of Arabian gardens could desire to witness in a vision. Along the base of this solemn pile the swell of the Pacific bursts in thunder and splendour, and when there is wrath in the gale, and when the flood comes sweeping fierce through the

corridors of Tierra del Fuego, the sea is mountainous and mighty, it smites the rock and leaps in gigantic plumes or clouds of spume; the hollows are dangerous with conflict of gale, surge, and current; and ill fares the sailing ship that in such weather as this finds Staten Island a lee shore.

What most impressed Phyllis as the *Dealman* floated nearer and nearer, revealing new tints, configurations, and opening peaks at every length of her own keel that she measured, was the silence which that mass of rock suggested—the silence of immemorial loneliness! for when we speak of silence we do not think of the rusty cry of the sea-bird, or the language of any denizen that is not man, but the silence in which the human voice and the psalms of the mills of human industry are engulfed as by the sands which sealed the relics of Nineveh, as of the South American waste which reposes like a tombstone upon the memories of a prehistoric civilization.

Phyllis had that power of realization which makes poets of its possessors. It was enough for her to be told that the island at which she was gazing was as tenantless of human life, save when now and again a sealer looked in, as Selkirk found Juan Fernandez when the buccaneers set him ashore, to read into its mystery of glancing peak and iron terraces a meaning, and, therefore, a fascination, which it could not have contained or exerted had it been populated by a few fisherman, or such folks as are, at long intervals, visited by one of His Majesty's ships in the South Atlantic ocean.

“Look here, Phyl, see there,” said Captain Mostyn, breaking in upon her meditation; and he pointed to the water alongside.

It was a sort of wingless duck of a dull grey-brown, bluff in the bows as an old “Geordie,” and flat in bottom for skimming—a butcher's tray in theory of form.

It kept pace with the ship, though heading three points off, and it smote the water with its broad webbed feet like the paddles of a side-wheeled steamer.

“What name do they give it!” the wife asked, following the thing’s foaming career with the interest she took in all that was strange in beauty, or sudden in disclosure of loveliness, or vital with a decipherable spirit.

“I fancy it’s a logger-headed duck. I’ve heard them called racers or steamers. Will he eat sweet?” said Mostyn, looking at the bird. “There is always too much oil in the flavour of sea-fowl. Its flesh is like Dipp’s voice when he’s slightly on. I’m afraid, Phyl, we shan’t be able to talk of roast duck and green peas; even field-peas can find no soil on that island.”

“Who troubles to think of eating whilst admiring?” said Phyllis. “You once pointed to the splendid colouring of the feathers of some hen or other at Woolsborough. Did you think of it as trussed and smoking on the table?”

“I hope to find something to eat in that island, anyhow,” said Mostyn.

“Mind you don’t poison yourself.”

“If our detention is long you will find it dull, Phyl.”

“Certainly not, if the gold is recovered; and even if it is not recovered I shall make myself happy. We’ll take some rambles ashore. I should like to climb one of those heights, and view the scene. I suppose I should be the only girl whose foot ever printed the snow there.”

“You’ll not catch me climbing. I’ve had enough of it,” said the captain, pointing to the rigging. “You’ll plumb a precipice, or sit motionless with fright on an edge of rock, where your skeleton will be found by some Rip Van Winkle in after years, and that’s the amount of



the glory of the sunrise, and the splendour of the sunset, and the magnificent stage of earth covered with towns which you are invited to destroy yourself in order to see."

"All the same, Charlie, you and I will climb one of those hills," said she, firmly; for by this time she knew her man by heart, and laughed at his little amorous perversities of argument. "What's Mr. Mill so busy about on the fo'c'sle?"

"Getting the ground gear ready for letting go the anchor," was the answer.

"Have you observed that Mr. Benson is the only man in the ship with whom the mate seems disposed to exchange a syllable more than is necessary? He has nothing to say to Mr. Matthew Walker, or Mr. Dipp, or to you. What, then, has he to say to Mr. Benson, who is not a sailor, and has nothing to do with the navigation of the vessel?"

"I gave Benson leave to talk to him after I found the beggar asleep. He's a man in search of command, and might hope, as I hope, that Benson will prove useful if carefully cultivated."

"Falling asleep in your watch is not the way to recommend you to Benson?"

"I don't know what they talk about, and don't care," said the captain, a little fretfully, rendered petulant by the obtrusion upon him of a topic which had nothing to do with the navigation of Port Parry. The marital habit is soon acquired, the inattention to those lips whose words were melody, whose movements were entrancing to watch, the tendency to walk a little ahead instead of compactly side by side as of yore, when the full moon was never sweeter, when the river, and the flower, and the meadow, and the surf upon the golden sands never held deeper meanings. To be sure Mostyn was as much in

love with his wife as when he married her—only, I say, the marital habit begins soon.

Just then Mr. Benson slowly mounted the steps with a cheroot drooping under his fall of moustache. Mr. Dipp had once asked him why he did not insure himself against fire, "For," said the diver, "no man with such a moustache as yours can light a cigar or pipe without the chance of bursting into flames."

"How far off is the land, captain?"

"About five miles."

"When do you heave-to?"

"A mile of offing will serve me," replied Mostyn.

"What are the soundings here?"

These were perfectly reasonable questions in the mouth of a man who represented the interests of the insurers.

"I'm not going to sound for no bottom," said Mostyn. "It's steep-to till you enter the heads when you get thirty fathoms, which is deep enough for this ship."

"Have you been admiring those albatrosses, Mrs. Mostyn?" inquired Benson, slightly changing the key of his voice, and looking at her with that insinuating smile which she loathed, which the hair that showered from his upper lip hid, which his eyes indicated by somehow or other spreading the expression over his soap-coloured brow.

"Yes, Mr. Benson."

"Isn't their flight beautiful?" said he, slightly dropping his head to his shoulder in the plausible posture of the man who says he admires. "Has not somebody written a song about a man who shot an albatross with a bow and arrow?"

"You mean, perhaps, a comic song written by a person called—let me see—oh, Coleridge," replied Phyllis.

"Possibly; it's years since I heard it. How would you like to be princess of that island?"

“Mr. Mill!” shouted the captain.

“Sir!” was the foc’sle response.

“Send the men aft to trim sail.”

The breeze had suddenly shifted three points, and Mr. Benson must wait for an answer until the hullabaloo of the braces had been coiled down. By which time he had forgotten the question, but as something of the sort was running in his head, and as the sailors were again busy forward, he thought proper to continue in conversation with Captain Mostyn’s wife.

“What a miserable picture of desolation!” said he, viewing the island. “What would a man do if he were cast ashore alone upon it?”

“Go on board a sealer,” answered Phyllis.

“Remove the sealer, and what then?”

“Do as Crusoe did. Sleep in a tree for the first night, and live in caves and behind barricades after.”

It is worthy of notice here that, though Benson was in conversation with Mrs. Mostyn, he looked at her as seldom as possible, and never when not addressing her.

“Defoe was good to pile up a Spaniard soon after Robinson’s arrival, full of everything which that British sailor could want,” said Mostyn. “But for that wreck he’d have been lining himself with limpets, or tucking into lumps of raw sea-lion.”

This conversation was interrupted by the arrival of Mr. Dipp, who asked if the ship wasn’t being set to the westward.

“Yes,” answered Mostyn, “I’m noting it, and shall make a board north-east and heave-to on the starboard tack before I send you ashore.”

The diver picked up the telescope and critically inspected the entrance to Port Parry. The land was about three miles distant, and every feature determinable by the naked vision. The colours combined into a picture

of rugged and lonely magnificence, with clusters of growth radiant with red berries, and little hills and plains covered with green mounds like cushions, and flowers which afterwards proved to be fuchsias, with sea-pinks on the dry shore, contrasting their burning red lanterns with the whiteness of the rolling foam that thundered at their feet, the whole dominated by the soft purity of the virgin snow on the mountain-tops. Rills of fresh water, with many a laughing glance in their silver lines, could be seen running down the hills into the sea. Vivid was the vegetation of the Antarctic beech, whose dark green leaves are delicately underveined, whose boughs glow with bright pink blossoms, whose trunk is girt with an orange-coloured fungus; vivid, too, the arbutus, an evergreen, whose sharp-pointed leaf is enriched by small, white, cup-shaped flowers and berries like white-heart cherries. And another noble evergreen is there to mingle its dye with that rainbow of an island, the holly-leaved barberry, encrusted with lichens and mosses, and graced by sloe-like fruit hanging in clusters.

All this with Cape Horn hard by! all this profusion of beauty, this magnificent canvas of colour, this rich, large, and liberal banquet for the eye and the intellect—for whom? Who calls at Staten Island? The mariner of the sailing-ship gives it a wide berth and the gilded gentleman on the bridge homeward-bound does not love it.

After an interval, "See all clear for stays!" shouted Mostyn, at the top of the deck-house, from which altitude he meant to put his ship about.

The tacking of a full-rigged ship is as charming a manœuvre to witness from outside as the wheeling of the albatross ere it drops to the meal it sees, unless, indeed, the man who gives the orders puts his ship in irons. There was wind enough for stays, and it had again headed the ship, rendering the putting of her about imperative.

The helm was put down; the canvas on the fore and mizzen darkened with tremors of shadow as the yards were swung, and presently rounded out into full breasts which, in the *Dealman*, shone gloriously white in the northern sun, and the reef-points gleamed in fringes like yellow silk which made you think of the white throat of a woman sparkling with a necklace; whilst the forward canvas lay hollowed into the mast, with the jibs unsightly with their sheets to windward. Then, "Let go and haul!" and the brace-released yards of the fore were swung, and the shell-like heart of the sail, beautiful with its shading of violet, running from the parrel to the lee clew, drank in its full measure of the salt-sweet gush of the breeze, and the jibs yearned in pinions of grace and light from bowsprit to flying jibboom.

Meanwhile, Dipp and his men, and others of the crew, were engaged in making one of the quarter-boats ready for lowering. They put a hand-lead and tallow into her, and the hole in the end of the lead was liberally greased that it might reveal what Mr. Dipp would not be able to see until he went down. Dipp also took a rifle. Then, when the place upon the sea, sought and desired by the eye of Mostyn, had been reached by the sentient, gentle, queenly thing he governed—not less noble in her isolation than the lonely many-coloured land she kept aboard—the main topsail was swung to the mast, the ship's way was arrested, Dipp and five men sank in a boat from the davits, and the real romance of the voyage began.

## CHAPTER XVII

### DIPP SOUNDS

IT was a quarter-past three in the afternoon. The sun was high, and would be long in setting. Captain Mostyn and his flower-sweet wife stood together at the brass rail on the deck-house top, watching the receding boat. Benson paced the deck on the other side. His glance was often directed at the girl whose back was upon him. One might judge by the character of his tread that thought in him was energetic. He was obviously much less interested in the departure of the boat for the shore than in the shapely form of Phyllis as she stood by her husband's side.

Not far down the coast, past Port Parry to the westward, is a bigger but shallower bay, called Port Hoppner, and in this yawn of water, with its rock and the gigantic submarine growth, and the cavern and ledge, that by compression of air, burst their floodings into roaring foam, the freaks of the sea were giddy and glorious.

"Had the *Conqueror* made for that opening," said Mostyn, "she'd have gone to pieces like a house of bricks."

"What's the story of her wreck?" asked Phyllis.

"The account occupied five lines in a London morning newspaper. Had it been a railway collision, with the precious loss of a member of Parliament, a retired butcher, an undertaker, and a policeman handcuffed to a felon, all killed, two columns in the same journal would not have supplied space for the enthralling, exciting, ghastly,

tragedy. But it was a shipwreck with the loss of fifty-five lives, and its record was an illiterate epitaph of five lines in a London newspaper. Ha, ha !”

They both laughed.

“The *Conqueror* was a ship with eight saloon passengers and some labourers in the steerage. At midnight, about twenty miles to the norward of where we are, she steamed into a floating, lampless lump, bottom up, crushed in her starboard bow, and began to sink. They cracked on all the steam they knew, and under a whole moon fetched yonder Port Parry, where down she went with a roar which filled the island with a terror of scared fowl. The master was a foreigner. He should have kept his head. He should have swung out his boats. He waited for his ship to sink, and she obeyed orders and left eight men of her crowd living. These found refuge in sealers, and they reported the loss.”

“Fifty-five do you say ?” asked Phyllis.

“That was the number.”

“Where are the bodies ?”

“Some locked up in the wreck, and some rotting round about it.”

“Mr. Dipp will see those corpses.”

“No doubt.”

“What horror ! Poor man ! It’ll be the same to him as digging up a cemetery.”

“Dipp under water has the sentiment of a seal. He sounds for gold, not for human remains. But it will be strange if he does not fetch up some curio, as he promised.”

“It’ll be an unearthly relic if I get it,” said she.

“In he goes,” exclaimed Mostyn, watching the boat as she was swept betwixt the points that formed the natural harbour’s mouth. “It’s now that a man misses steam. I ring a bell—tinkle, tinkle—a pleasant sense of life enters

the ship, and I head a straight course for that opening. Or the tow rope would equally serve me. But there is no tug to come out, no pilot to help me. I shall lie off and on all night, and if the wind heads us it may take me days to fetch that anchorage. Such is sail."

"It'll be all right," said she.

"All right! That's how pretty young girls talk when they argue out of their wishes, and not out of their convictions, which should be truths."

"If you don't take your ship in to-morrow," said she, with some spirit, but with laughter in her face, "I will."

"And Benson shall steer you."

"How long," called out that gentleman from the other side of the deck, "do you think Mr. Dipp will occupy in sounding?"

"Three or four hours. He'll want to be very particular."

Mr. Benson continued his walk in silence.

"I once," said Mostyn, "saw a book about an island called Utopia. I tried to read it, but stuck fast in the middle. It's an ideal land with ideal institutions and things. It would be funny to turn Staten Island into a Utopia. I'd shift for love of novelty, for how damnably customs stale ashore."

"You'd allow no strong language, I hope."

"Tell you what, then, Phyl, the men should bow first, and women take off their hats. I'm sick of the old civilities."

"How about the hatpins?" she asked.

"They'd away too. The men should do the nursing and the wives would have all night in. The women would bank their husband's gains and make them an allowance. Any woman styling herself a doctor and dealing with the unsavoury, under the pretext of social reform, should be locked



up in vindication of the purity of mind of the sex. Girls should propose. How much easier that would make it all round! When a girl married, her mother would cease to be a relation, and there would be no mothers-in-law in Staten Island. I would not allow any woman of distinction to marry vulgarity for money, under pain of sinking to the social state of a charwoman. Look! just as the sun is always in the north here, as it is always in the south with us at home, so I would change the face of custom, for I am sick of its obligations, which are like dolls that bleed sawdust."

"All this because you think the wind is going to draw ahead."

"Come below, and have a cup of tea."

It was about seven when Mr. Dipp came off. The sun was large and red in the west, and bathed the island in solemn, silent glory, in which it took on the aspect of some magnificent cathedral, some sublime work of art, rich with white marble and stained windows. The diver came alongside and climbed into the ship, and the boat was hoisted. They had brought with them some ducks, clams, berries of the arbutus, "Which, ma'am," said the diver to Mrs. Mostyn, "I 'ope the cook'll make into a nice tart for you;" some wild celery, and other growths of the shore. They had looked for penguins' eggs, but could find none. Yet, in some places, the birds were so many that wherever there was a stone a bird was perched upon it.

Mr. Dipp wanted his supper, and Mostyn sat down with him at table to receive his report, and at table too, of course, were Mrs. Mostyn and Mr. Benson.

"Well," said Captain Mostyn, "what sort of a harbour is it?"

"As pretty a little 'arbour as you could wish to see," answered the diver, chewing salt beef and cabin biscuits and pickles in the pause of question and answer.

“What of the soundings?”

The diver's reply was the production of a note-book, in which he had made entries. These entries consisted of depths of water, and the various bearings of the shore.

“There's no part shallower than ten fathom,” said the diver, “and that's where the wreck is.”

“Are you sure?” inquired Mostyn.

“As sure as the sensation of feeling can make a man,” answered the diver.

“Is the water clear?” asked Mr. Benson.

“Why, yes, but not so clear that you're going to see down through sixty foot of it.”

“How d'ye know the wreck is there by feeling?” demanded Mostyn.

“Because the lead fouled a line, which I reckon had been Flemish coiled on the deck, and when we got hold of the end of the line we hauled it taut. What then,” said the diver, with a roll of his eyes over Captain Mostyn, “should the end of that line be made fast to if it isn't the wreck?”

“Oh, that's conclusive,” said Mostyn. “I wish you'd buoyed that line.”

“I did,” answered Mr. Dipp.

“What with?”

“With the stern-sheet bottom board.”

“What sort of ground?”

“Sand and shell. That's all I could get. There's a spectacle in that 'arbour that'll please you, missus. It's a water forest. Trees as big as the trunks of oaks, and you can see them by looking over the boat's side.”

The captain saw a question in his wife's face.

“Never mind about that sea forest now, Phyl,” said he. “I want to make sure of my anchorage. Where should I let go, do you think, Mr. Dipp?”

“About ’alf a ship’s length to the west’rd of the buoyed line.”

“Plenty of room to swing?”

“You’d better get an anchor out over the stern, and send down your top-gallant masts. There’ll be sights of shelter for that sort of moor if it blew as ’ard as a dying whale.”

“Will you dive from the ship or a boat?” said the captain.

“From the long-boat,” answered the diver, “and if the ship should swing to a flying moor or a single anchor over the wreck when I’m down it would make the art of diving a ’eart-breaking calling for me.”

It was quite consistent with the discipline of this undertaking that the captain should consult with the diver, and take careful heed of the notes he had made. But where was Mr. Mill? Why was not the mate invited to share in this council? Nothing could have more fully illustrated the contempt in which Captain Mostyn held the man, who remained as ignorant of the anchorage in Port Parry as any common sailor of the crew. Relations of this sort often exist between master and mate. The master keeps his charts to himself, and the mate steers by instructions, and guesses where he is. This tension, to use a convenient word, is a direct menace to a ship’s safety, for certainly a mate should be as well acquainted with the ship’s navigation as the captain. But in Mill, Mostyn had a man whom he could not trust, whom he deeply disliked, whom he thirsted to get rid of, and he would no more have thought of consulting with the surly rascal than with the most ignorant ordinary seaman forward.

He fetched his chart of Staten Island, and whilst he hung over it, comparing its statements with Mr. Dipp’s notes, Phyllis began to question the diver.

“Is the scenery pretty, Mr. Dipp?”

“Very pretty indeed, mum. Nice scarlet flowers, like October creepers in England. There’s a beach of white sand that’ll make you think of Broadstairs, if you was ever there. And what do you think, Mr. Benson? There’s a man’s grave with a cross over it, and on the cross head is carved the words:”—he extended his hand to take his note-book—“*Shellard’s fried-fish and chipped-potatoes shop.*”

“Is that an epitaph over a dead body?” inquired the literal Mr. Benson.

“To make sure,” answered Mr. Dipp, “we sounded for the body, and found it, and covered it o’er again out of sight of the lady when she landed.”

“Shellard’s fried-fish shop,” exclaimed Phyllis, laughing. “What an epitaph to lie under!”

“Perhaps the man kept a shop of that sort in his day, and the fo’c’sle wags buried him with traditionary honours,” said Mostyn.

“You can’t say,” said Mr. Dipp, after swallowing half a glass of rum and water, “that, with such a hepitaph as that flourishing in it, Staten Island ain’t ’ighly civilized. ’Ow many centuries of progress would it take to turn out a Radcliff ’ighway, and that hepitaph to my mind answers all the purpose of that sort of civilization.”

“You’re right,” exclaimed Mostyn. “Could some places of civilization be denoted by epitaphs only, Jack would save money. That line of yours is on my mind, Dipp. How did you hook it up with a lead?”

“The lead-line slipped; the lead fell into the coil and took a turn of a fake, and brought it up in a bight. The fakes may have been kept in their place by something fallen on ’em.”

“I understand,” answered Mostyn.

A true sailor will not let you off. He will examine the mingled web of your yarn, and damn the whole

because of a spurious thread. He will read a book like "Robinson Crusoe," which is not seagoing, but a book like "The Pilot," professedly seagoing, and crowded with technical blunders he will pitch aside, and never ask to hear of it again. Mostyn now saw how it was possible for a cone of lead, smooth-sided, attached to the end of a line to bring up a rope from soundings of sixty feet.

All that night the *Dealman* stood off and on Staten Island. The moon was in her third quarter, and her path amongst the stars was almost cloudless; she lent the fairness of crystal to the milk-white quartz of the land, and smote the surf into a long line of light, and she polished the snow of the mountain-tops until they shone like herself.

If ever mystery is felt in solitude it is at night, in moonlight, in the heart of a mighty sea, with the shadow of an island blotting out the stars. Phyllis could scarcely be induced to go to bed. Had Woolsborough ever offered her such a sight as this? Had she ever seen the like of it set to music by a German band on the esplanades and beaches of the two or three seaside towns her father had taken her to?

She was not a girl, as you know, to gaze idly, and to see no more than what was visible. Her imagination quickened that shadow with its moon-bright peaks and crystal gleams of quartz into a romance of the sea, and as sometimes by her husband's side, sometimes alone she watched it, she read strange stories in its mysterious page; she saw the spectres of the drowned of the *Conqueror* walking upon a shore as shadowy as that to which we all are bound, mutely but in pathetic gestures lamenting their bitter fate; she read the story of a sailor who had been left on the island by a whaler, and found some days afterwards by the crew of a sealer, dead, with his throat cut, but not by his own hand, since no knife lay near him. Which was so great a mystery that the sealers searched

the island for the assassin, and finding no sign of man anywhere inland, were seized with superstitious terrors, and for some years afterwards every whaler and sealer that touched at that island was carefully sentinelled throughout the night by an armed seaman, when but for this extraordinary thing a careless or perhaps no anchor watch would have been kept.

Is this of the several stories which the young wife read in that romance of shadow upon the sea-line, and which detained her, fascinated, from her bed, true? If Mr. Stanhope had invented it he had certainly never related it to his daughter. The only fiction the universal provider deals in may be found in the lies written upon jam-pots, tins of meat, bottles of pickles, and other dangerous recommendations of rogues. But Phyllis had for years past taken great delight in dreaming dreams on her own account, and the generous, the liberal, the impassioned sentiment of her nature was one reason why she was off Staten Island this night in a little ship commanded by her husband, instead of being in a big house, florid by day with plush, festive at night with the sound of the hired fiddler, the voice of the paid singer, the gleam of satin and diamond, the whole commanded by a gentleman who may have dealt, *inter alia*, in savoury tongues.

The wind shifted several times in the night, and kept the watch on deck more melodious than they liked. Boxing the yards about by starshine is vexatious to sleepy men, who tumble over coils of rigging and answer with a silent curse the mate's commands, "A small pull of that lee top-gallant brace! round in a little on your weather topsail braces! ease off that inner jib sheet! slacken away this weather vang! clap the watch tackle on to the main tack! wheel there! keep your luff!" And Staten Island, just now to starboard, is now to port.

In the morning it was blowing a light leading wind, which Mostyn immediately took advantage of, reducing his canvas as the ship sailed shorewards, until the vessel was under topsails only when she entered the heads, and then the lower topsails were clewed up, and she floated slowly onward to the place assigned her by Dipp.

On each side of this natural harbour were lofty ridges broken by glens, and the foliage, and a water-course at the bottom of the glens made the scene at the first glance so much like a piece of England that you would have thought yourself at home. Flocks of penguins were straggling about ashore. They wore white breasts, and carried their bills high, and when grouped in repose might have passed for a crowd of castaway colonial bishops.

“Where’s the submarine forest, Mr. Dipp?” asked Phyllis of the diver, who, alongside of her, was viewing the proceedings on board.

“Yonder,” said he, pointing to a space in the creek some cables’ lengths beyond the buoyed line. “The captain ’ll take you in a boat, and you’ll see a sight you’ll never forget.”

“Let go the anchor!” shouted the captain.

“Stand clear of the cable!” bawled the mate.

The hammer struck the pin; the anchor shot to the depths like a bolt from the sky; the cable roared in the hawse-pipe—yet the business of the day had scarce begun.

The creek swept brim full into two miles of the island, and the *Conqueror* lay sunk about a mile inside the heads, and the *Dealman* would ride free from the faintest pulse of the swell of the sea, so that the rest and repose of the land were to be the ship’s. The hardest weather down at Staten Island in summer nearly always blows from south-west. In the winter, the easterly gale, with the mightiest of the surges of the seas, thunders at the island. Port Parry faces almost due north; at noon the sun streams

his splendour into its waters; once gained, the haven offers the shelter of a dock, and is noble with the scenery of the land.

When the anchor was let go, and the iron links of the cable were hoarsely roaring in the hawse-pipe, Phyllis was viewing the lovely sheet of water round about her, in whose silver blue depths, ringed here and there by the leap of a fish or the dip of a bird, the tall shores, clad in their dark green and scarlet Fuegian livery, struck their shadows. Abreast of the ship, on her starboard side as she lay with her head pointing south, was a beach of sun-bright sand, fringed with giant kelp, at back of which was soil, rich as peat, sumptuous with growths of currant bush, beech, barberry, and the large and elegant flower of the rush. At the extremity of the sands two seals were lying, half in and half out, and round about the gulls and albatrosses wheeled; whilst on the left of the ship, Mount Buckland reared its diadem of snow, and enriched the scene with the majesty of the mountain. Now and again a big bird could be seen sailing—an eagle or a hawk, at sight of which—for this country girl perfectly well knew what a hawk was—Phyllis sincerely doubted whether she could, even if she would, return with the glory of a humming-bird in her hat.

It was all novel, and therefore delightful. It was land, and green land, after endless leagues of salt ocean, and it was one of those spots on this globe which the young wife might be proud to boast of having visited, because, saving a breed of half-savage fishers, no one, even a millionaire, dreams of taking a holiday on Staten Island. To few places can you go now in this civilized earth of the wire and the foot-plate and the screw, but that in the very heart of the loveliest and most romantic of solitudes—

“Up pops some damned round English face,”



as Thomas Moore sings. Staten Island would to Phyllis make a memory all alone to herself like Crusoe in exile. None in millions would be able to compare notes with her; to say, "Yes, I always laughed when I saw the upright penguins in consultation, a synod of bishops, raw in speech;" and, "I also saw a number of thrushes and linnets, but no humming-birds;" and, "I used to make nosegays of fuchsias, and the rush flower, and seapinks, and ferns, and shape them into things of beauty by lichens and mosses, green and scarlet."

Phyllis would have all this to herself. It was better than going to Rome on a tourist's ticket. It was better than doing anything which any man can do in the way of travel for a few shillings, and the girl looked about her a little proudly. She might guess that the eyes of but few of her sex had ever reposed upon this lovely ocean picture.

All day long the ship was full of business. The canvas was stowed, and the top-gallant masts housed. The long-boat was hoisted out, and a kedge anchor carried astern shackled to a chain cable, which, when roused taut, held the ship fixed in a line north and south. The *Dealman* was not a man-of-war; her ship's company were comparatively few, consistently with the tradition of the merchant service. The men's toil moved on the rolling legs of leisure; the mid-day meal was to be got, and the pipe to be smoked, much raffle to be coiled clear; and it was half-past six in the second dog-watch before the ship was in a state of rest ready for the diver to solve the mystery of a sunken wreck. The long-boat lay alongside, the lake-like surface of the harbour floated in the tender grace of the lofty violet shadow of hill and mountain, and the peace of the evening was upon the island. The men were weary; they had worked well, and when work was knocked off, rum was served out to them. After the

cabin supper was ready the ship was silent, the men were lounging forward, the Southern Cross was glowing, and the four of our little company sat down to table.

The meal this evening was varied by Staten produce. The cook's second arbutus-berry tart was a reasonable success; his soup of wild celery was not without relish. Stems of the large tussacks supplied the place of asparagus, and the duck was not so oily as had been feared. Moreover, the common cheer of the cabin was supplemented by Benson's hospitality, which, this the first night of their arrival, must be liberal. Champagne was on the table, likewise little dishes of jellies, chicken and tongue, and other things, reckoned dainties even ashore. He had resumed throughout the day his earliest manner, and it was noticeable throughout the feast that he looked at Phyllis more freely than prudence had durst let him heretofore. He would easily find, and expect others to find, an excuse for the smile, the look, the sentiment he bestowed upon the young wife, in an animation of mind consequent upon the completion of one part of the undertaking.

When they had sat down, Mr. Dipp cast his eyes over the table and exclaimed—

“After to-night, eating's done with for me.”

“How's that?” inquired Mostyn.

“Because I've got to dive.”

“Mayn't you take a little of your favourite rum and milk before you go?” inquired Phyllis, smiling.

“No, mum. If I was thin I could. Thirteen or fourteen stone of suet must sink warranted free from liquor as they guarantee some music 'alls free from vulgarity. But that don't mean I ain't going to enjoy myself now;” and the diver, in his homely comfortable way, helped himself abundantly.

“I've a toast to propose,” said Mr. Benson. “It's a

little soon, but no matter. Mrs. Mostyn, let me fill your glass. Captain, brim a bumper. Mr. Dipp here's the bottle."

He stood up. Phyllis was then sensible that something shadowy was lurking at the skylight listening.

"I rise," said Mr. Benson, in his amplest way, "to propose the health of the gallant commander of this ship, and I venture to bracket with his the name of his devoted and most engaging young wife, Mrs. Mostyn. Representing as I do, the interests of the Ocean Alliance Insurance Company, I have no hesitation in officially declaring that the conduct of the captain has been everything that could be expected of a skilled navigator and a thorough gentleman. In the name of the directors and in my own, I drink his health and that of Mrs. Mostyn."

He lifted his moustache and swung half a glass of champagne down his throat.

"Missus, I looks towards you," said the diver, in a voice of cold grease. "Your 'ealth, captain."

He nodded, raised the glass but did not drink. His reception of the toast was in curious contrast with the warmth with which it had been delivered.

"I'm much obliged to you, Mr. Benson," said Mostyn, without rising. "I shall value your compliments more highly when we get home safe with the gold."

Mr. Benson did not look as though he knew that his speech had been interpreted by all three listeners as humbug. How dared he manifest any inward mortification when he believed and knew that his whole strategem of the outward voyage had been to leave Mostyn incapable of challenging a syllable of language, a glance of eye, whilst if he intuitively perceived that Phyllis knew he was in love with her to the very degree of damnation, his vanity would certainly acquit her of all suspicion of the dislike, or rather of the loathing she had for him?

"Touching the gold," he said blandly, "have you examined the safe lately, captain?"

"I was in the lazarette yesterday," answered the captain, "and all was right."

"Who keeps the key?" asked Mr. Dipp.

"I do," replied Mr. Benson.

"Happily for me," exclaimed Mostyn. "That key heaps the weight of forty thousand pounds upon your back."

"It's improper to impose too many obligations upon a shipmaster," said Mr. Benson. "Is not the responsibility of carrying the gold enough for one? Its custody is a mere detail of official routine."

"They talk as if the gold was aboard," said Mr. Dipp to Phyllis. "Try some of Mr. Benson's 'am and chicken, missus. It's meant for ladies who have teeth like yours."

She took a slice to please Dipp.

"I knew a naval man who was an officer aboard the ship that brought the Koh-i-noor home from India," said Mostyn. "The diamond was placed in a box and so secreted that no man aboard the ship knew where it was save the two military officers who were charged with its safety, and each of these men had a key of the box. This I know to be the fact of the transport of the Nation's biggest gem, and I have always held that the plan adopted was an insult to the officers of the ship, who by implication were not to be trusted. I take it that the honour of a naval officer stands as high as that of a military officer, and why the captain and the commander and lieutenants should not know what was known to two soldiers and to nobody else is one of those conundrums which work out as insults to my way of thinking."

"No insult is intended by my holding the key," said Mr. Benson.

"I would not accept the sole responsibility of safe-guarding that gold——"

"When found," put in Mr. Dipp.

"For half its value," exclaimed Mostyn, with something of haughtiness in his handsome face.

"You'll dive into a cemetery, Mr. Dipp," said Phyllis, who was always glad to temporarily obliterate Benson by engaging in talk with the diver.

"I've been a-thinking of that, mum."

"On consideration," said Mostyn, "I fancy the loss was exaggerated. Fifty-five. The *Conqueror's* passengers would not balance the ship's company up to that number; and how many people would a ship of that sort carry? Fifteen in the engine-room including engineers, firemen, trimmers, donkeyman, and store-keeper. I don't think you'll find so many corpses, Mr. Dipp, as the newspapers reported."

"Did you see any ashore?" asked Mr. Benson.

"None," answered the diver. "Besides, you've been a-looking all day, and what should I see that ain't in sight to you?"

"Mrs. Mostyn, pray let me give you some more champagne," said Mr. Benson.

"No, thank you," she answered, just brushing his fœtid look as she glanced from him to her husband.

"I don't wonder," said Mr. Dipp, "from what I've seen, that this island hasn't been settled. I'd rather be locked up for the rest of my days in a hattie in White-chapel and fed with saveloys through the winder than live 'ere. It must be truly shockin' in winter. Who first discovered the blamed 'ole?"

"I can't tell you that," answered Mostyn. "But if it's name is English I'll swear it's a theft. Without exception we are the most thieving nation in the world. A surveying vessel falls in with a headland; she sends a boat ashore with a piece of parchment in a tin cannister stating that this land was discovered by H.M.S. *Prowler*,

and taken possession of in the name of His Majesty King George III., and afterwards it's down on the charts as Point St. George. Whereas the Spanish or the Portuguese may have visited the same place two hundred years earlier and left just such another scroll, taking possession in the name of some other sacred Majesty. You've heard of the South Shetlands, Dipp?"

"Why, yes; I've been off 'em."

"In a whaler?"

"No; coming 'ome from Sydney in a clipper. The captain started on the Great Circle lay and locked us up in the ice close agin the Pole."

"Take the South Shetlands," continued Captain Mostyn. "That coast was discovered in 1599 by Dirk Gherritz, in a vessel called the *Good News*, one of five Rotterdam ships which doubled the Horn. In the old chart it was written Gherritz Land, till we coolly struck it out and named it South Shetlands. This is one of many reasons why foreigners, especially the Dutch, should love us as a people and adore our maritime genius as discoverers. Come along on deck, Phyl."

They had supped, and husband and wife rose. Phyllis entered her cabin to warmly drape herself. Though not chilly, the atmosphere was curiously humid. The young wife emerged sparkling in the lamplight, as a girl will sparkle whose eyes are a heavenly violet and whose auburn hair contrasts its glory with the rich fur of the turban hat. As she passed through the cabin, Mr. Benson, rising, followed her with his eyes, and Dipp, seated, looked at him with the expression you might imagine he would wear if he met with something puzzlingly disgusting close against the glass of his helmet under water.

The moon of yester night was in the north, and so clear and bright was the air that you saw the "earth-shine" upon the dark part of her, making her a globe.

There was an element of ghastliness in the serenity of the island, with its white silence of mountain-top, and the land dumb save in the low thunder of the surf, whose green growths glistened faintly. Mostyn lighted a pipe, and, whilst he was sucking, his wife exclaimed—

“There’s a vessel down there at anchor.”

So there was. She was readily distinguishable as a little schooner, that had sneaked in from some other creek or from the south.

“A sealer,” said Mostyn. “Perhaps the chap we lost sight of round the point. This place at this hour makes home seem far off, doesn’t it, Phyl?”

“No.”

“Six thousand miles.”

“You should have been born north of the Tweed. My home is here,” said she, passing her arm through his, “and it is not six thousand miles off, though you wished it.”

As this statement was pettish, and not worth contradiction, he said—

“Benson’s attentions to you this evening were a little too marked to please me. He may have been a bit sprung in a Bensonian way. A man of that sort will pour a bucketful down his neck without showing it, except in increased plausibility and blandness, as in Pecksniff before he fell into the fireplace, or, if the stomach and liver are implicated, in increased severity of stare and a disposition to make himself offensive by blunt contradiction. That speech of his was tommy-rot. Yet I say again, what can he do? How, too, can I go up to him and say, ‘You must not look at my wife. You must not speak to her. You must not offer her any of the delicacies you have laid in.’ Impossible! Only consider, we are locked up for, perhaps, another three months.”

“Whilst you see how things stand for yourself I am

comfortable," she answered. "But he has spoilt the honeymoon which would have been delicious."

They stepped to the rail and looked at the water in which the *Conqueror* slept.

The mystery of darkness will often deepen into terror the mystery of death; and the yokel who vaults the tombstone in sunshine might lose his reason if he should find himself locked up for the night in a cemetery. The silence of the island was in that cold salt sepulchre, and the night, with her lantern, the moon, pendant at her visionary fingers, looked down upon it. Phyllis shuddered as she gazed, but she was ignorant of the saloon full of light, of the engines making strange music as they intricately toil, and she could not realize fully what had foundered with the *Conqueror*.

Her husband could have told her; though he was without experience in steam he well understood that the last and greatest terror of the foundered steamer must be sought in the engine-room, where the boilers explode, where the scarlet furnaces are extinguished in dense volumes of steam, where the eyes of living men are boiled out of their heads, and where their half-naked bodies are flayed to the living skeleton, and where they die from steam before water can strangle them, faithful below doing their duty.

"What are you thinking of, Phyl?" asked Mostyn.

"I was wondering what appearance the *Conqueror* makes as she lies upon the ground," she answered.

"And I am hoping all the time that Dipp will recover the forty thousand pounds, for we want the commission, old girl; we'll put it into chairs, tables, and looking-glasses. If you don't go to sea with me next time where would you like to live?"

"As near to where your ship sails from as possible."

"The precincts of the docks!—Poplar, Limehouse,



Stepney. A very commodious accommodation for stevedores, skippers, mates, and crimps. I shall want to think of my country bird as living and singing where trees are when I am away, where new milk and new-laid eggs may be had sure and sweet. The mere idea of the neighbourhood of the docks excites all the smells of the East End of London, and I am now snuffing and spitting in the West India Dock Road."

The scent of a cigar could be tasted in the air. Phyllis turned her head and spied Mr. Benson standing close behind.

"What is that vessel, Captain Mostyn?" he asked, with one whisker silvered by moonlight.

"A small schooner. A sealer, no doubt."

Benson stared at her.

"What is she doing here, do you know?"

"She's come a-fishing, I suppose."

"Is she the same sealer we sighted before we entered?"

"I think not."

"Then if you're going to accumulate your sealers in this island, and their crews get wind that there's forty thousand pounds to be got by burgling this ship in the night when all hands are asleep, what'll be our look-out?"

"I have not the slightest fear. Moreover, when even the first of the boxes is aboard rest assured that all hands will not be asleep in the night. You did not ship a chest of small arms for that."

"How many go to a crew in one of those sealers?" asked Mr. Benson.

"Five or six I should say."

"Oh, well," said the chartered accountant, with a note of relief. "If there's no more than that, and no more than three or four vessels at a time, we shall be able to

sleep in peace, Mrs. Mostyn. I am very interested in sealing. I don't want to make this voyage for nothing, and wish to enlarge my experiences. I'll visit that sealer to-morrow. I want to know how they catch the creatures, how they skin them, where they stow their spoils, where and how her people live. It'll be something to talk about."

"And something for you to do," said Captain Mostyn. "For it'll be a devilish idle, tedious time whilst Mr. Dipp is bobbing for gold."

"I feel cold," said Phyllis.

They paced the deck, husband and wife, arm in arm in the alley-way. Benson, a lonely man, smoked out his cigar in front of the deck-house. A riding-light glittered like a star on the fore-stay, and shadows of men were in motion on the fo'c'sle. The ship rested as though sleeping soundly after a long and weary passage. The sense of the desolation of the land was heightened by its lightlessness, no ray, no beacon, no dim window gleam, nothing but the stars shining over the silver height of the mountain and along the broken skyline of the shore.

But though in any case an anchor watch would have been kept, the presence of a stranger in the port determined Mostyn to provide a harbour watch of two every two hours, and in the brief stern semi-contemptuous way he was now used to address the mate, he told Mill to turn out from time to time and take a look round, and these instructions he gave to Mr. Walker, but in the language of a genial captain. At ten o'clock Phyllis went to bed, and at five bells the captain went to his berth, leaving two sailors trudging the fo'c'sle deck.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE "PENGUIN"

TILL four in the morning the night was quiet, and the ship slept in peace watched by two fo'c'sle tramps, who took care to be regularly relieved. Throughout the night the captain was more on deck than below. The figure of Mr. Mill, too, peering about for half an hour at a stretch from the deck-house top was visible often enough to satisfy Mostyn that the surly rascal was on the alert.

But at the hour I have named it came on to blow a breeze of wind, which freshened into half a gale from the south-west by sunrise, and day discovered a flying heaven of rags, tatters, and cobwebs; the brooms of the wind were sweeping the dirt off the floor of the sky, and it sped in a swift low scud, piling itself into a thunder-coloured mess north-east. Nevertheless, the water was so smooth in the harbour that a saucer would have floated in it. You heard the continuous booming of smiting seas whose weight you guessed by seeing the reflected trouble or springing brine snapping into foam beyond the heads. Yet save for now and again a flaw of wind direct or in back draught, with the spit of its mother in it as certain reptiles when born hiss, fretting the water triflingly here and there but not often, the breast of the harbour swept as smooth as silk to its limits.

Indeed, the ship found a huge and lofty terrace in the hills that soared in their deep green foliage to a height

that made them mountainous. The water was alive with penguins, whose heads in all directions came and went like the flickering glance of a hen's head in the bars of a hencoop. Many albatrosses and wild fowl of the sea were seeking refuge here, and clothing the air with the enchantments of their marvellous flights. A day laden with anxiety had come, and Mostyn, whose expectations were ardent, betrayed his mind by omitting to treat Mr. Mill with the contemptuous neglect with which he inwardly visited him saving in commands which were stern and sharp. He saw the mate looking at the schooner, and paused on his way to the top of the deck-house to say—

“I hope Mr. Dipp will find the money.”

The mate looked at him in a slow way and answered—

“It's to be hoped he will, sir.”

“It blows hard outside, but I think our kedge is good even if a swell should roll in, which is not very likely, for it has a long road to slide over, and the soundings won't help it.”

The mate made no answer, and this brief conversation terminated.

It was about half-past seven in the morning now. Mr. Dipp's three men had got up a three-cylinder air-pump, and the diver was carefully examining the machine. Indeed, that apparatus, with its brace of fly-wheels, iron sling and piston-rods, gun-metal guides, and patent gauge to tell the depth and pressure at which the diver is working, was bread, meat, rent, taxes, gas and coal, compressed into the single word “life” for Mr. Dipp when under water. He knew this truth well, and was extremely critical in his scrutiny. Now and again a flaw set the rigging singing, but though the ship sat light in ballast, as indeed throughout the passage, never did a

hillside blow a gust to heel her to a fraction of a degree.

She looked comely; they had made a good show aloft; they had sent down the royal and top-gallant yards, and housed the top-gallant masts. They had squared her by lift and brace, as Mostyn abhorred all distortion in his ship aloft or alow. All must be shipshape and Bristol fashion with *him*, and the vessel rode under lines of timber upon which snow seemed to have fallen. All gear was hauled taut, the decks were fast purging themselves of the hose and scrubbing-brushes, and opening into large eyes of white plank, and low over the island swept the scud and rag of cloud, and the head of the mountain Buckland was buried in whirling vapour, with white clouds writhing about it as though resisting the efforts of the gale to detach them.

Mr. Benson arrived trimly blue with a shave. He wore a soft felt hat and a light overcoat and spats.

"A brisk morning, captain," said he, looking up at the sky and then round. "Lucky our wreck lies where it is."

"Lucky indeed," answered Mostyn.

"I see that Mr. Dipp is making ready. D'ye know when he starts?"

"I hope it will be soon," said Mostyn. "There's nothing to keep him waiting. The long-boat's alongside. He's only got to lower that air-pump and his diving dress into her, unless he dresses here, which possibly he'll do," said Mostyn, inwardly reflecting that the art of diving might be made a little embarrassing to Mr. Dipp if he saw Mrs. Mostyn watching him shift into his helmet and rubber small-clothes.

"Mr. Dipp," cried Benson, "when do you propose to begin?"

"In about 'alf an hour," answered Dipp, without turning his back.

"After breakfast, perhaps?" cried Benson.

Dipp was silent.

"You'll find him irritable, as most men are," said Mostyn, "when they first start on business of moment. And this business is of moment, for suppose he comes up and tells us that the cases are hermetically sealed by the wreck."

"Always take short views, captain. What time is it?" Mr. Benson looked at his watch. "I shall be glad of my breakfast. Is not that a boat putting off from the schooner?"

Mostyn looked, and answered—

"They're going to pay us a visit. Are we to explain the nature of our business here, or leave it to them to find it out?"

"Not a word for worlds!" cried Mr. Benson, greatly agitated.

"They'll see the cases coming up if they stop."

"They mayn't stop. They may sail to-day. Not a word for worlds! Think of them as cut-throats. They come from that class."

"But if they stroll forward they'll get the news from the men."

"They mustn't be allowed to stroll forward. See to that, captain, I beg."

As there was no gold on board, Benson's alarm seemed out of place, and Mostyn thought so. Moreover, sealers are not pirates, nor even cut-throats, as represented by Mr. Benson, and Mostyn judged that little was to be feared at the hands of the men who visited this island to hunt the seal.

The boat, flashed through the water by three oars, came alongside. She was of a light whaling pattern, very old even to craziness, and showed uncommonly like the end of a long voyage. Her squalor was a blend of ribs and

rags, for her oarsmen were as ill-clothed as she was, and the man in the stern-sheets, who was now coming aboard, looked as though three turns round the long-boat and a pull at the slop-chest would make him feel a boy again. Their jackets were greasy and patched, their trousers would have made a good sign for a bagman, and all three wore caps which might have come up with the anchor.

The fellow who had steered sprang over the rail and stepped at once on to the deck-house top, where he saluted Mr. Benson and Captain Mostyn by, strange to relate, taking his cap off. He was a man of a somewhat dark and sinister appearance, bowed in the back to the degree of almost a hump, and his arms, which were too long for him, hung up and down in the idle way of the sea. His hair was black and extremely curly, and he wore a short beard and moustache; his nose was handsome and well finished. But his eyes seemed gout-ridden; that or drink-ridden. They were defaced by little patches of scarlet, and daylight made no spot of brightness in his mirrors. He was roughly dressed in very old clothes, and presented the aspect of a broken-down sailor tramping to a work-house.

"Good morning, gents," said he, with a strong nasal accent. "I read the name of your ship, and see you hail from London. What might you be doing down here?" and he ran his eyes aloft to judge if the vessel had put in for repairs.

"What schooner are you?" was Mostyn's answer to his question.

"The *Penguin*, of Stornington. I'm her captain, and my name's Morell."

"Are you a sealer?"

"Jest that."

"Are you the schooner we lost sight of rounding the western extremity of this island?"

“No. I came round here last evening from Port Basil Hall. The schooner you mean will be the *Swan*, I reckon. And what might you be moored in this harbour for?”

“A steamer called the *Conqueror* went down there,” answered Mostyn, pointing, “and we’re to salve her cargo, or as much of it as the diver there can help us to.”

“Yes, I know, she went down drowning fifty-five parties and sinking a couple of hundred thousand dollars. She lies in ten or twelve fathom, and I’ve often thought of her.”

Mr. Benson looked at Captain Mostyn, and Captain Mostyn looked at Captain Morell, whose expression of face, when he was not speaking and the lineaments were in repose, was anger. He was a man you instinctively knew, if you did not agree with him, would quarrel, and hump his back yet more, and fall a-snarling, jutting his face into yours and snapping his eyes at you; a type of fo’c’sle hand who comes aft to the captain airily balancing a cube of salt horse on his sheath knife, to ask if men made by Gord, jess’ as capt’n’s and mates and better men are, are expected to eat and work, and keep their bodies alive on such muck as this: a question which, in certain kinds of sailing-ships, particularly those hailing from Nova Scotia, is usually answered by the mate or second mate with the belaying-pin.

“Of course the loss of the steamer would be known to the sealers,” said Captain Mostyn, stepping forward to give his hand to his wife, who was ascending the short ladder.

Captain Morell stared at the young beauty with astonishment before pulling off his cap to her. He had never seen anything like her in Staten Island before, nothing half so good in Stornington, and he thought it would take a deal of New York to beat it.



"This lady is Mrs. Mostyn, my wife. This is the captain of that sealer, Phyllis. If you want to know anything about seals he'll talk to you like a book."

"What would you like to know, ma'am?" asked Captain Morell, still lost in admiration of Phyllis, who instantly disliked him on the merits of his looks, and felt that he was not a man in whose relations of perils, fishing, and other experiences she could take interest.

"I am told," said she, coldly, "that seal-hunting is almost as bad as human murder."

"Who's put that in your head, ma'am?"

"You said so, Charlie."

"I guess," said Captain Mostyn, not much heeding the current of talk, "that you don't find many seals down here nowadays."

"Not enough, after expenses have been paid and you're ashore, to buy a couple of red herrings for a meal for four. But why have you caused this young lady to believe that the trade's as bad as human murder?"

"I have it on the written authority of sealers," replied Mostyn, in an off-hand way. "I know that the seal has but a single young one at a time, which the poor hunted creature suckles with infinite care and affection for several months, and if you steal her baby she sheds tears, and moans like a human being. Is that so?"

"Why, perhaps it is," answered Captain Morell, whose face Phyllis found more forbidding the more she looked at him. "But slaughtering them animals to keep beautiful young females, like your lady, warm in winter isn't to be called human murder without my entering a protest as master of a sealer."

"What'll you drink?" said Mostyn.

"If you've got such a thing as a drop of whisky aboard it'll slide down nicely, I think."

"You shall have it straight from Leith: something

that your country never yet has produced," said Mostyn. "Steward!"

Prince, who was hanging over the bulwarks in conversation with a man in the boat alongside, dropped on to his feet erect, and came aft in the soldierly walk that the heave of the plank had not yet swung out of him.

"Get a glass of whisky for this gentleman."

"Here!" cried Mr. Benson, running to the head of the ladder. The steward, looking surprised, ascended a step or two.

"Who's that you're talking to?" said Benson, in a dark mysterious manner.

"A man named Powell, sir."

"A friend of yours?"

"We belong to the same place, and his brother married my cousin."

"Not a word about the ship being here to pick up gold," said Mr. Benson.

"It's known to the crew, sir. But if it's known in the boat it'll not be through me."

"Get a glass of Scotch whisky for Captain Morell," said Mr. Benson, in a loud voice.

The scud was still speeding, and the thunder of wind on high found an echo in the calm betwixt the hills. It was noticeable that Benson scarcely heeded Phyllis. He had eyes for none but Morell. In his furtive way he studied him whilst the man drank to the success of the dollar-fishing. And before he quitted the ship, Benson went up to him, and said—

"I'm much interested in your industry. I'd like to pay your schooner a visit."

"You're welcome," answered Morell, looking up and down the man with a keen biting eye, and the expression that is anger in the human face.

"How long do you stay?"

"Depends on the catch."

"Are you likely to remain a month?"

"Oh, why, yes, all that, and perhaps more."

"How long in this harbour?"

"Till there's nothin' to catch."

This conversation passed out of hearing of the others, and Captain Morell, after remaining about twenty minutes, went away. Ten minutes later, the cabin-breakfast was ready. It was strange to find Mr. Dipp's seat untenanted. No one was ever more regular at meals than the diver. Blow high, blow low, his was the loaded plate and the pale red draught; and the more roasting it was the more fat he would ask for, and the higher the seas ran the keener his delight in the under-done chop from the last stuck porker. In the middle of the meal he came out of his cabin in his diving costume, holding his helmet.

"'Ope you're making a good breakfast, Mr. Benson," said he.

Phyllis half rose from her seat.

"Are you going to dive at once?" she exclaimed, flushed with excitement at the sight of the helmet and rubber toggery.

"It won't be long, ma'am," he answered, smiling at her. "But there'll be plenty of time for you to finish your breakfast."

She made such haste after Dipp had gone that her husband laughed at her.

"Why, Phyl," he exclaimed, "one would suppose that a diver is more exciting than an execution or a royal procession."

"I never saw a man dive, Charlie," she answered, with a pout.

"There is nothing to see after he is under," said Mr. Benson, without looking at her.

“That’s what I like, for the imagination is let go, and you can dream what you please.”

The look her husband fixed upon her was filled with pride and admiration. He never thought her fairer than this morning.

“Go and put on your jacket, and we’ll watch the proceedings. You shall dream whilst I expect. For if the gold is buried, then—good night.”

When the young wife gained the deck the long-boat was being hauled alongside. Phyllis walked straight to the diving apparatus to inspect it before it was lowered.

“Air is made, then, by revolving those wheels?” she inquired.

“Pumped into this ’elmet,” said Mr. Dipp.

“Why doesn’t it burst it?”

“Because I can let it off by this valve.”

“I should like to see the tube that feeds you with air,” said Phyllis, whose charming face and spirited expression were eyed with a half-smiling but respectful admiration by not only the diver’s men but a number of the crew who had clustered near.

One of Mr. Dipp’s people held up a bight of air-pipe, composed of layers of solid sheet indiarubber and prepared canvas, and armour-clad internally with spiral metallic wire; the couplings, like Mr. Dipp’s boots, were of gun metal.

“What pressure is allowed for this pipe?” asked Captain Mostyn, who had sauntered to the little crowd.

“It’s tested to a pressure of two ’undred pound to the square inch.”

“You’ll see best on top of the deck-house, Phyl,” said the captain, as they ascended to the familiar surface, made then, as commonly, extremely objectionable by the presence of Mr. Benson.

The apparatus was lowered into the boat, the ladder

by which the diver descends from the boat's side followed. Dipp then entered, and three men rowed him and his little company to the place where the *Conqueror* was believed to be lying. The gale was easing down, but you could judge of the weight of the sea by the distant flash and toss of the surge beyond the heads, and the thunder of the surf was a prolonged roar. Mostyn called to Prince for his binocular glass, and Phyllis then brought Mr. Dipp to within half a ship's length of her. Mr. Benson stood behind at a little distance, black, silent, obviously expectant. Anxiety was showing in Mostyn's face. It was the very core and crisis of the adventure.

A wild romantic scene; a ship dismantled to her top-sail yards, a long-boat in a central calm, high over which a strong wind was blowing; no sunshine to touch the scarlet lichen into flame, to fire the clusters of the red berry, to glorify the foreshore with the splendour of the sea-pink. Albatrosses and other birds flew wildly about over Mr. Dipp's head. They were certainly not tame, and therefore not shocking to him. The men in the boat had dropped the anchor, and were now equipping Dipp for immersion. They put on his helmet and complicated him with pipes and lines, and slung the steps over the side.

"Oh, Charlie, he's going!" cried Phyl, whose excitement was provincial to the life.

She saw the diver, in a heavy and massive way, labour one leg over the boat's gunwale, then with equal toil labour the other leg over, and when he was on the ladder he paused at least a minute in manifest intention that the young wife should see as much of the show as he could submit, as was proved by the faces of the men, which were turned to the ship. He then slowly sank out of sight, and two men revolved the fly-wheels, whilst a third took charge of the signal line.

When Dipp had gained the bottom, he signalled by

preconcerted arrangement, and the signal linesman shouted to the ship, "Touched bottom, sir!"

"Now we have nothing to do but to wait, and everything comes to those who don't expect anything," said Mostyn, taking the glass from his wife.

The diver remained under water one hour. The whole term of the outward passage might have been compressed into those sixty minutes of expectancy. At the expiration of this time his helmet showed above the gunwale, and he rose out of the sea and got into the boat. The men relieved him of his dead weight of helmet, and he seated himself without attempting to communicate with the ship. Expectation was wrought into torment. For what was the information that lay sepulchred in that stout rubbered figure? From the captain to the boy, which means the youngest ordinary seaman, all hands lining the ship's side were in a state of excitement, more or less acute. At last Dipp lifted his hand and signalled for attention, and every ear was strained.

"The wreck's there right enough, broken in 'alves. Many dead bodies. I 'ope the road's not difficult to the cases."

A cheer broke from the ship's side. Phyllis flourished her handkerchief, and Benson and Mostyn their caps.

"The *Conqueror's* there, for sure," said Mr. Benson; "and she being the antecedent, the consequent, of course, is the gold."

"I wish he would sail away in that schooner in search of seals and get drowned," thought Phyllis, with a curl of disgust in her lip as she shot a glance at him.

After sitting in the boat for some two hours, and smoking a pipe, Mr. Dipp was again made an ancient knight of about the head, and if his rubber had been mail, a spear or lance would have completed him. This time he remained down about three-quarters of an hour.

When he emerged he was rowed aboard, and went into his cabin to shift.

Mr. Benson did not appear to understand Mr. Dipp's conduct. He thought he should have remained two or three hours under water at the very least in the first day, and afterwards six or eight hours. He had as much knowledge of diving as might be expected in a chartered accountant. He conceived that Dipp was evading his duty, and not earning his money; and with some degree of agitation in his manner, he said to Mostyn—

"Has Dipp dived for the day?"

"He's in his cabin; ask him," replied the captain.

Benson immediately entered the deck-house and knocked on Dipp's door. The familiar voice of the diver sounded in a greasy—

"'Ulloa! Who's there?"

"Mr. Benson."

"What d'ye want?"

"To know if our diving operations have ceased for the day. It's early in the afternoon."

Silence followed this inquiry. The door of the berth was then violently flung open, and the figure of Mr. Dipp appeared, dressed in the cap, guernsey, and drawers which he wore in his diving dress. His face was em-purpled by anger. Had Phyllis seen him she would have wondered that so kindly a man could have looked so terrible.

"What's that you're wanting to know?" he asked.

"There's no occasion to lose your temper, Mr. Dipp. I put the question in all politeness, as the representative of the office."

"Damn the office," shouted Dipp "D'ye expect me to keep under water all day?"

"No, but——"

"I'd chuck the damned job this minute if it wasn't

for Captain Mostyn and his wife," shouted the enraged diver. "Don't you think I know my business?"

At this moment Phyllis came out of the cabin, whereupon Dipp vanished with lightning rapidity.

Benson stood aside to let her pass. Otherwise apparently he took no notice of her. He was a mean and an exacting man, in whose hands the debtor, the half-pay officer, the poor widow, the young man blown with wine and insolence would fare but ill. He would have made an ideal money-lender. Nevertheless he was a good deal discomfited by Dipp's reception of his inquiry, and went on deck to talk to Captain Mostyn about the diver.

"Dipp's a man of spirit," said Mostyn, much irritated by Benson's impolitic conduct; "and if you ill-treat him or trouble him, he'll chuck the job as he threatens, and then where are you?"

"He's handsomely paid," said Benson, "and we don't want to linger longer here than is necessary."

"Just so; but then Dipp's first day's work in my opinion is splendid. We have to receive his report. Why vex the worthy fellow, Mr. Benson? His work is hard and dangerous, and he has gone without food all day."

Mr. Benson, whose eyes were fixed on the schooner astern, sank for a few minutes in thought.

"I will apologize to him," he then said. "On reflection I may have expected too much from Mr. Dipp on the first day."

The captain, profoundly disgusted, turned on his heel, and walked to the cabin to await the diver. Phyllis rushed after him.

"May I be with you when Mr. Dipp tells his story?" she asked.

"Of course you may."



They seated themselves at the table. A few minutes later Mr. Benson joined them, and shortly afterwards Mr. Dipp emerged, clothed in his usual attire, but looking hot and angry. Mr. Benson stood up.

"Mr. Dipp," said he, with much expansion of shirt-front and waistcoat, and plausible suavity of expression, "I desire to apologize to you for the question I just now asked. I agree with Captain Mostyn that your mere reporting the discovery of the wreck makes your first day's record splendid."

Dipp gave him a nod and sat down.

"Captain Mostyn," said he, studiously addressing himself to the skipper, "she lies in 'alves, like this." He placed his hands on the table and hollowed them at a little distance apart. "There's a tidy scramble of raffle in her and about her, and some corpses; but having said so much of *them*, I wish to be allowed to keep my observations to myself."

"You are wise and kind in so doing," said the captain.

"I expect it will take me about four days," continued Mr. Dipp, "at three hours under water every day, to get into the lazarette where the cases are. There's a lot of cargo in the road, and it 'ud have 'elped me had we brought some blasting stuff to bust it out of the way."

"If you can get at the gold in four days," said Captain Mostyn, with his face triumphant with the colour of delight, "the feat, I should say, would stand among the highest in the annals of diving."

"It shall be done if trying can do it," said Mr. Dipp, relaxing a little; and then, turning to Phyllis with his homely, kindly smile, he said—

"Would you like to ask me about what I've seen, missus, all saving the bodies?"

"Is it very dark down there?" she asked, bestowing

one of her sweetest smiles upon him, whilst Benson sat silent, a discomfited listener.

“Sort of greenish glimmer. Suppose you was to put on a pair of green spectacles and bury your face in a large basinful of water. The light down below ’ud be like that.”

“I wonder you’re able to see.”

“It’s as much as I can five times out of six. It’s more gropin’ than looking.”

“Why don’t they connect the electric light with your helmet?” said Mostyn.

“We’ve a breast lamp working on a ball and socket joint, but it wouldn’t be of use down there,” answered Mr. Dipp. “The wreck makes a shadow in the water like a storm in the sky, and this ain’t a good day for divin’. The light’s sad.”

“What is the nature of the cargo?” inquired Mr. Benson.

“Bale and case goods,” answered the diver, surlily.

“We are an empty ship,” continued Mr. Benson, addressing Mostyn, “and I’m sure your wife would not object to the gift of a handsome diamond bracelet as part of the profits of salving some of that cargo.”

Captain Mostyn stared at Dipp. Dipp took no notice of the observation, but looked a bit squally about the eyes, as though another suggestion from Mr. Benson must bring him on to blow hard.

“I was a-thinking of you, mam,” said the diver, “and ’eartily wished you was by my side when I saw not far from the wreck all sorts of trees a-growing jes’ like what you’ll see when you go ashore. ’Ave you ever seen a boa constrictor?”

“No.”

Dipp was at a loss. Parallels are often hard to find.

“You’ve never seen, perhaps, a halligator?”

She shook her head, smiling.

"You mean," said she, "that that wood under water is like a grove of alligators and boa constrictors."

"Yes; and had you ever seen them animals you'd puffictly understand the nature of the sight below."

"You must be careful not to lose yourself in that wood, Mr. Dipp," said Phyllis.

"T'ain't in the road. Besides, it's not green slimy things that's dangerous. It's ribs, and angle irons, and pieces of wreck forking up, which a man, seeing badly, foulds with his air-pipe."

"What would happen?" asked the young wife.

"The same as 'ud 'appen to your 'usband if you laid 'old of 'is windpipe and kept on squeezing it."

"Mr. Dipp," said Phyllis, "you'll think me extremely simple for what I'm going to say, for the life is commonplace to you, and familiarity breeds contempt; but I declare, if I was to be asked to name the most heroical figure I could imagine, I should name a diver toiling alone deep down in the sea, not on smooth sands, but amidst piles of rugged wreckage, threatening death to him at every turn, and offering pictures of horror which he must have the heart of a lion to witness, to remain conscious of them as his attendants, and yet to go on with his invisible work."

Dipp's eyes were rivetted to her with admiration and delight.

"Very handsomely said, Mrs. Mostyn," cried Benson. "What effect such a speech would produce in a crowded theatre if delivered by a beautiful young actress!"

"She would not mean it; I do," answered Phyllis, without looking at the man.

"Tell yer what, Mrs. Mostyn!" exclaimed the diver, "will you forgive me if I say that I shall be bloomed glad when the supper hour comes round?"

“We’ll make it two bells, if you like,” said Mostyn, judging that Dipp was extremely hungry.

“Will that give time?” exclaimed the diver, looking at the clock. “What’s agoin’?”

Prince was just outside. Mostyn called to him.

“What’s for supper?” he asked.

“Cold salt beef and pork, sir. A sea-pie, a duck I caught——” He paused in effort to remember.

“Steward,” said Mr. Benson, “add tins of chicken and tongue, brawn, and put some bottles of champagne on the table.”

“Not for me,” said the diver, with a cold flourish of his hand.

“You’ll leave yourself no champagne for the homeward passage, Mr. Benson,” said Captain Mostyn.

Benson smiled as though the suggestion delighted him.

“Get supper as soon after two bells as possible,” said Mostyn to the steward; and they all went on deck.

The strong wind of the morning had almost entirely failed; the albatross and the sea-mew were few, and their flight was the holiday circle over prey penetrable only by the marvellous eyes of the sea-fowl; the wink of the foam in the sers beyond the heads had died in the large swell, which yet left the water of this harbour as serene as a sheet of ice—you might know that by watching the ship. Sunshine was now clothing the air, and silvering the snow, and colouring into brilliance and beauty the tinctures of the shore.

“I shall pay that schooner a visit to-morrow,” said Mr. Benson. “I am unable to dive, but it is within my power to enlarge my mind above water.”

“When are you going to take me ashore, Charlie?” said Phyllis.

“To-morrow, if fine. But you’ll see no more there than here.”

"I shall feel dry land under me, which will be a new sensation."

"I'll take a pencil and sketch-book and draw. Every skipper ought to add something to the general marine knowledge. I may be able to make the old chart of this island a sight more accurate than was represented by the *Chanticleer's* people."

The husband and wife walked right aft to the taffrail to admire the harbour and island in this gay mood of the day.

"Benson seems very anxious to visit that schooner," said Phyllis.

"I agree with you."

"As to his enlarging his mind," she continued, with the disgust of her heart for him in her face, "a fat lot he cares about seals. Besides, I suppose he has seen a seal in London."

"Not hunted and killed."

"Will he see that there?" she exclaimed. "I doubt it. He can't be eager to visit that schooner out of love for her skipper's face. I don't think I ever saw a more repulsive man. I'm not more repelled by Mr. Mill."

"Like most of your sex, Phyl, you're suspicious. How would a woman manage without suspicions? She'd be barren of grievances. She'd have no story of her husband's insolence to relate to the greedy ear of her dear sister——"

"Now, don't go on, Charlie," interrupted Phyl. "There is no greedy ear for me. I am yours; but, apart from you, I am utterly alone in this world; and as I know that men hate mothers-in-law and their wives' relations, this reflection ought to keep you smiling in your dreams."

He looked at her tenderly, and then a little pensively. Maybe some thought of her father came into his head. He had abstracted her, and if he died she was indeed

truly alone, and the thought found accentuation in the scene of majestic solitude round about, in that lofty mountain, solitary as the Great Spirit, lifting its eternal snow and its belt of troubled vapour. But his heart was a young man's, and a few minutes later found him humming "Yankee Doodle," with his eye critically exploring the schooner, which was rigged with square topsail, top-gallant sail, and royal, and, to judge by the height of the fore yardarm above the rail, capable of expanding a considerable area of square sail.

By a quarter-past five supper was got ready, and Mr. Dipp was much pleased. He told Phyllis that he meant to make up for lost time, and astonished her by quoting, in an oily note, the following couplet:—

"Sure, 'tis better repenting a sin  
Than regretting the loss of a pleasure,"

which he sang rather than recited. But it was to be observed that he gave a wide berth to Mr. Benson's good things, and even to Mr. Benson himself, whose questions he answered so sulkily that the chartered accountant sank into silence from him, and referred himself in behaviour and speech wholly to the others.

This conduct in Dipp made Mostyn very uneasy, and in his gizzard he cursed Benson, in the terminology of the fo'c'sle, for menacing the destruction of the adventure by gross want of tact and real ignorance of such human nature as Dipp submitted. Phyllis caught the thought in his face, and, with the sagacity and sympathy of a clever wife, she went to work to help him in smoothing matters by showing Mr. Dipp marked attention. She passed this and she passed that.

"Do try some of this jam, Mr. Dipp."

"My dear lady, jam's death to a man who's run to fat."

She passed the cheese, she passed the biscuits, she relieved Prince of his duties so far as Dipp was concerned, and I will not say that the fascinating address of this charming girl failed in its influence upon the worthy good fellow; he smiled, he made an immense meal, and, after his third glass of rum, grew talkative, and said to Phyllis, "that as life aboard a ship lying stripped and moored off Staten Island must be uncommonly wearious to a young lady fresh from theatres and parties and picnics, he'd be glad to amuse her by singing some songs."

Of course, she was delighted. Charlie was looking more composed; and this chapter closes on Mr. Dipp beginning to sing, and conducting his orchestra of working face and falsetto tone by flourishing the bâton of a long pipe.

## CHAPTER XIX

### BENSON'S VISIT

"CAPTAIN MOSTYN," said Mr. Benson, whilst they sat next morning at breakfast, "will you kindly order a boat to be got ready for me by ten o'clock to row me on board the sealer, that I may thoroughly overhaul her and have a good long talk with her skipper before she sails, as I am resolved to learn all I can about everything outside the din and roar of that huge city in which I have been pent for years."

"Certainly you shall have a boat," said Captain Mostyn, meeting his wife's swift glance without visible recognition of her meaning. "When does your sealer sail?"

"How should I know?"

"But you said before she sails."

"Quite so; and she may sail at any hour for all I can tell. Steward!"

"Yes, sir," responded Prince, stepping out of his pantry.

"See that you place a box of cheroots and a case of champagne in the boat which will be in readiness at ten."

"It shall be attended to, sir."

"What time are we to go ashore, Charlie?"

"Is Dipp in his long-boat yet? Steward, look."

"No, sir; he's still on the main deck seeing to his windmill."

Mostyn mused.



"He said that he was likely to be under for three or four hours to-day. I don't much love the idea of quitting the ship whilst Dipp is groping. Suppose he met with an accident."

"Your stopping wouldn't avert it," said Phyllis.

"To be sure we shall go no distance inshore—to-day, anyhow. I shall carefully keep the ship in sight, and leave certain instructions with Mr. Mill that I may come off at once if necessary. Suppose we say eleven o'clock, Phyl."

She smiled, looking highly pleased.

"You must put on your Sunday best," said he, "and make yourself as killing as you can."

"For whom?"

"For the natives."

"Who are the natives?"

"White-waistcoated penguins, who sit upright on immense feet, look wiser than any human judge ashore, and will pass remarks upon you as you go by."

"They'll bolt," said Phyllis, with a laugh.

Mr. Benson's gallantry was in his face, but he would not express himself. Something more than the token of that ballroom quality was also in his face, but plenty of black hair, a half-buried nose, little furtive eyes, and a small scope of soapy forehead, garnished with a twist of eyebrow like the curl of a moustache, should as effectually seal a man from observation if he holds his tongue as though he were in pitch blackness or twenty miles off.

"I'll take my gun," said the captain. "I'm a dead hand at a miss."

"We must get a humming-bird, if possible. We must be consistent with our traditions."

"Humming-birds have been flying about in your mind ever since you left Woolsborough."

"Charlie, I'll not allow you to shoot one. I won't be decorated at the price of suffering and beauty."

“They may have a humming-bird on board the sealer,” said Mr. Benson. “If so I will purchase it, and feel honoured by your acceptance of it.”

“Thanks; but pray give yourself no trouble,” said the young wife.

“Sealers don’t come down here to chase humming-birds,” said Mostyn, laughing.

“They may have picked one up or knocked one down, in which case it is at Mrs. Mostyn’s service,” answered Benson, who, immediately after uttering the words, rose and entered his berth; for at sea there is no ceremony, no waiting for ladies and the like. When you are ready you begin, and when you have done you go.

At half-past nine Mr. Dipp was under water, and Mr. Mill had received instructions, sternly and coldly delivered, as usual, by Mostyn, to hoist the ensign for his recall if needful, and to get a boat ready for Mr. Benson by ten, for himself by eleven. Repellent as was Mostyn’s demeanour by contempt and dislike of the man, I am bound to say that Mr. Mill this morning discovered some faint sympathy with the discipline of shipboard by acquiescence as little acid as he could produce it. But no sailor, no old hand who knew the ropes and was free to spit to windward, but would have intuitively known, by looking at the two men when they spoke, that their livers lay in black eclipse towards each other.

At ten o’clock a boat was brought alongside, and three sailors entered her. The steward handed down the gifts as ordered. Mr. Benson, in a monkey-jacket and a billy-cock hat and rather flowing blue trousers, was so far nautical in his appearance as to have passed perhaps, but not without suspicion, as a barge owner. He got into the boat, and was rowed away.

It was again a fine morning. Here and there the placid surface trembled to a cat’s-paw, the long shining

breast mirrored the vivid Fuegian green and scarlet and yellow of the foreshore, and the abrupt height was ringed into ripples by the play of penguins, and a score of racers or logger-headed duck could be counted stemming with full breasts of foam.

"His thirst for information is curious," said Mostyn, surveying with his wife at the top of the deck-house the receding boat.

"Do you think he is scheming some private enterprise? Seeing, I mean, if he can add to the profits of the voyage by a purchase of sealskins."

"I don't know what to think," answered Mostyn. "Enough that his meaning can't concern this adventure. But I am beginning to view him with your eyes, Phyl, and if I catch him in anything scenting of rascality, which God knows so respectable a man as Montague Benson seems incapable of, it would give me great pleasure to clap him in irons out of your road for the rest of the voyage."

Whilst she listened to her husband, Phyllis silently compared the moral natures of the man in yonder boat and the man, buoyed by the long-boat, who was viewlessly exploring the glimmering green depths, witnessing wonders and horrors all alone, and once again she declared to herself that she regarded the figure of a diver in deep waters as infinitely more heroic than anything that can be manufactured by the art of war, whether in the field or afloat.

At eleven o'clock the starboard quarter-boat was at the gangway ready for the captain and his wife. She was flushed and beautiful, and her eyes were as brilliant as the sunshine in the sea in the happy girlish prospects of her visit. The captain took a gun with him, and he was also careful to secrete in a side pocket a six-chambered revolver. "Shove off," and off they went to the impulse

of four oars, and the captain at the yoke-lines kept her steady. They passed close to the place where Mr. Dipp was trying to find the commission of four hundred pounds for them, and when her husband called Phyllis's attention to this she leant over the gunwale and sought to pierce the sea.

In the long-boat the men were revolving the fly-wheels, and a man was standing at strict attention at the signal line. The pipes curved over like snakes.

"If they should cease to pump," said Phyllis, "what would happen?"

"A corpse. Nothing else. One more to the many down there."

"Strange that any man should be found to repose his life entirely in the hands of others—so utterly and entirely!" exclaimed Phyllis, whilst the oarsmen swung their blades with often a glance askant of mutinous admiration, defiant of the husband, who perfectly knew that the men could not help themselves, that a handsome woman is created for the admiration of men, and that "not to admire" is to violate a noble and exalted canon of Nature.

"The diver doesn't stand alone, Phyl. Pull gently, my lads. I want to come across a forest of seaweed. We trust our lives to the engine-driver, to the captain of the ship, to the man who tends the line in whose bowline we're slung. It's give and take all round, and men were created so as not to be able to do without one another, and that's what leads to war."

The grins of the men expressed appreciation of the captain's views.

"Oars!" he exclaimed. "Johnson, peer over the bow and see if the forest is in sight."

The man made a duck of himself. The boat lay still upon the water, all hands strained their vision, in vain.

"Where can Mr. Dipp have seen this phenomenal growth?" exclaimed the captain to his wife.

"It lies about there, sir, by the bearings of the long-boat," said a man who had formed one of Dipp's company.

They made for the spot, and there stole out in the green dissolving gloom huge leaning and yearning shapes, as of mighty oaks in the throes of the fall; vast green ropes and cables; so like the mighty sea-snake that had they stirred Phyllis must have shrieked. All under water, but rising to within a few feet of the surface, and springing from depths of three hundred feet, the plants of the sea in this part of the world are gigantic in form and sublime in might. Their mother is the hurricane; she sweeps them with crash of surge and shrieks which fill the skies, and, clothed in the blinding raiment of the snow-fall, she seeks to uproot them, and they sway and swing in the terrible sweat of her wrath.

"What d'ye think of it?" said Captain Mostyn.

"It'll live in my dreams until I die," she answered.

"Can you wonder that sailors should invent inhabitants for huge woods and groves of that sort?"

"I don't wonder at anything a sailor does," answered Captain Mostyn; at which, as he expected, his men laughed.

"Why should not the mermaid be deep down there out of sight, in the pavilion lighted by sea lamps in which she is said to live?" said Phyllis.

"I wish she'd show herself," said Mostyn. "All that is worth seeing as ghosts and mermaids keeps out of sight. If I were to fish for a mermaid," he continued, being in no hurry whilst his wife continued to gaze into the green grandeur, serene in water, "what bait should I use? A man's heart?" The sailors laughed. "A piece of sailor's beef? I might try her with a bracelet or brooch. She'd go for that. If she's a woman to the waist then there's

woman enough to grasp a jewel, and I'd fish for her as the Fuegians fish with limpets; they secure the limpet to the end of the line, the fish bolts it, can't release it, and is brought up, and taken by the hand."

He ordered the men to continue rowing. They made for a natural landing-place in the sandy beach. Even the sailors, rude and ragged harriers of the deep, were impressed by the grandeur of the titanic kelp that slept in the still embrace of the water, wooing semblance of vitality from the motions of fish, some of which were large and richly coloured.

"Land ho!" shouted Mostyn, as Phyllis sprang off the boat, holding his hand. "Give me that gun. Where's my note-book? I have it. Men, if you wander, do not go far from the boat, as I may want to go aboard at a moment's call. One of you tend the boat."

"Ay, ay, sir."

"I shall keep ship and boat in sight."

"I can't believe I am on the earth," said Phyllis. "And it's not so long, after all. What must it have been to Captain Cook? Oh, what a splendid bird!"

A large mountain hawk, sailing in state over her head, had caught her eye. They strolled slowly up the sand towards the background of scurvy-grass, and trees of red berries, and large currant bushes, and fuchsias side by side with ferns and lichen and scarlet and green mosses. The picture was made enchanting by the view beyond. You could not see far, yet what you saw was soft and sweet, though this is the stormiest region on the face of the globe. The mountain rose from hillocks of ten feet to the snow-crowned monarch of three thousand feet; each hill was peaked and tenderly clothed almost to its summit, and the springing rills running into the sea glanced the gaiety of a fountain into the picture.

Mostyn loaded his gun, and took aim. Bang! the

hawk sailed away, and several other birds were greatly agitated, amongst them being gulls and albatrosses, thrushes and linnets. Mostyn watched the bird to see if it meant to fall until it had fainted into a speck.

"How base is English taste!" said Phyllis, who was laughing at him. "The first thing a Briton attempts when he gets ashore on a sweet island is to murder something that helps to make the island beautiful."

"Don't you pick any flowers, then," said he.

"What's that cross there, Charlie?"

They walked right up to it. It was on the margin of the sand where the soil began; a grave and a wooden cross, as reported by Dipp, and on the cross was chiselled in bold characters, "*Shellard's fried-fish and chipped-potatoes shop.*"

"A disgusting idea, and very profane," said Phyllis, with a look of loathing in her face.

"He might have been the son of a cook, and this is an epitaph for crabs," said Mostyn, and burst out—

"When news comes home, but waited ships do not,  
Of liners, schooners, tramps, or roaming whalers,  
There, mid the uncounted graves in the ooze beneath the waves  
Lie more than men—they also ranked as sailors."

They passed on. Mostyn looked about him for prey, Phyllis for flowers. Presently they paused on top of a little hill like a cushion, vividly green, and admired the scene. Now they could see the *Dealman* sleeping in a line betwixt the chains that held her; the shadows of her masts flickered in the water under her. The air-pump was still going on board the long-boat, and they thought of Mr. Dipp deeper down in the sea than they were high on land. Captain Mostyn dropped his gun, sat down, and began to sketch. His wife wandered about in search of a bouquet, which she presently collected. She went to the dry shore for the sea-pink, and the Fuegian flowers

she culled, whose stems she bound, whose dyes she enriched by a mixture of coloured mosses, lent their grace to her beauty, and her eyes shone over the ocean petals when she showed them to her husband.

They remained ashore for about an hour and a half. Mostyn well understood that he might be here for a long stretch, and that his visits to the island would be frequent, and he did not desire to prolong his stay from the ship on this, his first day of leaving her.

As they were returning Mr. Dipp's helmet showed upon the rungs of the ladder, and in a few minutes the diver was inside, helmet off, resting. Mostyn's boat went alongside.

"I don't want to bore you with questions, Mr. Dipp," said the captain. "I hope that nothing Mr. Benson can say will induce you to remain under water one minute longer than you think proper."

"Bet your boots," said Mr. Dipp, with a cold, pale smile, for this man, rubicund in the cabin, was pale after his sentence of heavy pressure and anxious groping. And diving makes a man feel cold too, in spite of the warm underclothing he goes down in.

"I have picked these for you," said Phyllis, holding up her bouquet.

He motioned as though kissing his hand to her, but was silent. He was weary. The boat regained the ship, and they went aboard.

"Has Mr. Benson returned?" said Captain Mostyn, to Mr. Mill, who stood in the gangway to receive the boat.

"No, sir."

He had left at ten; it was now hard upon one o'clock. "Certainly he must be deeply interested in seals and their butchery," thought Phyllis.

Mostyn swept the land with his telescope, fancying



that Benson might have gone ashore with a party of the schooner's people a-sealing. Nobody was to be seen on ridge, in cleft, on mound. It was lifeless all till the hand brought the glass to the schooner; but even then it did not reveal Mr. Benson. It displayed the figures of some men smoking and idling in the bows, but the quarter-deck was barren. The *Dealman's* boat lay alongside the schooner. Her crew possibly formed some of the little mob in the schooner's bows. Jack loves the casual meeting, and the foc's'le yarn, and the piece read aloud from the newspaper. It used to be so. In this age of steam this hoarse coarse sentiment has been scalded out.

Husband and wife sat down to dinner alone for the first time of their taking their honeymoon in that ship. Prince waited with strenuous assiduity; but Mostyn, who did not choose to talk in his presence, dismissed him when they were in a position to help themselves.

"How heavenly if it had always been like this!" said Phyllis.

"I don't mind Dipp; old Dipp is never in the road," answered her husband.

"And I like Mr. Matthew Walker," said the young wife. "He looks an honest fellow; but how on earth, Charlie, you could ever have shipped such a mate as Mr. Mill——"

"It'll be the worst voyage he's made in his life," said Mostyn, looking darkly. "But what's Benson doing in that schooner? It is impossible to suppose that a mere City man of the Benson pattern could take any interest in the sealing talk of a sailor with a hangman's face."

"I promise you he's not on board that schooner to pick up information about seals," said Phyllis.

"It's easy to say that. I wish you wouldn't, Phyl. Those suggestions are girlish and negative, and make me

impatient with anxiety. Tell me what he has, not what he has not gone for."

"Charlie," she exclaimed, colouring, "you know that I told have you all through that this unsavoury animal is in love with me, and that half the pleasure has been wrung out of the voyage by his disgusting presence. Suppose we found our judgment on this, transform ourselves into Benson, and think out of his own mind. We might come near to some plan that's running in the wretch's head."

He viewed her thoughtfully, and said—

"You speak too positively. You convict him of a dark scheme on suspicion only. His trip to the schooner may have no reference to anything we could imagine if we took a year in thinking out of his nut. I have answered you all through by this question, What can he do? He's bound to go home anyhow. He's not going to stay in this island or on board that schooner nor ship as a sealsman. A large sum of gold will be in his custody, and he's much too careful of Benson to neglect the duty he owes to Benson."

She shook her head.

"Do you want me to think, Phyl," he continued, talking strongly with the irritation of worry, "that Benson is plotting to kidnap you?"

"That has not entered my head," she answered. "But I think he is capable of it."

"Good God, my love!" he cried, with a stamp of his foot. "Of what use are you to him on board that schooner?" and the hot blood of his heart dyed his handsome features as he looked at her sitting in her beauty before him, the sacred treasure of his life. A short silence fell between the two.

"You must know, Phyl, that schemes cannot be generated on the instant. That schooner's man came

aboard yesterday. Benson had as little to say to him as I. Can you suppose that so shrewd and artful a man of business as Benson would put himself into the power of a common sailor who by refusing would yet leave him at his mercy, and blackmail him for the term of his natural life?"

She would have liked to answer that she understood enough of the world to know that the passions of even shrewd and artful men may be too consuming to be controlled by the will, even if the will were not a subsidiary agent, as must be the case in such affairs; for you cannot act on mental stimulants, impulses, passions, emotions, sensations without complications of the functions of the understanding. The passions may begin it and lead off, but if the will follow it assents, and to speak of a man's will, therefore, in such a connection as this, is to invert your figures and make 10 01. But though she was his wife, how could she bring herself to reason with him in this strain? Would such decided views about men in a young bride improve her in her Charlie's opinion? It was for her to think and to feel and to fear, but not to speak, at least in the way she thought.

"Anyway," said Captain Mostyn, rising and taking short steps on the plank, "he's not likely to scheme until he knows that the gold is there or on board this ship."

"That depends upon the nature of his scheme. The gold may form no part of it."

"We may go on vexing each other till Doomsday with conjectures; I see no good in 'em. You hate the man, so do I, but I can't conceive that he can prove a source of danger to us or to the ship, taking him strictly as the chartered accountant Montague Benson, the representative of the Ocean Alliance Company."

She did not answer, and presently they went on deck.

It was not until three o'clock that Mr. Benson arrived from the schooner. They saw him emerging from the speck he made in the stern-sheets into a surface of dark pilot jacket and black whiskers. He speedily gained the deck, and immediately approached Captain and Mrs. Mostyn, who stood together on top of the deck-house.

"My visit has been delightful, I assure you!" he exclaimed. "The only thing I regret, Mrs. Mostyn, is that I was unable to procure a humming-bird."

"Never mind about that, if you are satisfied with the information you have picked up."

She spoke with a meaning that was not to be found in her words, and Benson looked at her for a second or two only. He put his hand in the pocket of his jacket, pulled out a note-book, and was about to open it, when he started, and, glancing towards the long-boat, exclaimed—

"What of Dipp? Has he been aboard?"

"No," answered Mostyn.

"I can't distinguish him amongst those figures," said Benson. "Is he in the boat?"

"He's under water."

"I have some facts here," said Mr. Benson, "which I think will interest you, Mrs. Mostyn. Besides the seal, the otter, the rat, and the mouse abound in this island. The seal is sought for its soft downy fur which forms beneath the long fur, and they are divided into two species, the male, which has a curly fur on the head, being called a wig. The males of the hair-seals are termed sea-lions; they have long shaggy manes, and resemble the beasts they are named after. I hope I am not boring you."

"You'd find all this in any encyclopedia," said Mrs. Mostyn.

"You'll find a description of a ship," he answered blandly, "in any encyclopedia, but the knowledge of the ship can only be acquired by experience on board the ship."

"But what has the trip to the sealer taught you about seal-hunting, Mr. Benson?" said Captain Mostyn.

"They have told me all about it. I have seen the instruments with which they butcher their prey. They have given me their experiences under conditions which lent them the brilliant colours of reality, and whilst I listened I hunted with them."

Phyllis laughed.

"It will interest you, Mrs. Mostyn, to know that the lady seals are called clapmatches," Benson went on, looking at his note-book, "because of their lightning-like motions, resembling the flash of a gun on pulling the trigger. The word was applied by a generation who used matches for their guns."

"Has that sealer got any skins?" asked Mostyn, who was listening with contempt to this penny-instructor information.

"No. She has been at the island a week."

"Then her stay will be some time."

"Not in Port Parry, I fancy. There's nothing to be got here. This ship and that long-boat will keep every seal sulking in secrecy, with a sentinel on the look-out."

"Two were on the beach a day or two ago," said Phyllis.

"They are not there now," said Benson, smiling. "I am astonished by the tactics which the creatures employ, now that, after very many years, they have learnt what a sealsman is. They encamp in rookeries," continued the chartered accountant, pointing to the hills, "and sentinels keep a look-out whilst the rest sleep. The instant a boat heaves into sight the alarm is given, and a rush made for

the sea. A few females," said Benson, softening his voice, "if they have pups or young ones will nobly stay to fight and die with them. If hard pressed, the mother takes the baby in her teeth and dives into the surf, but holds the head of the little creature above water to prevent suffocation. It is touching, it is pitiful—quite human, indeed."

Mr. Benson pocketed his note-book and smiled at Phyllis, who instantly averted her head. It was a cheap performance. Benson was no actor. He lived behind a natural mask which rescued him from self-betrayal. Here was this man talking nursery drivel about seals to Captain Mostyn and his wife, who both felt that he cared as much about seals as about whelks, and clearly perceived that his visit to the schooner, though ostensibly explained by his note-book, an explanation charged with a teasing quality of indirectness, was from a motive clean outside the possibility of gauging.

"I hope you enjoyed your trip ashore, Mrs. Mostyn?" said Benson.

"Very much."

"That is a lovely nosegay on the skylight."

"I picked it for Mr. Dipp."

"When will he arrive with his report?" asked Benson.

The binocular glass was near the nosegay. Mostyn looked at the long-boat. As he did so he saw the planished helmet starry in sunshine at the gunwale.

"There he is," said Mostyn.

"How long has he been down?" Benson wanted to know.

"About two hours."

"I hope he has something good to tell us," said the chartered accountant, who then left the deck-house top.

It was four o'clock before the diver came aboard. He went straight to his cabin as before, and Benson and Mostyn likewise as before awaited him at table, whilst

Phyllis sat next her husband with her nosegay in her hand. The diver emerged.

"Ow's trade in sealing?" was his first remark, as he seated himself and looked at Benson.

"My dear Mr. Dipp, pray let us have your news," replied the other.

Mr. Dipp put his hand in his pocket and produced a bangle, which he laid upon the table. It was of gold, and heavy, and looked as a gold bangle would after it has lain for a considerable time at the bottom of the sea. He pleasantly ogled Phyllis, whilst his fingers flirted with the toy.

"What can this be, I wonder?" he said, with the harmless irony of a good-natured man. He weighed it. "It seems gold. It's savages as wears these things, missus, ain't it?"

"They're worn by many women, Mr. Dipp. I am one, and I hope I'm not a savage."

"Did you take it off a dead wrist?" asked Mr. Benson, in expectation of disgusting Phyllis with Dipp's spoils for her.

"Why don't you ask me if I found it in the belly of a seal?" answered Mr. Dipp, who saw into the man's intention, and fumed inwardly over the conjecture because it happened to be accurate.

Mostyn took up the bangle.

"It's pure gold, and very handsome," said he. "When polished it will shine like your helmet. What does it matter where you found it?"

"Jess so," said Mr. Dipp. "And I'll ask you, Mrs. Mostyn, to do me the great favour to accept it, and when it's rubbed up into its proper brightness, to wear it in memory of this voyage and Mr. Dipp the diver, who'll bring you up more if he finds more."

"Thank you, Mr. Dipp," answered Phyllis, receiving

the bangle from her husband, "and I thank you not more for this ornament than for thinking of me whilst surrounded by perils under water. Will you accept this Fuegian bouquet?"

"Yes, ma'am, yes; and them flowers will be a real curiosity when they dries up," answered the diver, putting his nose into the bouquet.

"What's your report, Mr. Dipp?" exclaimed Mr. Benson, a little sharply.

Dipp replied by addressing Mostyn.

"I've cleared a good passage. I 'ope to be able to enter the wreck the day after to-morrow."

"Bravo!" cried Mostyn.

"And how much longer will it be before you're able to get at the cases?" inquired Benson.

"You're always asking a man riddles, Mr. Benson," said Dipp. "Suppose the worm 'as bored through the wood, and let the sovereigns leak out, which 'as 'appened over and over again; and supposin' these 'ere sovereigns, or the most of them, 'ave leaked in a true course through a gap in the 'ull on to the sands which sucks 'em up? These are my riddles, sir. Will you answer 'em?"

"D'ye think that's possible, Mr. Dipp?" asked Mostyn, anxiously.

"I'll try 'ard to make it impossible," said Dipp, smiling at Phyllis. "But worms is the natural enemy of sailors. They bores into ship's bottoms, into sailors' biscuits, into sailors themselves, who are made to feel as worms"—he was addressing Benson—"when they're talked to as worms, which is mostly."

"I have not the slightest doubt myself that the cases are intact," said Benson.

"I 'ope they are," answered the driver. "And I'm quite ready for my supper," he added, laughing, and looking at Mrs. Mostyn.



After supper, when husband and wife were alone, Phyllis said to her captain—

“Did that bangle, do you think, come off a dead arm?”

“How should I know?”

“I don't like the idea.”

“‘Oh, damn all sentiment!’ said Sir Peter to Joseph Surface. Would you wear a bracelet that your dead grandmother has worn? Would you chew with teeth out of a dead man's skull? Would you enrich the glories of your hair by wreathing thicknesses cut from German women, the cause of whose death no one who wears their hair dares conjecture?”

He was overwhelming, and silenced her, and indeed her objection was sentimental and illogical: because she might easily have reasoned that, suppose one morning she walked along the seashore and picked up a beautiful diamond bracelet, would she wear it because in its time it might have been worn by a woman who went down in a notable wreck that happened yonder?

“I want to have a quiet confab with Dipp,” continued Mostyn. “What will you do?”

“I'll go into my cabin and read.”

“You can't do better. Benson won't trouble you there.”

Mr. Dipp, having supped, and supped well, was smoking a large pipe on the quarter-deck. Captain Mostyn joined him.

“D'ye find,” said he “that your diving leaves any sense of weariness behind it?”

“None, sir. If it's weariness it comes along of manual labour, leaving hobstacles out of the road. But it ain't more tiring than a watch on deck in busy weather.”

“Your secrets are yours,” said Captain Mostyn, admiring the man. “I know the surface of the sea only. Are there any case-goods amongst the cargo?”

“Yes,” answered Dipp, letting out a large blue cloud.

“Are they perforated with the worm?”

“Ne’er a one. I only said it to frighten Benson. If that there man goes on a talking to me as ’e do I may take upon myself the responsibility of plugging ’im in the heye.” After which utterance he drew and expelled a larger blue aromatic cloud than any his lips had discharged in that walk.

“I want to consult with you about this gentleman,” said Mostyn. “I don’t understand his motives in visiting the sealer.”

Dipp sucked his pipe.

“He’s not interested in seals, you know, Mr. Dipp. If he liked the talk of sailors he would have gone forward and found plenty of informing conversation in our fo’c’sle. He left at ten and was back at three. That’s a long spell for a visit.”

Mr. Dipp, obstinately silent, sucked his pipe.

“Have you any opinion to give me on this subject?” inquired Mostyn.

After a pause Dipp answered “Yes,” like dropping a stone.

“What is it?”

“I’d rather stand by and look on,” said the diver. “In fact, I’ve been adoin’ that some time; but ’e don’t know it.”

Mostyn flushed.

“Do you refer to my wife, Mr. Dipp?”

“You ask me,” said Mr. Dipp, with a melancholy shake of his head, “and I answer yes. He’s dead gorn on her. ’E was dead gorn as soon as ’e saw ’er in the Channel. Harn’t ye eyes to see for yourself, capt’n?”

“My wife is a handsome girl,” answered Mostyn, irritably, “and it’s impossible for me to stop men from

admiring her. They may do that, but let them stop at that," he added, with a darkening face. "This man has never once insulted my wife to my knowledge. She has never complained of any lack of courtesy to her in him. Her grievance is the admiration with which he pursues her, but which he controls, and as a man I am not going to punish him for admiring the woman I myself fell in love with. I cannot forget that she is here by his consent."

At this, Dipp, who was pulling hard whilst the other talked, looked askant at his companion as though he wondered at him.

"I wish," cried Mostyn, in a sudden temper, "that the fellow would be tempted into doing something I could deal with as master of the ship. I'd risk a court of inquiry. I'd risk my professional character," he continued, with a glowing face. "Let my wife come to me, which as yet she has never once done, and tell me that Benson has said something or done something which has offended her, and the road is clear."

"He's too hartful. When that there Benson buttons up his waistcoat he buttons up a man that's uncommonly careful of 'imself, and's not likely to give 'imself away in a 'urry."

"I've asked my wife over and over again, '*What can he do?*'" said Mostyn, almost shouting as he finished the sentence.

"Well, ye see, Captain Mostyn, if he's prepared to take the risk he'd be able to do anything."

"What thing? Would you imply that he is scheming to carry off my wife?"

Mr. Dipp drew hard at his pipe before he answered. He then deliberately said, looking the captain full in the face—

"I don't think he's scheming to carry off your wife, but that he's scheming to carry off you."

Captain Mostyn laughed contemptuously.

“He’s not going to Portland for me,” said he. “Carry me off!” Again he laughed. “If that’s all, who in bally Jordan’s to take the ship home? How is he to account for my absence? Pshaw! don’t talk nonsense, Mr. Dipp. There is a ship-load of witnesses. What can he do? Your suggestion relieves my mind. The absurdity of the fallacy makes it as buoyant as a lifebuoy. Carry me off!” He looked round him proudly and threateningly. “Oh dear, no. That’s not his object in visiting the sealer.”

“I’ve ’ad my say,” said Mr. Dipp, a little sulkily, “and I’d rather not express another opinion.”

## CHAPTER XX

### THE GOLD

I PASS over three days. In those three days the *Penguin* sealer lay at anchor about three-quarters of a mile astern of the *Dealman* on her weather quarter, and her people could easily be seen by the naked eye passing to and fro between the shore and the schooner in their boat. What they exactly did Mostyn endeavoured to find out, but failed. They certainly did not hunt seals. When they were on the rocks he watched their motions through the telescope, which brought them as near to him as if they were pacing his own fo'c'sle, and saw they were peering about and picking up things; and once, whilst he watched, a man holding a gun turned swiftly, pointed the piece skywards, and flashed a red scar upon the glass of the telescope. All this was, perhaps, consistent with the tradition of the sealmen. They needed food, and they found it in ducks, clams, berries, and the like, and large fish were to be hooked with the bait of the limpet in the gigantic tangle of the seaweed on the shore.

Every morning a party of men were sent in a boat, in charge of Mr. Matthew Walker, to shoot, fish, and hunt the land for the ship's larder. As the vessel had left London in ballast many of her tanks, which were numerous, as they served as ballast, were still full of London water. But no man, after tasting the cold, sweet, bright falls which sprang from the hillsides, could endure the boiled-cabbage flavour of the liquid in the tanks under deck.

Now, how were they to fill up with fresh water? You may raft casks, but iron tanks will sink if you float and fill them. It would have needed a hose longer than the distance from the ball on the summit of St. Paul's to the end of the Strand about Charing Cross to have fetched water from the heights into the ship's tanks. Here were no conveniences of civilization: the freshwater boat to wait upon you, the coalman to coal you, the bumboat to feed you. Here were no inland towns or villages to which you could dispatch messengers on horseback for sheep, milk, poultry, cheese, and so on.

But there was time for the work, and men enough to spare, and Mostyn made his plans. He got up four empty rum-casks, and having chemically, out of the medicine chest, provided that the rum-soaked staves should not taint the sweet water of the hills, he ordered them to be rafted, and they were towed ashore by the boat. The party carried buckets and funnels, and, when the casks were filled, they were towed aboard and hoisted, and their contents pumped into the cleaned empty receptacles which, in the outward passage, had smelled of London water. This process was repeated again and again; it found occupation for the men; it did them good; it was good, too, for the ship's health that as many tanks as possible should be filled with the sweet water of the hills; and day after day, with far more patience than ever Job exhibited, despite his three irritating consolers, the work went on, and several tanks were filled.

Mr. Dipp continued to dive, on the third day making a record of six hours under water. He was then, he reported, so close to the part of the wreck in which the cases of gold were stowed that he hoped by next morning to have cleared away the remaining obstacles and get a sight of the cases, and even to send some up. This was his report before supper on the third day, and you will

suppose that the excitement of Dipp's listeners was profound.

"How frightfully tantalizing!" groaned Benson.

"'Ow d'yer mean?" said Dipp.

"The cases are within a short trudge, and you're not able to report them as in existence."

"Nor would *you*, working in my 'elmet and loaded with gun-metal," answered Dipp, with a sullen look at him.

"He has done marvels," said Mostyn, enthusiastically. "Only think of one man, toiling alone under water, achieving what Mr. Dipp has in three days."

"I recognize his splendid qualities as a diver," said Montague Benson; "but the situation at this moment is tantalizing all the same."

The fourth morning was fair. The mountain yielded its cone of snow in splendour of silver to the day when the sun sent his first flash. In many ways did the island look visionary in beauty; it was softened out, and the tones were kept tender everywhere by the little cushion-like hills, and the flame of the sea-flower, and the heavy glories of the loaded bushes. The water was dotted with penguins and racers, which evidently were not to be frightened out of the port by the gun of the sportsman. The schooner lay with her canvas loose to dry; it did not appear that she meant to sail. She had now been nearly a week in Port Parry; bad trade, you say, for her skipper and company, if their gains were to be limited to the limpet and the penguin.

On this, the crucial morning of the voyage as it proved to be, Mr. Dipp was laboriously slow in equipping himself. It was his custom to come from his berth clad in his rubber diving-suit and heavy metal weights and shoes, and he would then descend into the long-boat, which would row him to the place of the wreck that he had

now buoyed by a small green cone of wood and length of line, and dead weight at bottom to hold it still. When the long-boat had taken up her position Mr. Dipp's men put on his helmet and screwed his tubing to him, and saw to all that was necessary to his preservation whilst below; he then would place his metal sole on the rung of the ladder and slowly disappear.

But this morning he was slow and leisurely. In fact, he had made no haste to go to the boat. It was, indeed, ten o'clock before he went over the side. Mr. Benson marked this with much torment of expectation. Perhaps the diver intended that his behaviour should produce some such effect in the chartered accountant, who, after watching Mr. Dipp in the long-boat for about ten minutes and observing that he remained seated, smoking a pipe, without making any movement of a business-like character, rushed across to Mostyn, who was talking to his wife, and cried—

“When's that man going to begin?”

“He may have reasons known to himself for lingering,” answered Mostyn. “He has been diving for some days. He's stout in throat and sluggish in blood, and may require to feel himself by sitting smoking, whilst he climbs about his sensations inside before descending. I'm glad; he's wise to be careful. A pleasant look-out if he went down and was drawn up dead in a fit!”

“Well, he may be right,” said Mr. Benson, casting his eyes in the direction of the schooner. “May I ask if you suspect that vessel is going to sail?”

“How should I know her skipper's intentions?” answered Mostyn, who, ever since his conversation with Mr. Dipp, had felt, in some subtle, troubled manner, that the man who was now questioning him was his assassin in wish, and potentially his murderer.

“She has loosed her canvas,” said Benson, “to dry, I



expect. I hope she is not going to sail at once," he continued. "I promised to pay her another visit. I offered them a sum of money to collect a number of curiosities for me, and I hope that one of them will be a humming-bird," and he glanced at Phyllis, who stood with her back turned upon him, looking at the long-boat.

Mostyn, making no answer, stepped to his wife's side, and five minutes later they saw the men equip Dipp, who shortly afterwards sank out of sight.

"Oh, Charlie!" exclaimed Phyllis, in a thrilling whisper. "What is it to be?"

"The cases, certainly. He is too confident to leave me doubtful. He may have caught sight of them."

"What a dear old thing he is!" she exclaimed. "I heartily believe he is working more for us than himself, and would drop the business if Benson were alone in it. What does that man mean by saying he intends to go on board the schooner again?"

"Let him go and be damned," was the husband's gloomy and profane response.

"Couldn't you manage to leave him behind you here?" she asked most artlessly, and the quality of ingenuousness was beyond the reach of many because of the eyes that backed and poured their violet light into her husband's.

"How would you go to work?" he asked, laughing in a moody way.

"When the ship was ready to sail I should send him ashore with a gun and provisions for a fortnight. A sealer would ultimately rescue him."

"You want me to maroon him, with the whole of this ship's company as witnesses to testify against me if ever he arrived in London and laid an information."

"What could they do to you when you swore you expelled him because you were afraid of him?"

"I don't like that word afraid, Phyl," he answered,

with a hard face. "You may suspect a man without being afraid of him. I'll answer your question by saying that my sentence, if I marooned Benson without further provocation than I am in a position to show, would be a long term of penal servitude."

"Horrible!" she cried. "Then you won't think of it? But isn't the creature to be got rid of in some legitimate way?"

"No."

"Wouldn't that sealer take a bribe to sail away with him?"

He was amused by her innocent earnestness.

"Do you know, Phyl," said he, "that you are scheming against the man more cunningly than ever I can conceive his scheming against our interests."

He burst out laughing when he said this, for a ridiculous image had presented itself to his mind. It was that of a Cheapside Robinson Crusoe, dressed in a silk hat, frock coat, white waistcoat, varnished boots, standing in a melancholy posture on yonder shore, watched and much studied, and much canvassed, by a huge committee of penguins.

Time wore on slowly. It throbbed with expectancy in the husband and wife, and Benson and Mr. Mill, standing at the rail, held their eyes rooted in the long-boat, whilst an occasional comment passed between them. There was nothing in this or in the previous conduct of Benson and Mill when together to challenge suspicion. Mill was rarely on deck when Benson was. He did not eat at the cabin table until the captain had ended his meal, and then Benson had finished and risen. Nothing could be more natural or reasonable than that the representative of the insurers should chat with the chief mate of the salvage ship about the recovery of the gold in this critical and expectant hour.

Phyllis and her husband kept watch on top of the deck-house. The atmosphere was marvellously transparent, and the white summit of Mount Buckland looked close. It was, indeed, as though you saw all things through a square of English plate-glass, which is the only glass I am acquainted with which, when the window is shut and the telescope placed at the eye inside, will submit the scene of land or sea exactly as though you surveyed it in the open.

It was seven bells, half-past eleven, when some men shouted from the long-boat.

“What are they holding up?” exclaimed Phyllis.

“The first case of gold, as I am a living man!” cried Mostyn, with his eyes at the binocular glass. “If he has got to the gold, we should have it all stowed aboard in two or three days and heading for home.”

“Will you kindly hail the long-boat,” exclaimed Benson, below at the rail, in a voice like catgut with the sensations of the moment, “and ask her people what they are holding up?”

“Long-boat ahoy!” bawled Mostyn. “What is that in your hands?”

“Gold,” was the reply, and the two men who held the case put it down.

For although I have never attempted to lift a thousand pounds, I should say roughly, without calculating the weight of the sovereign, that this amount in specie would be about as much as a man could carry.

When the reply reached the ship from the long-boat, a number of the seamen scattered about the deck in various odd jobs rushed to the side and cheered enthusiastically. Not because the poor beggars were going to benefit from Mr. Dipp’s discovery; each man had signed for so much a month, and no man would receive a penny more; it was the knowledge that the lifting of this

treasure signified the words "homeward bound," and they cheered and cheered for that and nothing more.

"The case is green with weed," said Mostyn to his wife. "It's oblong, and, I suppose, heavily secured by metal fastenings. It may be bigger than it looked, but it seemed to me small enough to pass through a cabin window."

Mr. Benson broke away from Mr. Mill, and with a cheroot in his mouth walked the alley-way with the air of a hunted man. Never in that voyage had his legs carried him more swiftly over the planks. Mr. Dipp remained under water another half-hour. At the end of this time his helmet showed and he got into the boat. He had sent but one case up. The men removed his helmet, lifted their anchor, and the boat came aboard. The case of gold was immediately whipped over the side and carried into the cabin, and Dipp followed to shift in his berth for the day.

*There*, now before them—the captain, his wife, Benson, and Mill, and Matthew Walker—lay one of the cases which they had sought this island to wring as a secret from the heart of the sea. It was coated with marine growth and shells, and looked as though it had been in the water since the days of Magellan.

"I should like this case opened," said Mr. Benson. "Mr. Walker, will you open it?"

The acting second mate spun forward for the tools he wanted. Whilst he was absent Benson said—

"I'll keep this case in my cabin."

"In your cabin!" echoed Mostyn, in the clear ring of the astonished mind. "Why, I thought all the cases were to be stored in the safe constructed by order of the directors."

"This is the first case—the memorial case," said Benson, blandly, "and it shall repose in my cabin."

“You’ll be accepting a serious risk in sleeping with a thousand sovereigns in your cabin on board a ship the morals of whose crew may be the morals of highwaymen,” exclaimed Mostyn, looking very suspiciously at the man.

Mr. Benson put on a cold, hard manner.

“I leave *you* to take charge of the ship, and I beg that you’ll allow *me* to take charge of the gold. I am here for that purpose, as you are here for the other.”

Just then Mr. Walker came in with a bag of tools. Husband and wife stepped back a pace when Walker, kneeling, fell to hammering the sodden mass, whose value would have set him up for life as a bargeowner, or fried-fish and chipped-potatoes shopkeeper. Into what boundless wealth may not soar the man who, knowing how to spend money, commands a thousand pounds?

Whilst Walker filled the cabin with the quarrel of the hammer and the chisel, Dipp came out of his cabin; the expression of his face was like a warning to keep off the grass. Spring-guns and man-traps were in every furrow of his countenance.

“D’yer hope, Mr. Dipp, to send up any more cases to-day?” shouted Benson, through the noise of the hammer.

“No; I’m done fer to-day.”

“Done!” yelled Benson, whipping out his watch. “Why, there’s the whole of the afternoon——”

“I’m *done*, I tell yer,” shouted Dipp, turning blue with passion, “and by Gord Almighty, Mr. Benson, if yer says another word to rile me, I’ll hammer yer buddy nut in!”

Benson snapped his finger and thumb in a sudden ecstasy of agitation.

“Captain Mostyn,” continued the diver, “yer lady’ll pardon my language. I’m not ’ere to be nagged and

worried. The floor of the cabin, full of goods and furniture, has fallen in on the cases, and it'll take me all a week, and p'raps ten days, to get at 'em again."

A general groan uprose.

"What a horrible nuisance!" cried Mostyn, with every extravagance of disappointment in the workings of his handsome features. Benson asked no questions. Matthew Walker, with his hammer suspended in the air, gazed with a countenance of deep discomposure at Mr. Dipp.

"I hope you weren't hurt?" said Phyllis to the diver.

"Kind of you to think of *that* part of it, missus," he answered in a dolorous tone. "Thank Gord I ain't; but if I'd made another step I should be lying there now."

The shudder of a sympathetic heart ran through Phyllis; but Mostyn and Walker were sailors: Dipp had come off with his life, and so it was just the same as though it had never been risked. Had he come up with his arm torn off, or risen with a foot less than he had carried down, Mostyn would have found something tangible to rest pity on; but nothing had happened except a chance, a risk, and every man incurs a chance or a risk of his life every hour of the day, whether ashore or afloat.

Matthew Walker again flogged the chisel, and the deck-house howled.

"Will it take you a full week, do you think?" asked Mostyn.

"All a week. Some of the stuff seems like bales of wool. Where it came tumbling from Gord knows."

The lid of the case was opened and the sovereigns disclosed, packed in rouleaux. It was a pleasant show of money. Benson pulled out a clasp-knife, opened a blade, and picked out a coin, examined, flung, and rang it. Oh yes, it was a good English sovereign, of a young and

yellow gold, and the date was 1888. The chartered accountant replaced the coin, and sent his right two fore-fingers on a duck's walk over the line of packed pieces, counting them. He quickly ascertained, by making a short computation in his note-book, that the case contained one thousand pounds sterling.

"Will you replace the cover, Mr. Walker, if you please?" he said.

Again the man fell to hammering. Mostyn took Dipp by the sleeve of his coat and walked him through the cabin door on to the deck, Phyllis in chase, and said—

"Benson intends that that gold shall be stowed in his cabin."

"So much the better," answered Dipp.

"But the thing is contrary to the instructions of the directors, as explained by the strong room below," answered Mostyn.

"I don't care a dump about that," answered Mr. Dipp. "Let him keep them suverins in his cabin, and one night it may please the Lord to send a fo'c'sle hand to cut his throat."

"If we could only make sure of it!" answered Mostyn, laughing in spite of depressing suspicions and disappointments.

"I'll tell my men," said Mr. Dipp. "It'll bloomin' soon leak out."

The suggestion in its way was scarcely a joke, and both men knew it. They stood in conversation some time over the diving, and Dipp said he meant to start tomorrow morning at ten o'clock, but "his narves had been a bit shook, and when he couldn't place confidence in Mr. Dipp aboard ship, he wisely refused to rely upon Mr. Dipp under water." For a diver, no matter how seasoned, is but a man, and though you equip him so that he sinks

in knightly costume to his dominions, he carries with him the sensations and moods and passions of a man into a condition of life—if you call that life where nothing but fish can live—which gives frightful import to the passing feeling that may seem trivial on dry land.

Benson had his way, and the case of sovereigns, slime, shell, and all, were stowed under his bunk: “as the memorial case, you see, Mrs. Mostyn,” he pleaded.

“But the whole sum will be memorial,” she answered.

“In its way, when recovered. But this first chest, so to speak, is a sample, and it pleases me to have it under observation.”

“I would not sleep with a thousand pounds in my cabin, unless I wanted to die, to save my soul,” said the young wife, looking at the blue, fat throat of the man.

“I am like Nelson,” answered the black, whiskered hero. “Fear has never come near me.” And he smiled upon her with one of those smiles which never failed to dismiss her to the cabin or the deck with disgust and loathing.

A hearty good dinner put Dipp into better spirits, and a still heartier supper completed the conquest of his nervous juices. In the first watch they were flowing healthily, and he was talking to Captain Mostyn about the recovery of the rest of the cases, with as keen a note of anxiety as had ever threaded the language of the other. In fact, the sight of the gold was realization, ample, convincing, profound, as to the quality of the remaining cases. Thirty-nine were down there; if he sent up twenty he would have done wonderfully well.

At breakfast next day Benson asked for a boat. He went away, leaving the thousand sovereigns locked up in his cabin. It was not evidently for the purpose of sailing that the schooner had dropped her canvas. Matthew Walker was preparing a boat for a shooting



and hunting party for the ship's larder. The captain stopped him, as he wanted to go ashore with his wife, and there was plenty to eat on board. He desired to see more of this island, and he must have a boat to himself to command at a moment's notice.

At about eleven o'clock Phyllis and he landed. Mostyn was armed. The morning was as warm as May in England, and the water shook under a little breeze. The young wife felt like a girl when her feet were on the shore. She raced and romped, and her spirits were in her cheeks and eyes. This time they ascended a considerable hill, but the view of the island was constantly interrupted by mountains. Mostyn pulled out his note-book and made a number of entries, whilst Phyllis picked up anything she could find that was good as a curiosity. Presently looking towards the schooner, Mostyn exclaimed—

“Benson is making for us.”

The *Dealman's* boat was coming along, and in about twenty minutes Benson got out of her, with a man behind him, and walked up the hill to meet the husband and wife who were descending.

“I guessed you were here, captain, by that boat,” said he, in an easy, affable manner. “I have brought you some curiosities from the schooner, Mrs. Mostyn. Would you like to see them?”

Somehow her being ashore rendered conversation with him easier than when on board.

“Yes, I should like to see them very much indeed,” she answered.

“Spread that handkerchief,” said he to the seaman.

The fellow exposed a commonplace store of shells, brilliant of hue, specimens of the quartz and other coloured surfaces of the island. There were more things than these not worth enumerating, but some curiosities of a rather piquant sort were comprised in the little lot: a

couple of shark's teeth, eggs of the albatross, penguin and other birds of the place, a couple of whale's teeth, and carefully reposing on top lay the minute body of a humming-bird.

"You didn't make a long stay this time," said Mostyn.

"No. In one visit I learnt all I wanted. What do you think of this show, Mrs. Mostyn?"

"If they are intended for me, I am obliged to you for the trouble you have taken, but," she said, stopping to pick up the humming-bird, "if this beautiful little creature was destroyed for my pleasure, I assure you I shall find none in its possession."

"Collect those things and take them down to the boat," said Benson, "and go on board and put the curiosities on the cabin table. I will remain with the captain."

The man picked up his little load and trudged down the sandy beach.

"A wonderfully fine climate," said Benson. "How long does this enchanting weather last here?"

"During our winter months," answered Mostyn.

"Are you strolling?" asked Benson, in the manner of a man who meets a friend in the street, to whom he proposes a turn round St. Paul's or a visit to the Abbey.

"We've been wandering," answered Mostyn. "Are you tired, Phyl?"

"No," she answered doubtfully.

She was not tired. But Benson was so very obliging this morning, his face so empty of all those looks which used to affect her to sickness, his behaviour so genial that if he was giving a dinner-party he couldn't look more beaming, that she was willing to shrink her suspicious disgust into its shell of soul, call a truce, and talk as though she had met him for the first time,

"Your schooner, I see, is getting under way," said the captain.

"Is she?" cried the other, starting, and shading his eyes to view the vessel.

They watched in silence. The little vessel's head sails floated her towards the points, and she slowly streamed outwards.

"There's no game here for them, I suppose," said Mostyn, secretly relieved by her departure.

"The captain did not talk to me about his business," said Mr. Benson. "I called this morning for what he had promised."

"You're very kind," said Phyllis, in whom the old tradition of the voyage was recurring: that this man was a power, and though she never could doubt her own intuition, though she was as convinced now as before that his heart was as black as his whiskers, yet his present call upon her courtesy this morning subdued her to a certain degree, and she was not unwilling to be gracious. A long homeward voyage stretched before them, and her husband had again and again asked, "What can he do?"

"Who stuffed the humming-bird?" asked Mostyn.

"The mate of the schooner," answered Benson.

"It'll be offal for the penguins in a day or two, Phyllis," said Mostyn, laughing. "How the deuce can a man undertake to stuff a bird and guarantee it free from putrefaction in the space of time occupied by the mate of that schooner? Anyhow, you now know that there are such things as humming-birds in Staten Island. You wouldn't believe me in Woolsborough."

She was admiring the picture of the goose-winged schooner that was slowly blowing outwards and nearing the head. The vessel gave life, and even civilization, to what else had been supreme desolation to the eye. Her white shadow went with her as the ripple rolled from her

stem, and beyond, betwixt the points, Phyllis could see the gleaming blue of the vast ocean in which this island rested.

“I don’t know why the mate of the schooner shouldn’t know how to stuff a bird,” said Benson.

“I wonder where she’s travelling to?” and the captain dropped his chin at the schooner.

Mr. Benson watched the flight of an albatross as though he would by magnetic fascination attract Phyllis’s eyes to the same object of beauty that their gaze might meet in it.

“She’s not going home,” continued Mostyn. “Not with a clean hold. I don’t suppose she’s taken a seal since she’s been in Port Parry.”

“There are more interesting things to talk about,” said Mr. Benson.

They moved slowly down a hill, at the foot of which lay the grave of the man of the fried-fish shop. Mostyn carried his gun under his arm. Phyllis walked between them.

“One interesting thing more there certainly is, Mr. Benson,” said Mostyn. “And that’s the gold in your bedroom. How can you repose such confidence in a merchantman’s rough company of sailors as to sleep for two or three months with a thousand pounds under your bed?”

“I utterly fail to take you,” responded Benson; “as a matter of fact, it was suggested to me by Sir William Steele, one of our directors, that all the gold should be placed in my cabin, under my immediate and personal supervision.”

“Why was the strong room built?” asked Mostyn.

“For my convenience,” answered Mr. Benson. “The directors knew that the cabins were very small, and forty cases, if all are recovered, would pretty well crowd me out.”

Mostyn perfectly understood that this man was telling lies, and grew more and more puzzled as with the swiftness of thought and the velocity of the eye he sent a look at the *Dealman*, the dwindling schooner, the long-boat, and then at Benson, who proceeded thus—

“I cannot understand, captain, what risk I accept by taking charge of this gold. It is a heavily clamped case. The same burglarious resolution that would force a man or men into my cabin would force them into the strong room. Why not? It must be mutiny, then. Piracy and bloodshed. You don't anticipate that, I hope?”

“There is much more danger of the money being stolen out of your cabin, and secreted in coin throughout the ship, than if the strong room contained it.”

“I cannot agree with you. You would have the whole crew in the conspiracy. How can a few secrete the sovereigns without the whole ship's company knowing?”

“You're not a sailor, Mr. Benson, and don't know the ways of a sailor or his arts. I tell you plainly that if you insist on keeping that money in your cabin throughout the homeward passage I wash my hands of all responsibility for your life.”

“My life?” echoed Benson.

“Your life,” re-echoed Mostyn. “They'd strangle you in your sleep. But you will do as you please.”

He turned half off in a motion of disgust and irritation, and his wife instantly deflected from the path that Benson was taking, and the city man was left alone. He followed them.

“Captain,” he called, “I should like to try my hand at shooting. What's that up there? I have little knowledge of birds. Will you lend me your gun?”

The captain came to a dead stand with his wife. His gun! Would he lend Captain Murder his gun? The fierce fear of assassination was in the wrath of his

heart when he answered, forcing a smile that was ghastly—

“No; my gun may prove another Winkle. If you want to shoot, wait till we’re gone.”

“I shall go on board,” said Mr. Benson, suddenly. “Are you coming?”

“Have you had enough of it, Phyl?”

“Oh yes, dear.”

She was pale, and there had been something in her husband’s tone and something in her husband’s face that instantly made her put the true interpretation on his refusal to lend Benson the gun. She was almost sick in a horror-stricken way; she could easily understand how this man, whilst fumbling with a gun, might, could, and would shoot her husband through the heart, feign an ecstasy of grief and penitence, and widow her in a single *coup*. A frightful fancy, and yet on the very eve, it might be, of accomplishment! for all she or her husband could tell of the meanings which honey-combed the black processes of the blackguard’s mind.

They walked down to the boat, and were rowed past honest Mr. Dipp, whom they did not see, as he was under water. Husband and wife were too deeply moved by their reflections to talk about the diver as they went by, and gaining the *Dealman’s* side, the party went aboard.

## CHAPTER XXI

### THE CASTAWAY

MRS. MOSTYN entered the cabin. Dinner had been postponed till two, and Prince was engaged in laying the cloth.

“Did you find some shells, and a stuffed bird, and so forth, on this table, Prince?” she said, in the sweet manner with which she was always accustomed to address this man who had once helped her.

“Yes, lady. I was told they was for you, and I put them in your berth.”

“Oh!” she cried, with a sneer of disgust. “Fetch and throw them anywhere but there.”

The young fellow, with as staid a face as a cat’s contemplating a fire, obeyed, and removed Mr. Benson’s sealsman’s precious sweepings to the pantry; and the young wife went into her berth.

In a few moments she was joined by her husband. He caught her by both hands, and exclaimed quietly—

“The instant that man asked me to lend him my gun I felt as if I was shot through the heart.”

“I saw it in your face.”

“I am absolutely persuaded that the dog meant to murder me. The boat was some distance away. The people were talking and smoking, and not noticing us. The ship was too far off for the men to follow our motions critically, and no man would have time for that.

An accident happens in a second. The gun explodes in his clumsy hands. I fall dead at your feet——”

“Oh, Charlie, Charlie!” she cried, wringing her hands. “But it hasn’t happened.”

“The explosion attracts attention. The men come rushing from the boat. Who in the ship’s company would believe you if you charged the fellow with my murder?”

He looked a little wild, somewhat pale, his eyes burned—indeed, any one hearing him and seeing him would have been excused for thinking, “That man will go and shoot Montague Benson through the head yet.”

“How are we to be on our guard against him?” said Phyllis, who was being tuned up to the right humming-key by her husband, and would have shot Benson with pleasure had Charlie told her to do so.

“His position on board makes the situation very difficult,” said Mostyn. “He’s not over me indeed, but he is on the same platform, and the men know it. There is nothing that he has done that I could keep him in confinement for. Whatever may be my suspicions, I can prove nothing. His argument about the gold is plausible, and might be held as reasonable on the safe delivery of the money, although inside his reasoning may lurk a scheme as deadly to the interests of this ship, and to my fortunes, as a puff-adder in a man’s bed.”

“But if your suspicions are so serious, Charlie, why don’t you call a council of Mr. Dipp and Mr. Walker, and combine to put this man out of the way of doing harm?”

“Because he would sue me on our arrival in London, and sell the bed from under me.”

“What a disgusting position!” she exclaimed, pouting, and working her fingers, and rolling her eyes over the cabin as though for help to think.



“It is a positive fact,” the captain exclaimed, with violence, “though now I know that he is a black-hearted scoundrel, and a murderous menace to you and me, and the interests of this adventure, that I am absolutely unable to lay a finger upon him. Never was a man in my position so placed.”

Possibly not, and less likely still the chances of a man carrying so sweet a wife to sea with him as Phyllis; and so sensual, prudent, passion-complicated an associate as Benson. In fact, the conditions of the voyage were so uncommon as, I think, to render Captain Mostyn's situation even extraordinary.

In the various art of managing the face and conversation, there can be none, surely, so difficult as conversing in an off-hand way with a man whom you are convinced wants to murder you, and to whom you must betray no suspicion. Yet this was the art our young couple had to practise, and it was the harder because its operation came immediately atop of the conviction that Benson had meant to take Mostyn's life. That is to say, whilst husband and wife were talking with heat, and all conflict of emotion, over this lurid passage of mere intuition, as penetrating nevertheless as though Mr. Benson's heart could have been seen beating, the dinner-bell was rung, and our young couple had to go to table to meet him.

The conversation was neither brilliant nor swift; it seriously lacked those lifts and falls which make music of speech when people are in harmony; indeed, nothing could be more strained than the relations of those three at table, with Prince waiting. It is impossible to suppose that Benson's penetration was equal to the interpretation of the minds of the young husband and wife; but it is certain that in the course of the meal he expressed regret that Mostyn had not allowed him to try to knock a bird over.

“I was in the Volunteers for two years,” he said, “and on the whole was considered a good shot.”

“So many accidents happen with guns, Mr. Benson,” said Phyllis; “and I am sure you do not want to please your relations by shooting yourself.”

“My relations, Mrs. Mostyn, metaphorically speaking, are up in a balloon above the clouds; and, as a bachelor, I am the head of my family.”

“An old family, no doubt,” said Mostyn.

“The Bensons,” answered Mr. Benson, in his amplest way, “were originally French, and settled in Canterbury in consequence of the persecutions of the Protestants in France. If you turn the word into French you will observe that it reads *bon sens*—*good sense*.”

Neither of the others was willing to pursue the subject; the conversation languished, and the dinner ended.

And now for a week what happened? Nothing. No incident to yield two lines. They went on watering the ship, and hunting for lining for the daily larder. A few of the crew at a time were allowed to go ashore, but Mostyn knew well there was no temptation here to ease off and show a heel—no grog shop, no crimp, no black-eyed Susan. They went ashore sober, and came back sober, as it was impossible to get drunk on the mountain springs, and rum did not naturally flow in the valleys, nor brandy, nor gin either.

Mostyn frequently went ashore, and filled his book with sketches. But Phyllis did not often accompany him: twice in one week. The island had lost its attraction; it lifted its head in insipidity of face, colour, and shadow. The penguin that was once wonderful was a rotten old bird irritating to watch. The albatross that swung like spokes of the sun when the clouds are flying, was now only a tedious albatross, as old as the

creation, and never up to date. She prayed for nothing but the hour when the anchors would be lifted fore and aft. Then, though Benson might be on board, she could not conceive any more treachery in the fellow homewards than she perceived outwards. It was here, whilst lying at anchor in this island, that he might work mischief, such mischief as the accidental killing of her husband, such mischief as might, whilst leaving him alive, destroy their poor young hopes in the issue of this voyage. Benson's mind was a page which Phyllis had long read, and read aloud to her husband for some time without succeeding in making him understand it. She knew that the man was recklessly in love with her, and that he would sell his soul to the devil to possess her, and that there was nothing in all Benson, as chartered accountant, to dominate the distempered passions of Benson as the lover.

But to say that her husband stood in the way was to say what? They sometimes talked over this as coolly as you are reading.

“Suppose he buried me in that island?” he once put it to his wife in the week I am dealing with. “You remain on board the ship; he is with you. He; but Dipp is with you too, and Matthew Walker, and the whole ship's company, many of whom are men, and there is Prince. What is he going to do with you? It's one thing to kidnap a married woman. It's another thing to know what to do when you've got her. Benson is on board ship. It is no case of a man in a mask galloping in thunder along a moon-lit road with a fortune in a swoon behind him. This ship must sail for England when the cases of gold are recovered, if ever they are recovered. If another course should be proposed the sailors, like the Cornishmen, will want to know the reason why. When the ship is arrived in England, what is Benson going to do with you?”

“Yes, but I must arrive in England with you.”

“I’m putting the scheme as regards Benson; how do you come out of it? You’re a widow. He will persecute you. You may have every reason for knowing why you are a widow, and on the merits of this knowledge alone Benson would be as filth in a ditch to you. I confess, looking all round the show,” said he, “I don’t understand Mr. Benson’s game, nor can I imagine his plans if he has formed any. But he’ll have to turn pirate if he means business, and it’s impossible to think of that fellow in a round jacket and drill breeches in that character.”

“I wish he would take to bathing,” said Phyllis, “and a shark seize him.”

“There are no sharks down here. We might feign that he was sinking, and send lumps of timber at his head in the hope that he would go under, that is if he swam about the ship,” said Mostyn, beginning to laugh at his ridiculous fancies.

At the end of the week husband and wife had got no “forrader” with Benson; but Dipp had laboriously, day by day, been doing his work, rolling soaked bales off the cases, toppling over square, iron-rimmed chests, keen enough at edge to cut his pipe open and kill him, and eight days after he had come up and said that the gold had been blocked, he was sending the precious stuff to the surface.

The bullion reached the long-boat in one case at a time, and the intervals were often tedious. This was owing, Dipp explained, to the darkness where the money was, and to the scoundrel trick of bales, casks, or cases already moved by him suddenly shifting into the road.

When the second case was sent up the ship was prepared for sea. Masts and yards were sent aloft, rigging set up, sails bent, and the masts painted wherever the paint-pot was asked for. They painted her with a will

too, inside and out, and she would be bound away to London river as dandy a ship and as dandy a crew as had sailed thence some weeks previous. They were homeward bound, and the sound of the holystone groaned in the hollow plank, and wherever was brass flashed soft effulgence to the sun, and in whatever was glass the daybeam kindled beacons, and the *Dealman* lay upon her shadow a clever little ship.

Three days after the gold had begun to appear above the sea the figure of a man was seen to come down from a hill, and walk along the bright stretch of sand to its margin, where he stood signalling by flourishing with his cap.

Mostyn, who was walking up and down with his wife, exclaimed—

“Who can that fellow be?”

“He’s come for Benson, I hope,” answered Phyllis.

The captain brought his glass to bear, and saw the man was a young sailor in worn clothes, with no jacket to his back, and now that he was set close to into the telescope his demonstrations of limb were so plainly weak, the whole figure of the man so clearly exhausted, that Mostyn was rightly assured that he was perishing not so much with hunger, as from exposure, loneliness, and the daily homeless march along the coast.

“Send a boat for that man, Mr. Mill.”

A boat was lowered and rowed away to the sand. Matthew Walker and three men went in her. Matthew Walker stood up, and said, after looking at the man—

“Where do you come from?”

“I belong to a sealer,” answered the man, “that foundered in Blossom Bay. She was called the *Juanna*. All hands was lost but me, who drifted ashore on a skylight.”

He looked pale and hungry, of a ginger complexion,

and dusted with freckles, and in the rags and broken boots that garnished him, he was a very proper figure indeed to submit himself as a survivor.

“Did your vessel go down in a breeze?”

“It blew a hurricane, sir.”

Mr. Walker recollected that it had blown with great violence off that portion of the island where Blossom Bay was situated.

“What’s your name?”

“Whitmore.”

“American, or what?”

“I ’ails from Cardiff.”

“I don’t know,” said Mr. Walker, looking at him, and then rounding his head to look at the ship, “whether the captain will be able to find room for you. Don’t you think if we left you some provisions, a sealer ’ud be coming along soon, glad to pick up a likely man who knows his bit?”

The fellow, who had styled himself Whitmore, though he often grinned congenitally, drew a most miserable face, and spoke in a most miserable voice, as though he was lamenting his sins with the tears in his eyes.

“A sealer may not put in here for six weeks or two months or not at all this season,” he exclaimed, in his whine. “’Ow can I walk around the shores of this ’ere island a-seeking for vessels when, insofar as I know, there’s not one on the coast from Cape St. John to this place.”

“’Ow do you know that?”

“I climbed a hill and looked round.”

“Jump into the boat. Let me see what the capt’n ’as to say.”

And Whitmore was rowed aboard. He climbed over the side, and stood before Captain Mostyn, and Phyllis surveyed him with infinite compassion. At the moment

of the captain beginning to question him, Prince came out of the cabin, and saw the man and started, but instantly mastered his face and successfully carried to the galley a trayful of glasses. But that he had been very suddenly and very greatly astonished there could be no doubt. The captain asked the man fewer questions than Walker put. If he was a shipwrecked man, nay, if he had been left alone on that island under any circumstances, humanity imperiously demanded his rescue.

“If a sealer,” said the captain, “should put in whilst we’re lying here, I’ll send you to her.”

Just then Benson, who had been in his cabin in ignorance of what was proceeding above, arrived, and cried, “Halloa! who have we here?” with a frown of suspicion, and no man could frown more tragically in a startling manner, arms folded, head back, than Mr. Benson of the curly eyebrows.

“He’s a survivor of the crew of the *Juanna*,” answered Mostyn, stiffly, for the rescue of a man at sea is the captain’s duty, and he’s responsible for it, and here was this chartered accountant thrusting in.

“Where was she lost?” demanded Benson, in a note of fiery curiosity.

“T’other side of the island,” said the man, pointing, with a stupid grin, “in a place called Blossom Bay.”

“Isn’t it strange that you alone should have survived?”

“Strange! no,” exclaimed the man, waxing warm, though he was scarce able to stand.

“What object can this man have in relating his story?” said Captain Mostyn. “The face of it is stamped with truth. Where are his companions? Why should not a small sealer founder at her anchor?”

“The sea rolled in frightful,” said the man. “She bowed it, nose under, till it swept her decks, and then she filled and went down all of a sudden, like a stone. I

heard one shriek in the wind. It was gettin' on dark."

"How many went to your crew?" demanded Benson, gloomily surveying him.

"Six."

"So you've lost five. What was the master's name?"

"Christian."

"And the mate's?" whipped out Benson, in hopes of catching him.

"We knew him as Boston Dick."

Benson seemed very dissatisfied. He looked at the man, and then looked at the shore, and said—

"D'ye mean to say you climbed those hills to get here?"

"Never said anything of the sort," answered the man, with diminishing civility. "What I said was, I crossed a neck of land 'twixt Blossom Bay and Shank Point and then made my way to the westwards along shore trusting to pick up with a vessel."

"Could I see your chart of the island?" said Benson.

It lay handy on Mostyn's table. The captain fetched it, and handed it to the City man, quite willing to help him into working himself into some revelation of his intention. For, as Samuel Johnson said truly enough, fallibility must fail somewhere, and if you only give the most artful dodger or schemer time, if you'll only allow the most dexterous plotting rogue rope enough, you'll see daylight in his armour, a rent in his mask, Falstaff's beard in the petticoat.

"Mr. Mill, help me to stretch this," said Mr. Benson.

Their two noble countenances pored upon it.

"You can go forward," said the captain to the man.

"I have more questions to ask," cried Mr. Benson, rounding from the chart.

"Go forward, I tell you. I am master of this ship,



not this gentleman," and Mostyn then looked as though the revolver that ever lay close to his hand must be ending the mystery of Benson along with Benson himself if the fellow continued to anger him, filled as he was with the darkest suspicions a young husband could possibly nurse.

"Cook," shouted Mostyn, to the man who stood in the galley door, "give that man a hot meal. Tramping Staten Island isn't going a-blackberrying."

"His description's all right," said Mill to Benson, pointing to the chart. "But it's a bloomin' long walk. See these creeks. He's continually going out of his way, which makes it miles and miles more. And then, when he speaks of the foreshore, isn't it steep-to as here and there? If so he'd have found it a job to crawl round."

"The deuce of it is," said Mr. Benson, letting go his end of the chart, which sprang in a roll to Mr. Mill's hands, "I can't help fancying I've seen that man before."

"Replace that chart in my cabin," said the captain, peremptorily; and the mate went in. "You're in a mighty trouble about this fellow, Mr. Benson. What's got on to your mind about him?"

"This is a treasure-ship," said Benson. Mostyn made no answer. "And I don't like the idea of sole survivors being on board," continued Benson. "He may prove but a scout got up in masquerade to deceive the eye, with twenty desperate fellows, armed to the teeth, intrenched in the hills up there waiting for his signal to rush down."

"What have they got to rush to?" answered Mostyn, speaking in a note of unaffected contempt. "Will they come blustering down with a boat raised high amongst them? otherwise how are they to board us?"

"Well, that view did not occur to me, I admit," said Mr. Benson, who then walked some distance forward to

catch another glimpse, if he could, of the man, whose face he was solemnly convinced was not unknown to him.

The undissembled uneasiness exhibited by the chartered accountant at the presence of a stranger who had arrived on board from the island could not fail to complicate the puzzle which Mostyn, his wife, Dipp, and Walker had worked out in their several ways. Dipp, on his arrival from the long-boat, when he heard of the man, and of Mr. Benson's objections to his being received, said—

“It looks to me as if that there sealer the *Penguin* was in this job, and Benson, who may recollect the face of the crew, though not very well, on seeing this man, thought to himself, that yarn of shipwreck is a lie, and if he belongs to the *Penguin* I don't want him aboard.”

“That's a shrewd view, certainly,” answered Mostyn. “But how the deuce should a little schooner like the *Penguin* meddle with us? Five or six men. Chaw! Besides, she has sailed.”

“Don't for a moment suppose, Captain Mostyn,” said Dipp, with unusual gravity, “that Mr. Benson's game is the gold. It's your wife he wants, and that's 'ow it comes to be a little schooner may be 'andy.”

“Yes,” answered the captain, irritably, and flushing. “And he won't give me a chance of going for him. Mrs. Mostyn is safe in the ship. She'd be safe ashore for a few hours' ramble. Only look. An area quite wide enough to see people approaching, and I should be with her, armed, and my boat's crew at hand to help me. But she shall remain aboard during the rest of our stay. She has seen enough of Staten Island to last her a dozen voyages.”

“And so have I,” answered Mr. Dipp. “I don't say it ain't a sort of garden in its own durned uninhabited way, but a more Gord-forsaken place I never was in; not a pub. for a pint and a pipe, not a little theatre to give froth to the 'eavy draught of the day. I 'opes the next

ship that sinks with gold will go down off some place that ain't castaway, if I'm to be sent there. And, talking of the gold, I'm much afraid we shall have to leave fifteen cases be'ind us."

"Can't be helped; you'll have done nobly at twenty-five."

"It's took me all I know, sir. If I 'ad another man to 'elp me I could get p'r'aps at eight or ten of the cases, but there is no single pair of arms that's going to prize that crowd out of the road, nor should I recommend dynamite, for you stand to blow the sovereigns out, and when yer look yer find yer raffle left and the gold gone."

It was about the time when this conversation was held that Benson went up to Matthew Walker, who was at work at the carpenter's bench forward, and said to him—

"I have an idea. The chest containing the coin under my bunk will need to be cleated like a sailor's chest, to save it from running to leeward in heavy weather."

Walker, who was planing a length of deal, looked up, and gave him a nod, as much as to say, "I'm listening," and went on with his work.

"Now, my idea is this," continued Mr. Benson. "Instead of cleats, I want you to construct a door hinged at one extremity to the leg of the bunk, and closing at the other extremity by padlock and key. This will prevent the case from shifting, will it?"

"Unless it barsts through the door," said Matthew Walker, dropping his plane to talk.

"I'll take my chance of that. The case, anyway, will be under lock and key. When can you set to work upon this cupboard?"

"Soon as you like," answered Walker.

"Will you go about it at once?"

"No; I'm damned if I do. A man can't keep all on, you know, although you call him a sailor."

“What time will you begin?”

“Three o'clock.”

“How long will it take?”

The acting second mate cursed him with both eyes, whilst he mentally computed. He then said—

“I can get it fixed up by to-morrow at noon.”

“Thanks, Mr. Walker; and, as this is apart from the ship's work, here is a present for you;” and Benson extended a sovereign with the smile of a man who gives rarely.

Matthew Walker, muttering “Thank ye,” dropped the coin into the buttoned-up flap where a pocket was supposed to be.

Mr. Benson made much of his bunk depository, and showed it, with a great air of satisfaction, to Mrs. Mostyn, her husband, Mr. Dipp, and Mr. Mill, who, of the four, was the only person who seemed to find anything ingenious in the idea of fitting a door to form a cupboard in the lower part of a bunk.

“It'll make you no securer,” said Mostyn, “if they mean to plunder you.”

“Look at them staples,” exclaimed Dipp, in a greasy, sneering voice. “Who's got a clasp-knife? I could prize 'em out like digging up radishes.”

“In its way this safe is as safe as the safe below,” said Mr. Benson. “Look how it's hedged about: first by the cabin, then by the people in the cabin, then by Prince, who is always in and out, then by your humble servant, who is in the habit of passing his nights, and sometimes half his days, in that berth.”

It was certain that this private safe entered into Benson's scheme. But everything was so much above-board, that who could hint a doubt or hesitate dislike? Did he hope to induce Phyllis to elope with him on the security of one thousand pounds in sterling gold? Certainly the

cases in the safe-room should liquidate all necessary expenses such as a shift of course, the opinions of the men, and so on.

The day before the ship was ready for sea—twenty-six, and not twenty-five, thousand pounds having been splendidly wrested from a darker hall than the Valley of the Shadow of Death by one modest, homely, but most heroic spirit—the long-boat and a quarter-boat were despatched to fill up with everything they could find that was good to eat. Mostyn desired to finish a sketch, which, when completed, would render his portfolio of drawings of the island valuable.

“I hope you won’t go out of sight of the ship. I shall keep an eye on you from the top of this house,” said his wife.

“D’ye see the spur of that hill? I’m bound to go round it and disappear to get the view I want.”

“I shall be very uneasy, Charlie, until I see you again.”

“Good God, Phyl! why? There’s not a sealer on the island; and, if there were, why should he want to molest me? Could anything be more barren of human life than those hills and little valleys between the cushion mounds? Besides, I have always this.” He slapped his left jacket pocket. “If Benson, or even Mill, were accompanying me, then, indeed, you might wish me to keep in sight. I shall be away about two hours. Tell Prince to delay the dinner until I return—to three bells. If Benson or Mill comes ashore, my men will report their arrival, and I shall immediately take Mill by the throat and hurl him over the bows of the boat, for the mate of a ship has no right to be away without leave when the captain is ashore. Make yourself happy, honey-bird, and give Benson a wide berth.”

The complexity of the position as regards Benson, and

whatever was in his mind, was keenly accentuated by the foregoing remarks; for what captain of a merchantman, after giving his chief officer certain instructions, and then going ashore, would dream of thinking that, shortly after he had gained the land, the first person he meets is the mate of his ship? Yet some such contingency was evidently in Mostyn's contemplation, and I, who am writing his story, avow that Captain Mostyn was deserving any fate that might befall him by leaving his ship to complete a few paltry sketches valuable only to his conceit.

The ship wore an eager and an expectant look. It was her last day at Staten Island, and she seemed to know it. Every man had a manner of excitement about him; the leap was swift, the drag hearty, the response of "Ay, ay, sir," cordial. The breeze was gusty with the mountain squall, the foam of the breaker was large and rich at the foot of each head of the port, the clouds were skirmishing in several planes or currents of wind, and, whilst one blew to the westward, another was heading off south-east. The captain put off at about eleven. Four men swept him to the shore. Every boat belonging to the ship was now on the water. Phyllis, with the binocular glass, watched her husband jump from the gunwale of the boat on to the shore and trudge slowly along in the direction of Shellard's grave. Three of his men got out of the boat and began to hunt about, seeking curios for the last time. The captain's figure could be easily followed by Phyllis as he stepped through berry-loaded openings of hillside growth until he emerged on the clear green grass some distance high from a cone-shaped hill. Here he paused and gazed earnestly around him. He now drew out his note-book and began to sketch, and then, walking fifty yards to another point of view, he turned a spur which put him out of sight of the ship and shore, and, seating himself, went on sketching.

When Phyllis lost sight of her husband, she left the top of the deck-house, with the binocular, and walked aft near the wheel, where she was joined by Mr. Dipp, who dragged a chair after him. Scarcely were they seated, Mrs. Mostyn on the chair, the diver on the grating abaft the wheel, when Mr. Benson's figure was to be seen upon the top of the cabin-house. He had armed himself with a ship's telescope, and was manifestly intent, to judge by his conduct at the glass, on getting all he could of his last impressions of Staten Island without going ashore. He directed the tubes at the brilliant heights of Mount Buckland, and swept the scene slowly, pausing often.

"You'd 'ave thought 'ed 'ad enough of it," said Mr. Dipp to Mrs. Mostyn.

"I am sure we have all had enough of him."

"Well, and I dare say, ma'am, you'll be glad to get home," said Dipp, in his kindest way. "Shipboard life after this pattern ain't the life for young ladies. But I'm so sorry for not being able to get at the rest of the gold for yours and your husband's sake. I've been turning of it over in my mind, and if he'd like to head this ship for some South American port, where the services of a diver could be 'ad, then we'd return, and the two of us would make the job worth forty thousand pounds."

"I wish he was here," cried Phyllis, with eager eyes. "He ought to hear you, so as to determine at once. Are divers to be readily found?"

"Oh, I should say you'd find 'em in the port we'd try for," answered Mr. Dipp.

"You know," cried the young wife, "we get four hundred pounds as commission on the whole sum, which 'll be a perfect godsend. My husband has nothing but his pay, and my father, who is a rich man, has expelled me, and cut me off, for marrying him."

"They does that very often," said the diver, "and mostly them that's been guilty of it themselves."

"Four hundred pounds," continued Phyllis, "would be quite a little fortune to start with. He might invest the money in the next ship he commands——" She was at a loss after this, wanting Benson's City experience as an investor.

"There's a deal to be done with four 'undred pound," said Dipp; "and, as we are 'ere for no other purpose than to get the money, there should be no deviation to risk if this vessel's been hinsured for the purpose of getting the money."

"I don't quite see what you mean, Mr. Dipp."

"In charter parties, ma'am, it's provided that ships are not to deviate from their course except under particular circumstances. Because, in going out of the way, the masters may be risking their vessels, and the insurers won't take the extra risk."

"Our calling at a South American port wouldn't be a deviation, would it?" inquired Phyllis, who was at least keen, if she was not commercial. "We have arrived at our destination. You have recovered all the gold you can send up single-handed. A large sum remains, to obtain which you seek help. Would not the insurers commend you? Is not the whole object of the voyage contained in this policy?"

"I don't want no persuading, missus," said Mr. Dipp, with a smile of complacence. "You've put the truth as it is. But it's for your 'usband to discuss the matter with me and old black curly-wurly up there."

"I wish he would come off," she cried, sweeping the district in which she had last seen her husband. "We've been freely speculating about Benson's ends the last few days, and I myself, Mr. Dipp, simply sum the man up by calling him a black-hearted rascal."



The term was made much stronger than it reads by the young wife's sweet face and music and management of speech.

"I've long seen 'e's not been playing the game," said Mr. Dipp, gazing at the man, who, though close, was out of hearing. "Benson's one of those men that are like locomotive hengines: they're all right s'long as they keep the metals; but if they goes off the bust-up is awful, and they very often drags 'eaps of others along with 'em. But, whatever 'is game is going to be, I don't see what 'urt 'e's going to do ye 'ere."

She felt that, if she put her case too strongly, it would be immodest. She felt that, even if she put her case moderately, she might be accepted as appealing for sympathy. Hers was a woman's suspicion, based on apparently untenable things, for she could give a name to nothing against Mr. Benson. Therefore she held her tongue.

"You see," continued the friendly diver alongside of her, puffing at his curly pipe, "that, even if Mr. Benson's agin you, every other man aboard the ship is for you; surely that's enough to keep up your 'eart, missus?"

He looked at her with that sort of admiration with which a man views a Persian kitten or a dove. It was not the look which Mr. Benson was wont to fasten upon her. The holiest father in all Christendom would have been pleased to consecrate Mr. Dipp's gaze.

"You seems a little oneasy about yer 'usband," he continued. "Why now, more than before, when 'e was ashore?"

"Perhaps because it is our last day here, and he ought to remain with the ship."

"There's no call. As to last days, don't reckon on anything as sartin at sea. I don't know how it may be," he continued, "for I don't carry a barometer in my eye; but," he continued, looking straight up, "in twenty-four

hours all up there may be a raging scene of tormented cloud, and we thankful to be lying snug and whole at our anchors here."

As he spoke Mrs. Mostyn observed that Benson, who had been plausibly surveying the island through his telescope, but who in reality had been critically inspecting one corner of it, though he often flung the tubes aside as though in survey of other objects, dropped the glass, and, turning his face her way, met her stare.

"Do you see anything of my husband?" she called to him.

"I saw something like the shape of a man moving where I last saw Captain Mostyn; but he's not been gone long enough to complete his sketches, has he, Mrs. Mostyn?"

She made no answer. Benson did not tell her that he had been looking out, not for a man, but for a tree; and that when, suddenly turning the lenses of his telescope on to that same tree, and observing one branch broken, with an almond whiteness of the wound, he had dropped the glass and met the gaze of the young wife.

## CHAPTER XXII

### THE ABSENTEE

WHEN half-past two was struck upon the ship's bell the captain's boat was still ashore, and the captain himself out of sight. It was then past the hour he had named for dining, and, as a rule, he was a punctual man. Phyllis's ceaseless strain of vision through the binocular glass from the quarter-deck, groping, so to speak, all over the district where her husband might suddenly emerge, had given her a headache—because trouble makes a rule of never dealing with you alone; call it the gout: that's bad enough; why add dropsy? Why add such distortion of limbs as amounts to paralysis? Why can't a poor girl stare at an island in search of her husband without getting a violent headache? It is certain that we are more fearfully than wonderfully made, and the more I consider the fearfulness of our make the less I admire the wonderfulness.

She had noticed, also, some time previous to half-past two, that one or two men had gone away from the boat up the heights to look about them, but certainly on no decisive errantry; they seemed satisfied. They had returned, and all seemed well. But, shortly after the notes of the ship's bell had floated to the boat, the crew took a resolution, and Phyllis's heart beat hard when she saw the men walking swiftly in the direction of the spot round which her captain had disappeared. One man was left in the boat. The others vanished, and were a

long time gone. Mr. Dipp came up to Phyllis, and said—

“He can’t be far off. ’E may have met with some small accident. There never yet was a hexpedition without some ’un breakin’ his ankle or puttin’ ’is arm out. There can be no trap. Only ask yourself. Every day that has passed would have served as well as to-day, and it’s not at all likely they would have waited for the last day, when the captain might not take it into his ’ed to go ashore at all, to seize him.”

“But who would seize him? What do they want with him?” asked Phyllis, in trembling notes.

“Ask ’im,” said Dipp, indicating Benson, who was coming along dressed in shining black cloth and heavy gold chain, as though he were going into the City.

“Mr. Benson,” cried the young wife, rising, with a sudden fling of her figure, on to her feet, “what have you done with my husband?”

The man made no motion of agitation in his face.

“You mean what has become of your husband?”

“I mean what I said,” cried the girl, with fire in her nostrils, and in her cheeks, and in her eyes. “Do you think this ship will leave this harbour until he returns to me? There’s not a member of my husband’s crew that would not help a young Englishwoman against the deadly plot laid against her husband by a scoundrel.”

She slapped this choice word full in his face, sweet and clean through her white teeth, and the fellow merely looked as though he were used to it. He hung up no signal of remonstrance. A faint, sad smile worked out of his eyes over his brow.

“I can assure you,” he said, “you were never under a grosser misconception in your life. Thus it is that honourable men’s characters are ruined. Ideas are formed, every trifling circumstance helps to heighten the idea into

conviction, and thus the most innocent man in the world may be kicked out of society or sent to the gallows."

"Oh no — oh no," said Mr. Dipp, with extreme surliness. "That's your way of reasonin'; 'cause it suits you, of course."

"Mr. Mill," shouted Mr. Benson, in a transport of black cloth, hard hat, and spats to his boots, "as the captain is delaying his return to the ship, would it not be as well for the whole ship's company to go in search of him in parties, particularly on the western side, where he was last seen, though his steps may have carried him to the south?"

"I think it was about time a search was made, sir," answered Mr. Mill, "and that the men ashore came off for their dinner. And perhaps the cabin dinner wouldn't be amiss."

He spoke with all the resolution that an evil expression backed by hunger can give the expression of a mate who loves punctuality in his meals as reliefs in his watch.

"Is dinner ready?" he shouted to Prince.

"Yes, sir."

"Awaiting?"

"All but two dishes, sir."

"Fetch 'em!" shouted the mate, and dived into the cabin.

"Mrs. Mostyn, I do entreat," began Benson, beginning to operate the strange physiological way of his City and suburban gear, trying to smile, reproving himself, inclining his head a little in deep condolence, bristling up into the ramrod spine of cheerful and hearty expectation.

She shrank from him. She knew what he wanted to say.

"I ask you to give me back my husband, Mr. Benson. I want nothing more."

“You’ll take a little food, and then we’ll go in search of him.”

“I can’t leave the deck to sit at table, and I couldn’t eat then. Where is he—where is he? Do you know?” and the glasses, tingling hot in her eyes, moved again and yet again over the area where her Charlie might appear. But no man was now visible, save the fellow that had charge of the boat on the shore.

Mr. Benson slipped into the cabin and told Prince to prepare a tray, and supply it with ham sandwiches, and he himself would provide champagne. As he came out of the cabin bearing the tray, Benson said to Mill—

“Be quick, for the sake of appearances. The bough is torn. The man is gone. Don’t let the hunt be delayed; and I want to miss the gold on my return.”

He carried the tray to Phyllis, who waved it from her and implored him to send search-parties without delay, as her husband might be lying with a broken leg, with a broken rib. She was sure he was to be found in that part of the island—and her white hands swept the surface—and the ship should not leave Staten Island till he came to her.

Shortly after this Mr. Mill tumbled out of the cabin, having drunk and eaten as much as he wanted, and began to shout about him, ordering boats to go ashore and seek the captain, who was lost. There went a fairly numerous company to the *Dealman’s* crew. A number remained aboard, including Matthew Walker, to look after the ship, and the rest went ashore, carrying with them the dinner of the captain’s crew. They formed gangs of five and moved in fives.

As I have said, Staten Island is very hilly, beautiful with cushion-like hills, and you get but very short views unless you climb a great height. When you climb to the place where Captain Mostyn was last seen you perceive

nothing but more hills, tall or short, one a little way to the south-west, mountainous. The land trends along-shore of Port Hoppner, which is ramparted from Port Parry by many huge hills, one of them—Mount Fitton—mounting to two thousand six hundred feet.

The search for a man is difficult anywhere if land be broken, if the ravine be deep, if the overhanging edge conceals the dangerous black ledge, sparkling with the ceaseless cataractal drench of the mountain torrent, if the rivers below be full and fleeting, and carry their burdens swiftly seawards. This was the sort of country the people who went in search of Captain Mostyn had to explore.

Phyllis put herself with Prince and some seamen. No man was more enthusiastic and energetic than Benson. Before leaving the boat he pulled off his coat and flung it into her with a sort of "now for business" air, and then they held a council, which resulted in gangs of five going south, south-west, and west. 'Twas idle to look eastwards. The man had not gone that way. The boat's crew had sworn that when they last saw him he was sitting, at about one o'clock, on that green hump there, sketching yonder mountain, and they pointed to the large blue pile that was snow-crowned.

Dipp's conviction was that Mostyn had been kidnapped. By whom? By Captain Morell, of the *Penguin* of Stornington, the American sealer which Benson had twice visited. Dipp was no fool, and he very well knew that a man like Morell was not going to execute another's criminal mandate unless he was richly paid. This, perhaps, might explain the placing of the case of gold in Mr. Benson's cabin. But as nothing could be brought home, nothing could be said, and threats, oaths, and high words were idle. Dipp thought to himself, "They'll have run him away down to a boat and sneaked him swift round the

creek where the schooner lies waiting. The job is to get any command of view of the sea." And Dipp was right. For the *Dealman* lay high up the port; the westerly point might have been two miles off. But there was an inner creek accessible from the point which Mostyn commanded, but not by a boat in Port Parry; and it was from this creek—Port Hoppner they call it on the chart—Dipp was convinced that Mostyn had been spirited, first having been ambuscaded, then rushed down the hill to the water of the creek, then tumbled into the boat, which was instantly swept out of sight.

It was the sea that Dipp desired to command, and shouting his views to a few of the men, he began to toil up the hill, but was blown before he was within a quarter of a mile of where Captain Mostyn had been last seen. He was a good diver, but an ill climber; like Falstaff, he had an alacrity at sinking, but discovered no buoyancy in his upward motions. His people drew far ahead of him, and then he arrived at Mostyn's cushion, which gave him a sight of the sea, though it yielded a pretty view of a green decline, almost an avenue of the arctic beech, and this went sinking and rolling down its precipitous course to a point which, if Dipp could have reached it, would have enabled him to see just as much of the ocean as would have been of no use to him.

The hunt began at half-past three. No man was more brimful of energy than Benson. He could only pray that Captain Mostyn had lain down and fallen asleep, and would delight them by his apparition on the beach after they had returned on board. This he said to Mrs. Mostyn's party, whom he joined, and which she immediately quitted, and sat down to rest herself beside Mr. Dipp, pale, exhausted, weeping, a broken-hearted, half-frenzied young woman.

"You must really cheer up, mum," said Mr. Dipp.



“Until you know it’s come to the worst, there’s no call to fear the worst.”

“I know my husband,” she replied, in tones broken by short breaths and emotion. “He is not the man to leave me here alone—to leave me alone with Benson. Something has happened to him, or he would be with us, and what that is and what that may be,” she cried, with a shuddering look around, “I dare not trust myself to think.”

“He can’t ’ave come to grief through any one on the island,” said Mr. Dipp. “His own party was down on the foreshore. And who occupied the island but him and them when ’e went a-messing about with his drorings?”

Here a man came ploughing up from one of the gang, and said, pointing to a huge beech which overhung the cliff—

“You see that tree, sir?”

“With the bough ’alf off?”

“Yes, sir. I’ve been examining of it, and find it was first sawed through after a rope’s end had been made fast to the end of the bough, the tail of which you can catch hold of in the water below.”

Phyllis stared, so did Dipp.

“Well, Jones, what d’ye make of it?”

“What d’ I make of it?” asked Jones. “I allow it’s a signal concerted between the ship and the shore. When the man was got, the rope was to be dragged and the bough broken as fur as it was sawed through. It ’ud be always a signal whether the watching eye saw it or not. It ’ud be like a railway telegraph.”

“Then, if it ain’t a sign of collision, what is?” inquired Mr. Dipp, with a portentous frown on his expression.

One by one the others joined them. The gangs were coming in. It was natural, perhaps, that on dry land they should make their head-quarters the place occupied by the captain’s wife.

“Do they want to pretend,” cried the poor girl, “that my husband has killed himself in some fashion by throwing himself off that rope?”

“Ere’s ’is pencil,” said Jones, picking up a drawing pencil that lay close beside Phyllis, and giving it to her.

It was like, after a man has gone under water, seeing his hat afloat. The sight of the pencil made them gape, and go about a little, and glare and stare, and look down and look up, and bawl—

“Hello! hello, I say! What ho, Captain Mostyn, ahoy! Are ye within hail of us? Sing out if you can’t speak.”

This Irish enjoinder produced no effect.

“If I was you, missus,” said Dipp, quietly to Phyllis, by whose side he was sitting, “I’d say nothin’ to Benson,” who was then coming along with Mill and a few other men. “There’s no good in keeping on calling of names. What we’ve got fust to do is to prove, and then we’ve got ’im and t’ other, who’s just as bad,” meaning the mate, “*Snick!* like this.” He made a motion as though turning a railway key.

“I’m under your protection,” said the girl, “whilst my husband continues away.”

“Yes, ma’am,” he answered proudly.

The fellow named Whitmore, who had been received on board as a ship-wrecked man from a sealer, a sandy, speckled yokel of a dull and sulky apprehension, followed by a stupid smile, instantly corrigible by a start or, “What the devil are you laughing at?” this man, who had made a most forlorn figure, as we remember, on the sand, and was taken off by Captain Mostyn on the merit of his being the only survivor, came sprawling up, and was instantly accosted by Dipp.

“Will ye swear you were the only man left after your wreck?”

"The only man," answered the other, looking a bit frightened, as though he was to be charged with the captain's going a-missing.

"How d'ye know?"

"Because they were all gone when I looked round."

"Looked round where?"

"Ashore, arter I'd been washed up on the 'encoop."

"You said it was a skylight," said Mr. Mill, who, with Mr. Benson, now formed one of the group.

"Call it a skylight," said the other. "If the meaning of these questions is, am I the only man out of that there schooner now alive on this 'ere island, I says yes, by Gord!" He clenched his fist and swept round, and menaced Mill with it in a manner so threatening you'd have thought he was about to fall on him. He looked from Mill to Benson, from Benson to Mill, with no fool's face now; a sort of new soul seemed to have been kindled in him. Mill gazed at him with a scowl, Benson said—

"Did you make one of the crew of the *Penguin*?"

"Has she gone down?" shrieked the man, in an ecstasy of passion. "You were aboard 'er last."

"It is evident that this fellow can give us no help," said Mr. Benson, manifestly discomposed by the fellow's irresponsible utterance and wild looks in the crowd of men, which had now grown. "Mr. Mill, we are under your directions, sir. In the absence of Captain Mostyn, what are your instructions?"

The surly rogue after a pause said—

"It's not so long since the captain was seen sitting here. Had it been this morning it would be different. It was about an hour ago."

"Three hours!" shrieked Phyllis.

"Quite close enough in time, ma'am," said he, appealing to her, "to enable us to see anything of him if he made away with himself, or tumbled into a hollow. But I'm

certainly for continuing the search until the evening shadows prevail."

"Oh, certainly, certainly," exclaimed Benson, with great emphasis. "I'm ready to proceed at once. Which way shall we go?"

"Where was he sitting, d'ye say?" asked Mr. Mill of some of the men.

"Jess where 'is missus is," was the answer.

She was seated on a mound behind trees, bushes, which were, with other thick Fuegian growths, impenetrable enough to serve as an entrenchment for a Boer, let alone a sealsman.

As we have heard, Dipp's conviction was that the captain had been made away with in the old pirate fashion, and the discovery of his pencil on the ground gave colour to another secret conclusion in Dipp's mind: that he had been grasped behind, let fall the pencil, perhaps the book, which had been picked up as an object which would not escape the eye as so small a thing as a pencil, and rushed as hard as he could be run down the knotty wind of beechen avenue, where, in the boat, gagged and bound, he'd be as safe from observation, sneaking close inshore, as if he were at the bottom of the sea.

This was Dipp's conclusion: the opinion of a sailor, of a man who had lived with Benson and Mill, and knew them both. He said nevertheless—

"Yes, I think you're right. Go on 'unting and searching. 'E may be in a 'ole somewhere. Are you tired, missus?"

"I could hunt for him all night," she answered.

Mr. Benson received a look from Mr. Dipp, and answered it by a glance at Mr. Dipp's shoes.

"Then suppose you and me and some of those men," said Dipp, addressing Mrs. Mostyn, "goes down this avenue. It may bring us to a sight of something."

The girl sprang up and gave her hand to the diver.

"That there bough," said one of the men, pointing to the beech, "proves it's been a put-up job. It can't be meant for anything else but a signal. Right in sight of the ship too. Jest one of them signals that a man might see without taking particular notice of."

"Who's the guilty party aboard of us, sir?" asked one of Dipp's men.

"It'll come out," answered Dipp, "afore that ship leaves Staten Island, if I send away a boat's crew for a man-of-war."

Mill, who was walking hard by, overhearing this, exclaimed—

"You'll send no boat without my consent, Mr. Dipp. I'm master till the captain takes charge again."

"Kink your tongue a hard bight in your head," said the diver, with an ugly scowl. "The gold's my finding, and there's not a man aboard when he comes to learn the story of you two men, you and that there Benson, I mean, but'll help me to a man to put it back just where I found it. So," said he, with a savage nod, "keep you quiet, for if you're the ship's mate, I'm damned if you're my master!"

These were tremendous tones in Dipp, who usually spoke greasily or silkily, and with a homely and encouraging face. The young wife's hand was in his, and the spirit of the devil was in him at that moment. Mill, after looking at him an instant or two, marched on in silence whilst Benson seemed intent on gazing on a figure of a man stretched or running anywhere upon the area of land within the observation of his curiously shaded eye.

The men of this north-west seeking gang, who were perhaps twelve in all, stared at one another when they heard Dipp speak. What was the diver charging the mate and Mr. Benson with? Some enormity that could

not be mistaken by even the most ignorant of their intelligences was imputed to Mill and the other. Had *they* made away with the captain? Were *they* going to make away with the gold? They looked at the young wife, and turned their heads to gaze again at the signal gash in the bough, and they began to stare about them eagerly and feverishly, and then to feel like men who wanted to know the meaning of the matter that was in motion.

And yet, though Benson supplied most of the tragedy, he also supplied most of the comedy of that scene. He toiled over rock and through bush, and all obstacles that impeded him, in a white shirt, black cloth trousers, black cloth waistcoat, a billy-cock hat at the back of his head, and gold links at his cuffs which rattled as boys make castanets of slates. He was the ideal of the heated figure of the Briton, who, coat over arm, surveys the wonders of the ramparts of Boulogne, or is driven drunk to his midnight boat by the police at Calais. No man ever toiled more in looking than he; he literally stared with all his might; sometimes he'd start and cry, "Hillo! I really thought—but no——" and, with a face of concern, stare on.

The party arrived at a point of the descent which commanded a gleaming space of the waters of Port Hoppner on the left. Away to the right they could see the green land trending sharp north-west to its limit, where the organ note of the ocean might be heard. Many birds flew over the waters of this little bay; the heights between hid so much of the ocean that you could scarce see more than the surface that spread along the left-hand shore, and there was no boat and no schooner there.

"Look into the gullies, look into the fissures, look into the splits and hollows, men," shouted Mr. Benson. "It's

into those holes men fall and perish. I lost a valued friend on Snowden in this way."

Mr. Dipp took a firm and long look at the sea. He still held Mrs. Mostyn by the hand, in fact, she would not part with him.

"My opinion is," said he, "that any further 'unting this way is no use. That he's passed this place to somewheer else may be supposed by the findin' of his pencil. But, as I'm a livin' man, I take it upon myself to say that if he's passed down here at all he's not gone alone."

"Right!" shouted several men, foremost amongst them being Dipp's men and the Whitmore man.

"That gash in the bough shows collision," continued Dipp; "it was meant for a mark, for some one to witness aboard, and the person who understood it is the person who's in collision, and I'm not going to say, men, that he lives forward of the galley."

"There's no gory good in your looking at me whilst you're talking," said the mate, in his ugliest manner. "What do you mean by 'collision'?"

"He means collusion," exclaimed Benson, with a patronizing laugh.

"You'll change that note afore I'm done with yer," said Dipp, with a side-face shake of the head at Benson. "Come aboard, missus. We don't leave Port Parry till your husband turns up."

He led her up the avenue. The mate dropped a word or two heard only by Benson; the men talked amongst themselves as they followed, clambering and sometimes cursing when they ground the bark off their shins. But it was not until a quarter-past seven that the whole ship's company were on board the *Dealman*. The cone of Mount Buckland sparkled like a huge raspberry, to compare small things with great. But the eye

could follow the shadow as it ascended darkening the tenderness of the herbage into deepness and paling the star-cressetted front of the huge pile, and the shadow of the evening moved upon the water of Port Parry.

Phyllis had borne up nobly well whilst she was ashore; but when she came on board and saw the old scenes, the house-top, the alley-way, the places in which she and her husband used to lounge in conversation, the reality of his loss came to her like a blow from a poniard to her heart, and breaking from Mr. Dipp, she rushed into her cabin and locked herself up. But fortunately for me I have a person of strong resolution to deal with in Phyllis Mostyn. She was a person of intrepidity of spirit, and capable of providing for difficult ends through reliance on her own qualities. Perhaps no woman was ever confronted with a more horrible trouble. She believed that her husband had been murdered, and that she was alone, at the wrong end of the world, in the unscrupulous charge of Benson, who as a Power would deal with Dipp and Matthew Walker and any other friends of hers on board, as easily as he had dealt with Captain Mostyn. What, then, was she to do? A widow—fatherless—absolutely friendless, save for one or two known to her husband, who, if she fell a pensioner, would speedily grow sick of her. Somebody knocked on her cabin door.

“Who’s that?”

“Won’t you take anything to eat, lady?” inquired the voice of Prince.

“Presently, thank you.”

“You’ve had nothing since breakfast, ma’am.”

“I cannot eat now, Prince.”

“Cheer up, mum!” he cried. “I know for certain it will come right.”

On hearing this she went to the door and opened it; but the lock had doubled itself and gave her difficulty,



and when the door was opened the man had gone. She again closed the door and stood by the side of her bunk, with her eyes fastened upon that part of the island picture which was spanned by the port-hole.

About this time Mr. Benson came out of his cabin. Supper would be ready at eight. But it was not apparently to sup that Benson stepped forth. His manner was a little wild and extraordinary; he breathed short. He left his cabin door open when he quitted the berth, and glanced behind him as he passed over the coaming; then, seeing Prince coming along, said—

“Where’s Mr. Dipp?”

“In the starboard alley-way, sir.”

Mr. Benson went right over to him.

The diver stood alone, leaning with his back against the rail, and his arms folded upon his breast, and looking up at the rigging. Mill was close by; Matthew Walker talked to some men in the waist. Benson said, like firing a volley into a man’s face—

“I’ve been robbed!”

The diver turned his eyes upon him without speech or change of posture.

“The thousand pounds in my cabin has been stolen from me!” shouted Benson.

“Well, I suppose you know where they are,” answered Mr. Dipp, with a greasy irritating laugh.

Mr. Benson’s voice brought all within hearing running to him, and a crowd was immediately assembled. Walker said hotly—

“What’s this about robbing the ship?”

“The cupboard you made in my cabin has been broken open,” answered Benson, “and the case of a thousand sovereigns abstracted.”

“D’ye mean stole?”

“Stolen!” shouted Benson.

“When did you last see your money?” inquired Walker.

“I don’t remember.”

“Oh, but you’ve got to remember,” shouted the man, fiercely. “If you mean to say that it’s been stolen whilst I’ve kept charge here with a few men when the rest were ashore, you’re making a charge.”

“None of that!” yelled the mate.

“None of that!” shouted Dipp, rounding on the fellow. “You’re mate of this ship, aren’t you? Why isn’t it you who’s asking Mr. Benson questions?”

“If you give me any of your d—d——!” began the mate; and his right hand slipped to his left-hand pocket.

But Dipp was a man used to emergencies. Before Mill could handle his pistol, the diver had wipped out his revolver and levelled it dead at the man’s face. He roared in no uncertain note, “Hands up!” and up went the rogue’s arms, and Dipp said to one of his men—

“Jackson, take away his pistol and give it to me.”

“When was this ’ere burgling job found out?” asked a voice.

“Ten minutes ago,” answered Mr. Benson.

“How did you discover it?” inquired Matthew Walker.

“By the staples and lock lying upon the deck, leaving the door a little open.”

“Did you go into that cabin afore you went ashore?” asked Walker.

“No.”

“Then you didn’t take notice of them staples and lock on the deck as you described,” continued the man, “afore you saw ’em ten minutes ago?”

“No.”

“Mr. Dipp,” said Mr. Walker, in terms of rough contempt, “there’s no convicting any of us men who was

left behind to look after the ship as having stolen this money."

"The money is gone, anyway," said Mr. Benson.

"Let's look at the berth," exclaimed the mate; and they all bulged in a shouldering body into the deck-house.

The twilight was clear. You saw the two staples and the padlock, also the open door, which Matthew Walker, with a kick, swung backwards and disclosed vacant.

"It's a put-up job," growled a voice. "No one man stole it."

"The charge of thieves is a b——y lie, and couldn't be done unless several was in it."

"And no one man's in it," shouted a voice, dangerous in its accent of sensibility of temper, easily rendered maniacal.

Phyllis, hearing the noise, opened her cabin door.

"What is the matter?" she asked.

"Mr. Benson's thousand pound has been stole," answered Mr. Dipp. "Light the lamp, Prince."

The shouldering group were scarcely more than visionary in that narrow space of cabin, and it was time to light up.

"Do they want to pretend that my husband stole the money?" cried Mrs. Mostyn, standing in the doorway of her berth; and her sweetness, albeit her grief had a little withered her, leapt with the flash of her eyes upon the sight of those who saw her.

"Certainly not!" shouted Benson, loud in indignant protest. "How could a man carry a chest of sovereigns ashore in daylight in the full eye of the ship's company?"

"Then 'oo took it, damn yer, 'oo took it?" shouted a rough seaman. "If it was here when you left, and gorn when you returned, then it went a-missin' whilst you was absent with the others, 'unting for the capt'n."

The deep breathing or snores of the men filled the silence. All was as calm as the slumber of a star's light in a lake, and the ship reposed motionless between her anchors.

"Why don't yer answer, Mr. Benson?" suddenly roared Matthew Walker.

"My answer is," responded the man, cold, business-like, hard as though he was addressing a public meeting, "that a thousand pounds of the money we have been sent out to salve has been stolen from this cabin this day, from under lock and key, and it will remain for the chief officer and myself to consider what steps are to be taken to-morrow to rigidly inquire into the robbery."

Thus speaking, Benson withdrew to his cabin and locked the door, as though, having summed up the account for the day, he had ruled off.

The hint of the key was not lost on one of the men.

"Was it in the door when we went a-hunting for the captain?" was asked.

"See here, my lads," said Mr. Dipp, observing Mr. Mill to stalk out on deck; "Mr. Benson is not here to answer you, and we shall have plenty of time to go into matters to-morrow."

"There's foul play aboard somewhere, lady," said a man, stopping at the table and looking into Phyllis's wan but beautiful face. "Take my word for it," he said, with an emphatic shake of the head, "it's not forrard."

"Oh, I know, I know but too well," she answered, motioning towards Benson's door.

"Mr. Walker," said Dipp, "take it upon yourself to go and ask Mr. Mill to give all hands a tot of grog. And if he refuses to sarve it out at the ship's expense, they shall have it at mine. Steward, put some grub on this table. Don't spare your 'and; I'm 'ungry."

This was a hint to the remaining sailors, who

proceeded to clear out; but there was much talking as they went. They were dissatisfied; there had been a heavy theft, their captain was mysteriously missing, the mystery of a tragedy seemed to hang about the ship, and in some of the voices were tones ominous to the experienced of the mutiny at sea. A crowd of men forward, and no commander, and rebellion and hatred aft, and many thousands of sovereigns in gold in the lazarette! This was the human fable of the coming night entrenched by those silent hills, some lifting in the might of mountains to the stars, and if the ship lay at rest, many hearts within her beat hard.

The steward put some food on the table, and Phyllis, the mate, Dipp, Mr. Walker, and Benson sat down to partake of it, a singular picnic, seeing the courteous language in which some of them had addressed to the others in the course of the day.

Mr. Benson was fearfully black, austere, and judicial. Phyllis sat as far away from him as she could, next Dipp on the diver's right. The mate hung his head over his plate.

"You have no intention of leaving this island till my husband is recovered?" said Phyllis suddenly, to Benson.

"I'm in the hands of the mate," answered Mr. Benson.

"Oh no, you're not," said Mr. Dipp, with a decisive shake of the head. "You're in better hands than the mate's, you lay."

The mate looked sideways at him.

"Be wary, Mr. Mill," said the diver, leaning towards him. "I don't like your face, and I don't like the black heart that is stamped in it, and as I've no doubt that you're as villainous as you look, I'd as lief put a ball through your head as stab this beef;" and seizing a knife he buried it in a block of cold meat.

"There's no need for that strong language here,

Mr. Dipp," said Mr. Benson. "You know, by the rules of the sea, that, when the master's gone, the mate commands."

"There's nothin' about the rules of the sea you're going to teach me," said Mr. Dipp, with an emphatic nod of his head at the chartered accountant. "This ship don't leave this 'ere port until Captain Mostyn is forthcoming."

Phyllis broke into hysterical laughter.

"What's going to be the order for to-morrow?" said Mr. Walker to the mate, after a pause.

"We must talk it over," said Mill, suddenly. "I recommend sending you and Mr. Walker and twenty men with three days' provisions right across the island to search the south shore, and see if you can pick up news of him from any sealers lying there. We'll wait till we get news of him," said he, turning to bestow a look of homely comfort on Phyllis.

"Not a nook shall remain unsearched," she exclaimed. "But would they seize him to leave him?"

"Ah, ah," said Mr. Benson, slowly wagging his head.

A fierce speech was on Dipp's lips, but he stayed it. Conversation conducted in this spirit could lead to no other result than bloodshed. They all seemed to feel this, and made haste with their meal, and the first to depart on deck were Benson and Mill, and then Matthew Walker, leaving Dipp in earnest conversation with Phyllis over the chart of Staten Island, which he had fetched from the captain's cabin.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### A WITNESS

ALL night long Phyllis was up and down, to and fro, in and out her cabin. No young captain feverishly anxious about the weather, and inwardly convinced that the mate of the watch was drunk, could have been more on the alert than this poor young wife. Sometimes during the black hours she would meet Dipp, who strove to cheer her up, and Matthew Walker, who was never wanting in a kindly word; but she glided swiftly past Mill or Benson, nor vouchsafed a reply to the latter if he addressed her.

Few women ever passed through a more cruelly dark, heart-bruising trial. She saw the shimmer of the white sand in the starlight, and strained her eyes at it; the luxuriant growths of Staten Island stood short, hard, thick, as sentinels. The cold stars, made more frigid by the snow, looked down at her over the mountain-tops. She would bend her ear for the sound of a voice, but unless it was the distant hoot of the mountain owl, rendered more unreal in resemblance to the human note by the distance, nothing came to her ears on the dark and drooping pinions of the mountain's gust, than the small breathings of wind blowing in flaws which put a life into the dog vane only and scarcely hummed in the tautest stay.

The Medusæ brightly illuminated the water during portions of this night. They flowed in folds of deep

emerald green, and beautiful rose colour, and gold and crimson, and blue and purple, and all these gorgeous spaces or stages of tints came and went in rapid alternation, making a sort of heaving fiery surface to the eye, though 'twas calm a-top as a dish of tea. She had examined with her husband the wonderful little bell-shaped or mitred-cone-like organism which in motion covered the water with glory, and saw that, though it journeyed in incalculable millions and might cover miles of brine, the longest was scarcely eight inches whilst the smallest was hardly one, and her husband had also pointed out that this night gem of the Southern Cross, this delicate jewel of the Magellan clouds, was propelled by oars or little wheels, and that when it stayed, though but for an instant, its light died as a star goes out of the sea when the cloud crosses its wake.

But the poor girl had no eye for these sea splendours this night. Dawn broke at about five, and shortly afterwards Phyllis came on deck, and found Matthew Walker there, smoking a pipe. The steward came from forward, and, respectfully saluting, asked if he should boil some coffee for her.

"I should be glad of some, thank you, Prince. Is there anything to be seen, Mr. Walker?"

"You may as well get me a cup too," said Mr. Walker. "No, mum, there's nothing observable our way on the island."

It stole out grey, melancholy, the blacker verdure like black splashes of paint, the lighter ashen like floating pumice in certain lights; then the topmost heights took the fire of the sun, and the morn clothed in glory walked down the hills, and bathed the valleys in light, and silvered the coils of the running streams, and shook red radiance into the berry and flower, and revealed the elegancies of the tenderer plants, until the whole island, or as much of



it as could be commanded from the ship was in full view, the full view of a searching sunshine, which flashed up the white sand into the dazzle of ivory, and set the very colour of heaven in the face of the water of the port.

But the sight that was sought for was not to be seen, and Phyllis silently wept as she gazed over the desolation of the picture.

Before breakfast, that is eight o'clock, Mr. Benson and the mate were to be seen walking up and down the starboard alley-way engaged in earnest conversation. The men were getting their breakfast, but most of them were on deck eating their food. Mr. Dipp, Phyllis, Walker, and the able seaman named Jones, who had called attention to the gash in the bough, were talking together in the gangway. On a sudden Mr. Benson broke away from his companion, and approaching the lot in the gangway, said—

“As the representative of the insurers, I have been talking the situation over with Mr. Mill, who acts as captain during the master's absence, and I am strongly of opinion that as we have so large a sum on board, the directors would wish their ship should leave this place at once and proceed to England.”

“Without my husband?” shrieked Phyllis.

“Before you get the men to wind an inch of that there cable up,” said Matthew Walker, “they'll want to know what's become of the thousand pounds that was in your cabin yesterday.”

“Oh, I am willing to accept that as a loss,” cried Benson, with an agitated motion of his hand as though dashing that most unseasonable idea from his own and the mind of Walker. “We don't want to increase that loss by remaining here.”

“You're not going to add to your loss by remaining here,” said Mr. Walker. “It was promised last night by

Mr. Mill, that twenty men should search the south shore for the captain."

"But why should he be there?" remonstrated Mr. Benson.

"The island must be searched!" screamed Phyllis, looking at him as though in another second she would plunge her finger-nails in his eyes; and then it was that even Benson saw that beauty in the spasm of wrath will sometimes darken and scowl upon you in an aspect which, if it be a single woman and you are courting it, might give you occasion to reflect how it would stand between you and her in the course of a year or two.

"I am willing to do anything I can to promote the search for Captain Mostyn, whose loss I deplore," exclaimed Mr. Benson, looking vaguely at the island.

"If the search-party comes off without him," said Mr. Dipp, "and they're to be allowed two days, then we mean to keep all fast with this ship, and send the long-boat to the naval station for assistance, which is a short sail, and this is the summer weather. And we shall be told exactly what to do according to the law."

"You send no long-boat away from this ship without my sanction," said the mate, who had come to a halt close by.

"No, I agree; it will not be for me to hact—it'll be for the 'ole ship's company," shouted Mr. Dipp, with a comprehensive look round.

"When do you mean to send the men ashore, sir?" said Mr. Walker.

"They can start as soon as they're ready," was Mill's answer, as gruff as the note of a chain in a hawse pipe.

The long-boat with three extra men to bring her back sufficed; and at about half-past nine o'clock a crew of twenty of the best men of the *Dealman*, most of them armed, were ready to enter the boat in charge of Mr.

Matthew Walker, who carried with him the chart of the island, a pocket-compass, a powerful ship's glass, and provisions for two or three days. Dipp's instructions were that Walker should board any sealer he found lying in a south creek, and forcibly overhaul her if resisted, first stating his reasons.

The creeks, harbours, and inlets south of Staten Island are numerous. York Bay in the south almost faces Port Parry in the north. Walker proposed to sail the long-boat right up Port Parry, which in length extends nearly two-thirds of the breadth of the island, then land, and send the boat back. After trying York Bay he would work his way if possible round Cape Webster, to as high as Port Vancouver, and if nothing came of that search he'd return and hunt in the Western Bays. The distance in mileage was not great. The difficulties and even perils to be encountered lay in the ravines and hills. Happily there was plenty of fresh water.

At about a quarter to ten the long-boat stood away from the ship under her lug, helped by three oars. She was a big boat, and yet those twenty-three men filled her. Saving the ship, she made the only picture of human life to be found in the port, as her bright canvas trembled its marble into the azure, and the toss of the oars threw ropes of pearls to the sun. They watched her until she had sailed a long distance up the port, and then she disappeared behind a bend, at which hour it was a little before noon when she would not be far off her landing destination.

Benson and Mill had been walking the deck alone. Neither man smoked; neither man seemed very much at his ease. Perhaps Benson was thinking of Burns's lines, in which he speaks of the best invented schemes of men and mice going oft a-gley. It is probable that some conditions, to use his favourite expression, had been interpolated by

Mr. Dipp into a programme which had never been contemplated, which could never have been conceived by them, and which were instantly obnoxious to it. For example, the idea that there was a station for British men-of-war near Cape Horn was not in his mind when he started on the foundations of his highly unscientific structure. He had reckoned that the crew would accept the fate of their captain with the submission to destiny crews usually exhibit in such cases, and he was versed enough in the life to know that when a captain dies at sea he is replaced by his mate, with the implied consent of all hands.

Unfortunately, in most sea affairs in the merchant service on the ocean, when the business of the ship has to be carried on, there is no Mr. Dipp to turn the current of man's foul intention a little aside, and trouble him to the very depth of his stained soul, by observing that the stream does not pursue the course he intends.

"What'll you do," said Mr. Mill, suddenly, to the man who was walking by his side, "if they find the captain aboard the schooner and come across the island with the news?"

"The same as you'll do, I suppose," answered Benson.

"What'll that be?" exclaimed Mr. Mill, with a queer look, as he cornered his companion in his eyes.

"I'll follow your example," answered Benson, with a husky laugh.

"He's logged me officially," said Mill; "and I know that, kidnapped or not, I'm a broke man in his hands." He looked forward, and then aft, and, muttering aloud, "What blasted genius introduced chain instead of hemp for cable?" he went into the cabin, where, a moment later, he might have been observed helping himself to a liberal drink of brandy and water.

Whilst Phyllis and Mr. Dipp conversed abaft the

gangway, gazing at the island, the young wife full of moving questions, of inquiries dark with despair, of looks that kindled into hope a moment under the influence of the diver's cheerful views—for he first of all begged her to believe that her husband was not dead, which, being so, they would come together eventually—some conversation was going on near the galley, and the principal speaker was Prince.

When Mr. Mill left Mr. Benson and went into the cabin for a drink, Prince said to Whitmore, who, with another, formed the group—

“Now for't! Go, like a man, and tell him what you know.”

Whitmore smiled his farmyard smile. It is difficult otherwise to convey the expression of haystack, waggon, and a crowing cock, which that man's face suggested when he smiled, sandy as he was, like hay seed, with just the stare the yokel gives you when he lifts his head from the turnip he is pulling to answer your question.

“Cut on,” said the cook.

“But what am I to say?” answered Whitmore.

“Say!” shouted Prince. “What you've said to me!” Then, losing his patience, he seized the fellow by the arm, and dragged him right up to Dipp and Phyllis.

“Beg pardon, sir,” he said, “but this man, whose name is Palmer, and belongs to my native place, can give you the whole yarn of the kidnapping of the captain.”

“*You!*” cried Dipp; and Mr. Benson, overhearing Prince, came to a stand to listen.

Palmer smiled.

“By God!” shouted Mr. Dipp, in a voice that made the fellow solemn as a body-bearer, “you'll find this no grinning matter. What's the information you're able to give?”

The man, alarmed by Dipp's menacing looks, answered—

“I was one of the crew of the *Penguin*, and ran and hid myself till she sailed, 'cause I didn't want to be mixed up with a job that might mean a life sentence.”

Mr. Benson approached by a single step.

“So that's the truth, then,” said Dipp, “and your other yarn's a lie? Now let the whole of it run out, or I'll have ye in irons as a confederate.”

“That's just what I ain't,” said the man, whimpering in his nose. “I left my clothes and wages to escape it. That gent”—here he pointed to Benson—“came off and agreed with the skipper to sail away with your capt'n for a thousand pound. The money was to be lowered in a case through the porthole into the schooner's boat, which would come round past that point there out of a creek lying aback of this. The signal that the man was took was to be a slashed bough—you can see it,” he cried, levelling his forefinger. “All the men were willing but me, and I hid till the schooner sailed, then came aboard with a yarn about being shipwrecked.”

“D'ye hear him?” cried Dipp to Benson, who stood listening, black as the brow of a thunder-storm, and as silent.

“Have they taken him away from the island?” cried Phyllis to Palmer; and, whilst he answered, “Dunno, ma'am,” Benson put his head into the skylight and shouted—

“Mr. Mill!”

The mate, who was drinking in the cabin, at once came out.

“That fellow,” said Mr. Benson, with remarkable self-possession, motioning to Palmer, “charges me with having gone on board the *Penguin* and connived with her captain to steal Captain Mostyn for the one thousand pounds, hard cash, of which we were, in fact, robbed yesterday.”

"Thought you was a sole survivor?" said the mate, stepping ominously close to the man, who backed a pace.

"I was a sailor aboard the *Penguin*," answered Palmer, getting behind Prince, "and don't mind telling you to your face that you was in the scheme, and that you was to have some share of the money for navigating the ship so as to lose her."

Mill fell upon him with his whole weight, and bore him with a crash to the deck, shouting for the irons. But this example of ancient sea-discipline was short. In a leap Dipp and Prince grasped the mate, and flung him to the other side of the deck with a will which left him half-stunned; and then Prince, shouting, "Forward with you! forward with you!" drove Palmer into the foc'sle and bade him skulk there.

"This is mutiny, rank, gross, bloody mutiny!" exclaimed Mr. Benson, folding his arms; whilst the mate slowly got up and looked about him, as though for an iron belaying-pin, apparently unchecked by the attitude of Mr. Dipp's hand, which was in the pocket in which he kept his revolver.

"We'll see what name the law'll tarm it when it comes to the law," said Mr. Dipp, who was blood-red with temper. Then he suddenly shouted: "Lay aft, all hands!"

The few who were left flocked to the main deck. They were about seven or eight men, including the divers'.

"Did you 'ear what was said?" asked Dipp, addressing the fellows collectively.

"No," answered the men, who thirsted for full information.

"Steward, bring that there pal of yourn out of the foc'sle," shouted Dipp; and in a moment Palmer stood in the thick of the group, grinning and gaping in alternations,

“I suppose, my lads, you know,” continued Mr. Dipp, “that that there young chap who miscalls hisself a cast-away man, but has really run to escape the penalties of the law, has informed against that there Mr. Benson and your chief mate, Mr. Mill: how Mr. Benson twice visited the schooner to arrange for the seizure of the captain when ashore; how he was to be paid a thousand pounds cash for the job, which was got by its being lowered through Mr. Benson’s cabin port-hole into the schooner’s boat, that sneaked through the night unbeknown and came alongside; and ’ow the object of that man who calls hisself a gentleman” (few stage actors could have put on the look with which Dipp surveyed Benson as he spoke these words) “was to get possession of this lady”—here he motioned to Phyllis, who coloured vividly, and then turned white, as in a swoon—“though ’ow ’e was going to manage with ’er when ’e ’ad got ’old of ’er, law being law everywhere, and society being society, you must take a muck-rake and comb over the dunghill of his mind to find out.”

“I’ll bring you to book yet for those words, you insolent scoundrel!” exclaimed Benson. “I am an innocent man. This is a plot to ruin me. Who is his witness? A grinning idiot, whose unsupported statement would not be received one instant in a court of law. Suffer me to have a voice,” he shouted, with expanding indignation, which exemplified itself rather in breadth of chest than in volume of temper, for this he kept under control. “Attend, you man, Palmer; none of your grins with me, sir. Did you hear me offer the captain one thousand pounds to abduct the captain from this ship?”

“No,” came the answer, after a little pause.

“What are your grounds, then, for making that statement?”



"Now then, speak up," said Mr. Dipp, "or I shall be thinking you an accomplice."

"You have no right to frighten him in that strain, sir," cried Mr. Benson. "No court of law would hear of such a thing. What are the grounds on which you bring these charges against me, sir?" and here he looked with all the terror and dignity which plenty of curly whiskers, fine clothes, gold chain and the like, could help as an impression to subdue the mind of a farmyard smiler.

"The capt'n called us aft, and told us what had passed," at last answered Palmer.

"What did he say?"

"He gave us the yarn I just now told Mr. Dipp there."

"And you think that a shrewd American captain like Morell," exclaimed Benson, drawing himself erect, and speaking with real breadth of coarse contempt and sarcasm, "would place his freedom, perhaps his life, in the hands of a crew, not one of whom he might have reason to trust?"

"What's become of the money?" said a voice in the little crowd. "That money us sailors, as was left aboard yesterday, was supposed to 'ave stole."

"It's on board the schooner," answered Palmer.

"A lie!" shouted the mate, who had so far stood listening, with his head lowered and his hands hanging up and down, and his face working as if he had swallowed a bottle of poison. "It's in this ship, and we'll have it yet;" and he tossed his arm, with an immense clenched fist, in a mighty flourish of triumph.

"What made you keep this secret till now?" inquired Benson of Palmer, when the grumble, stirred amongst the men by the mate's words, had ceased.

"'Cause I was afraid the mate and you would set me ashore and leave me there," was the fellow's answer.

“And that’s why ye ’elped in the ’unt yesterday, I suppose?” said Dipp.

“I knew there was no good ’unting,” answered Palmer.

“I’m mate of this ship,” suddenly shouted Mill, losing his self-possession, with his face full of blood, “and am master till the right man takes my place. That impudent liar, who came aboard with a yarn of a shipwreck, has charged me with concerting with others to navigate this ship so as to cast her away. Fetch the irons, one of you.”

He put the roar of a bull into the words. No man stirred.

“Nothing can or shall be done,” said Mr. Dipp, “until the return of the rest of the ship’s company, with such noose as they may bring along. Then a council of the whole ship’s crew shall be called, and it shall be for the men to decide. Come into the cabin, Mrs. Mostyn.”

She was looking ill and faint. She said—

“May I ask Palmer a few questions, Mr. Dipp?”

“Certainly,” he replied. “Come you along with me and the lady;” and the three went into the cabin, whilst Benson and Mill conversed together at the quarter-deck-capstan, and the others went slowly forwards, talking gruffly, and often sending backward sinister glances at the mate and the chartered accountant.

Mr. Dipp mingled a little brandy and water for Mrs. Mostyn, who was too impatient to question Palmer to await the diver’s act of attention.

“Do you think the schooner has sailed with my husband?” she inquired.

The dawn of the recognition of her meaning broke into his usual farmyard smile, and he answered—

“Yes, miss; I think so.”

“What keeps you grinning, you fool, when there’s no

call for laughter?" said Dipp, handing a small glass of brandy to Phyllis. "It's men like you who's always putting a wrong meaning on things by your face, darn you. You'd grin at a marriage; you'd grin if some drunken bearers let fall a coffin; you'd grin if, as a witness, you was to be asked, 'Did you say you'd seen 'is arm round 'er waist,' when you mean no, and your grin would ruin your evidence. Hold your mug whilst the lady talks to you."

But the thing was congenital, and it was as idle for Dipp to ask Palmer to hold his mug, as he put it, when he was spoken to, as it would have been for Palmer to request Dipp to have reduced his fat in twelve hours.

"Have you any idea where the schooner is sailing to?" asked the young wife.

"I believe she means to stand off and on until this 'ere vessel leaves the island."

"What for?" said Dipp.

"To land Captain Mostyn for another sealer to take off."

"Are you sure of that?" cried Dipp, with fervid eagerness.

"As sure as that the chest of gold is in the schooner."

"By thunder, Mrs. Mostyn! 'Then, ma'am," exclaimed the diver, in a low voice, looking through the door on to the quarter-deck, where Benson and the mate were in deep converse at the capstan, "if that be so, the sooner we get under way the better, so as to entice the *Penguin* back and then in two or three days' time we may safely tarn to and fetch the captain off."

Palmer nodded, as though he greatly approved of this scheme.

"If we leave the island," asked Mrs. Mostyn, feverish with the new hopes and ideas kindled in her, "how shall we find it again?"

“ We'll make Mill find it.”

“ He may refuse, as his object is to get rid of my husband, or he may steer us on some false reckoning.”

“ We'll not go so far away as all that,” said Mr. Dipp, smiling. “ I can pick up longitude quick enough by dead reckoning, and can't you take sights, missus ? ”

“ Yes,” she answered, with her face lighting up. “ I can certainly find the latitude of the place in which the ship is in.”

“ Then, if what this young man says is right,” exclaimed Dipp, who, checking himself fiercely, turned to Palmer, and shouted, “ Are you sure you're right ? ”

“ It was an onderstood thing, sir,” yelped the young fellow. “ The skipper says, what does he want with a British captain aboard his schooner ? How is he to answer questions ? Where is he to land him ? Benson himself onderstands this. He knows that, after this vessel had sailed, the schooner will put back and land Captain Mostyn.”

“ And Mr. Benson would leave him to starve,” cried Phyllis.

“ Perhaps it will be for him to be left,” answered Mr. Dipp.

“ Have you got any more questions to ask this young man ? ” he asked, as Prince entered the cabin to prepare the dinner.

“ If he has told me the truth I am happy,” she answered.

“ You can go forward,” said Dipp to Palmer ; and then, conducting Mrs. Mostyn on to the quarter-deck and away aft clear of the ears of the capstan, he said—

“ I believe the young man's telling the truth, 'cause it's much too natural a thing to enter his head for him to make the captain of the *Penguin* ask what is he going to do with a British skipper aboard his schooner. 'Ow is

he going to account for him being there? Beside, harn't your husband got a tongue in his head? You lay that that young man's right. Benson was quite willing that the schooner should return and land your 'usband. But even then, where is 'e?—I mean, where is Benson?"

He paused. Phyllis looked at the island, lost in thought.

"As I've all along said, if *you're* 'is game, Mrs. Mostyn, what's 'e going to do when 'e's got rid of your 'usband?" continued Mr. Dipp. "You'll forgive my plain speaking?" She coloured, but made no answer. "We'll suppose that he knows that if your 'usband should go a-missing, and perhaps perish, you'd be pretty nigh friendless in the world. Mostyn's a man to speak out, and he spoke freely enough about his own affairs to Benson,—*that* I know. Benson might consider that if he paid you great attention during the voyage 'ome, or to the place where we was to be wrecked"—here he delivered a greasy gurgle of a laugh—"you'd say to yourself, 'After all, I am alone, it's true——'"

"I'll not hear you, Mr. Dipp. It's too ridiculous," cried the young wife, with vehemently sparkling eyes. "Your reasoning——"

"It's 'is reasoning——"

"Is too shocking to enter into, when you think that the object of the man has been to get rid of my beloved husband for a purpose I would sooner stab him than hear from him. He, the beast, the criminal cur, shielding himself behind lies even now, perhaps working out some new and abominable plan to further his ends, shapeless and hopeless as they are, whilst we are still in ignorance of the issue he has brought to pass through causing my husband to be kidnapped!"

"Well," said Mr. Dipp, releasing the subject with a sort of groan in his "Well," "I've lived to see a good many changes worked in men by different influences brought

to bear, but never in all my going a-fishing have I known so cute, shrewd, level-headed a man of business as Benson, stowed to his fingers' tips with arithmetic, and larned in the exact calculations which are supposed to keep men who understand them straight—never, I say, should I have believed it of Montague Benson, not that he would have turned out a swindler, a villain, and any other character in the Ten Commandments, but that he should have made such a damned fool of himself, and such a damned mess of his job, for a woman, even though that woman be you, marm.”

This said, the subject came to an end—it was not only too personal, it was vastly too complex even for the mind of a diver, who has it in his power to see more than any man on dry earth. It entered into metaphysics, physiology, and sociology; it belonged to that vast family of human problems which submits the modification of character under influences of passion, low or lofty, as in the founder of the Jesuits, as in Joanna Southcote, as in Montague Benson.

Nor, indeed, was there room for more talk, for it was half-past one, and Prince rang the dinner-bell, but only a solitary individual seated himself at that dinner-table, and he was Dipp. Indeed, had the ship been on fire forward, Dipp must have dined had there been time to escape aft; but it was impossible for the others to meet. People who professedly thirst for one another's life cannot lightly and easily chew food in one another's faces. Mrs. Mostyn's dinner was taken to her berth by Prince, to whom she said—

“It is most fortunate that that young man Palmer is a friend of yours. He's too great a farmyard gawky, and too nervous, not to have told us the truth, upon which we must rely, both for our hopes and as a testimony against the wretches who have tried to ruin my husband and me.”

“I saw all along, lady, how it was working up,” said Prince, “but never hoped to fall in with that there Palmer. Soon as I saw him I guessed he might be of use; but it was my questioning him as a pal that brought out the truth, otherwise he’d have remained as dumb as a broken drum.”

“You served me once before,” she exclaimed, smiling at him. “I was always sure of a friend in you, Prince.”

He gave her the military salute, and, feeling that no more was expected of him, wheeled about, and walked out.

Benson dined standing—luncheon-counter fashion; he picked up this, and he picked up that, poured out a glass, and so got through with it. He often eyed Mr. Dipp, who ate as though this was to be his last meal on earth. He broke the silence once by saying—

“It’s not possible that a sensible man like you, Mr. Dipp, is going to accept the statement of that young fellow Palmer without strong corroboration, as against the oath of a man who is well known and universally respected throughout the city of London.”

“Wait till the rest of the ship’s company comes back,” answered Dipp, with his mouth full, “and then we’ll decide what to do.”

And this was about the extent of the conversation that passed at that dinner-table.

Mr. Mill came in, and smelt round, took some rum and water, and made a large biscuit sandwich of preserved meat, which he carried out on deck to eat, and so it stood; and thus the afternoon rolled away, and the sun sank low beyond the hills of the west, empurpling the sky that way, and deepening the blue of the east. But Dipp, and the others who searched, saw no signs of the long-boat. She had gone away early—she had about thirty miles to travel, there and back. When

she had reached the round of the bight which formed the end of the bay or creek, her company of twenty armed men, in charge of Matthew Walker, would encounter about three miles of hilly and difficult country to climb before they reached the coast. Orders had been given to Walker to send the long-boat back—by whom?—by the mate. Possibly Walker had thought better, and on his arrival where the bay ended, kept the long-boat in readiness for embarking if the need should arise. Nor had the wind been much more all day than a faint crawl, or travelling curl of dye upon the smooth waters; shifty as all air is bound to be in mountainous regions—the cat's-paw south-east one minute, nor'-nor'-east next. Moreover the boat might come alongside in the night.

But it was certain that when the hills of the west lifted in indigo against the crimson of the sunset not a hint of the boat was to be got by the glass; the lenses reached far, but not far enough; and when the darkness of the night came down upon the ship the long-boat was still absent. A sparkling lantern was hoisted on the forestay, and another hung over the stern, and there was scarce need to tell the few hands of the ship to keep a bright look-out. The darkness, coupled with the absence of the long-boat, and two-thirds of the ship's company, filled the ship with disquietude; some great outrage had been perpetrated. Jack could not clearly distinguish; all he knew was his captain had been run away with, and that a thousand pounds, which the diver had sent up, had gone a-missing with him. These crimes were vaguely associated with the mate and Benson, but with links of reasoning which would not travel through the hawse pipes of the sailors' minds, and so here and there was a jam in the mental gear, and the sailors were satisfied to say, "Well, the sooner we get away from this bloody hole the better. There is no man agoing to tell us that that



thousand pounds has been stole in the ship, and hid in the ship. Not if we know it." And as they accepted Palmer as a complete country greenhorn, and as he had sustained one good lie in the shape of a yarn about having been shipwrecked, they did not, on reflection, allow his statement to weigh greatly with them.

And so passed the night.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### OVERDUE

AT eleven o'clock next morning the waters of Port Parry were a splendid flash, thrilling to the breeze, and dwindling in blue air, and its sides mirrored the giant cones of verdant hills, and gleamed with lengths of mammoth weed. The surface was lively with penguins, and many sea-fowls swept over it, darting in lovely and gallant curves to their prey, and the island itself was as rich as a bouquet in the sun that had swung high in that Antarctic sky. The whiteness of the snow-topped mountains made a whiteness in the air round about, and the whole block crept out into a suggestion of some vast ocean ivory mass concealed by centuries of verdure, but still lifting the glory of its primordial structure to the stars.

Ever since daybreak all hands had been on the lookout for the long-boat. It was now half-past eleven. Phyllis, robed in straw hat and jacket, stood beside Mr. Dipp on top of the deck-house, he with a telescope, she with a binocular glass. She looked wan, thin, hollow under the eyes. She had passed two bad, broken, miserable nights. Beauty needs sleep, as complexion needs milk. Venus grows haggish after a week or two of painful vigils.

"It's certainly time the long-boat showed," said Mr. Dipp.

Down below them in the alley-way stood Benson and Mill, also bending their gaze along the port. They had talked much that morning. In fact, throughout the night they had talked much. They had little left to say now, one to the other. Mr. Benson was convinced that the *Penguin* had made sail with Captain Mostyn, and would not return and land him until the *Dealman* had got under way and was out of sight. Mill relied on this: suppose the party fell in with the *Penguin*, and Captain Morell gave up Captain Mostyn, unless Morell and the *Penguin's* crew appeared against them, who was to prove them guilty as conspiring to kidnap Captain Mostyn? There was no witness on board the ship but the man Palmer. In a court of law one man's word was as good as another's, and here there were two to one, that is, Mill and Benson against the statements of Palmer. Mill meant to face it out, happen what might, and come what would, and the hanging flaps of the bulldog were suggested by the fellow's dogged mien, and round-armed repose, and level look, and resting chin upon the bulwark-rail, as he stared along the creek.

Suddenly, a man, who had been sent aloft into the main-topmast cross-trees to do something, sung out, whilst he pointed direct up the port—

“On deck there! Ain't that white thing yonder a boat's sail?”

Dipp looked, Phyllis looked. In an instant Dipp caught the glance of the gleam of the lug of the long-boat. The lug was a fair pull, and a pull steady as the arch of a gull's wing, and in ten minutes she had opened out so that it could be seen she was full of people.

“As God is truth,” cried Dipp, talking with great excitement, his eyes at the glass, “she's a-bringing all the ship's company with her! Them that went armed, and them that went to look after her. Is the captain one of

them, I wonder?" and he screwed and probed with his telescope, whilst Phyllis, close beside him, shrieked—

"Oh, do find out! Oh, do tell me! Why aren't these wretched glasses more powerful? Can't you count the men, Mr. Dipp?"

"I'm a-trying to do so," groaned Dipp, in the heat of emotion. "But whenever I harrives at height the whole boilin' dissolves into mere faces again."

"How many ought there to be?" she cried.

"Now, don't worrit, mum. She's a-coming along fast enough. Yes; she's full of men. She never would have brought 'em off if she hadn't got the captain along with 'em."

"Can you make out any signs of Captain Mostyn being on board, Mr. Dipp?" said Benson, turning upon the rail to look up whilst he addressed the diver.

"No, sir," replied the other, with his eye to the glass.

"Will you oblige me with the use of that ship's telescope, when you have quite done with it?" said Mr. Benson.

Dipp stooped and handed it down through the rail. Benson looked, he looked long, hard, thirstily, he looked whilst you could have counted one hundred, which is a long time for the eye to remain glued to the lens. He then spoke in a low voice to Mill, to whom he handed the glass. The mate poised the lenses with a seaman's accuracy, and instantly uttered an ejaculation which caught the keen ear of Phyllis.

"What do you see?" she almost screamed down to him.

Without turning his head he answered, "Captain Mostyn."

Benson snatched the glass from him.

"Oh, give me that glass!" cried the frantic young

wife. "Oh, Mr. Dipp, is it my husband? Can you see him through those glasses?"

"It is your husband, Mrs. Mostyn," said Mr. Benson. "He's standing up on one of the back seats and waving his hat. I cordially congratulate you and all of us upon his safety;" and, perfectly self-collected, the chartered accountant handed up the glass, which Dipp took and immediately levelled.

"Oh yes! There he is! That's 'im right enough!" he greasily chuckled. "Lor, 'ow 'e's a-waving! Flourish your 'ankerchief back, missus; 'e'll be able to see ye. Lord bless my soul, what a yarn! Kidnapped two nights and a day, and a standin' there as if nothin' 'ad 'appened—as if he was just come off with some more droppings of 'ills."

"Balance the glass, steady it—my hand shakes so. I hope I shan't faint. Oh yes; I see him! God bless him! What a time of anxiety he's caused me. Think of his preferring to draw pictures of hills, to looking after his ship and me! There they come!" and Mrs. Mostyn, dabbing the telescope into Dipp's hands, rushed to the deck-house steps, shot down them at the risk of her neck, and was at the open gangway, waiting for her husband, and flourishing her handkerchief to him, and often crying, "Oh, Charlie! Oh, Charlie!" in the great joy and marvelling enthusiasm of her heart, whilst the boat was still coming.

In a few minutes the lug was lowered, the boat swept alongside, and Mostyn was the first to spring on deck. He certainly wore no appearance of having been kidnapped. It was clear that in two days somebody had lent him a razor. His looks were sparkling, his face was never handsomer in pride of lineament and manly charm of tint. His blue suit looked well brushed, and his brown boots showed no signs of wear, of toil, or climb. His

wife sprang upon him, and for some breathless moments 'twas one long embrace between them; with here and there a man looking away, and here and there a fellow spitting a yellow sud, and here and there some round-backed seaman wondering what sort of reception *he* was going to get when he got home.

Mostyn released his wife, and perfectly understanding that business was now to be business, she stood a little aside from him, with panting breast and worshipping eyes, and cheeks to whom the kiss of the husband had returned the freshness and the glory of the beauty that had waned somewhat in the night-watches she had kept for him. A new face came upon the skipper; he stepped to the quarter-deck capstan, and then he saw Benson and Mill lurking in the starboard gangway.

“Mr. Walker.”

“Sir,” answered the acting second mate, stepping forward.

“Put the mate into irons, and confine him in his berth.”

“Ay, ay, sir;” and in the silence that fell upon the ship, though they were still busy over the side, in handing up the contents of the long-boat, Mr. Walker went forward for the iron bars that were to keep Mr. Mill’s feet as strictly yoked as a newly married pair.

Mr. Mill came forward a pace or two, and said, “What am I to be put in irons for?”

“I answer you in the full hearing of these men,” replied Mostyn, at the top of his voice. “For conspiring with Mr. Benson to kidnap me and get possession of this ship, with a view to casting her away for purposes hereafter to be stated;” for, hot as his heart was, it was impossible for him to mention his wife and the suspected views of Benson in the presence of all those listeners, which consisted nearly of the whole ship’s company.

“Who says I meant to conspire against you and wreck this ship?” inquired Mill, with a bitter scowl, and a set of the lips that made you think of an adder’s mouth.

“I charge you with the intention,” shouted Mostyn. “I have testimony. The case of gold is on board the schooner. It was not robbed by any of our people, as Mr. Benson tried to represent.”

“You’ll have to make good every word you say,” cried Mr. Benson from the alley-way.

“Mr. Walker,” said Mostyn, as the second mate came rapidly aft, dangling the irons, “take Mr. Mill into his cabin, and clap the irons on him, and bring me the key of his berth, and if you want help you shall have it.”

“I don’t want no ’elp,” said Matthew Walker, who was an immensely strong man, looking at Mill somewhat pitifully. “Come along!” and he laid his right hand heavily on Mr. Mill’s shoulder.

The Jacks expected to witness a fight: there was to be at least a struggle, graced by some blood-letting, and enriched by groans and execrations; but Mill was an old hand. He saw that he stood alone, he intuitively understood that the sympathy of every sailor was against him, and that resistance would merely signify considerable corporal pain, and defeat ignoble and absolute. Directing one scowl at the captain, which did not seem to affect the complexion of the weather, nor depress sensibly any man’s spirits in the ship, he passed from the cabin door into his berth, followed by Walker.

“Mr. Benson.”

“I beg your pardon,” cried Benson, who was leaning in a contemplative attitude over the rail, apparently lost in the beauties of the island.

“You will immediately go to your cabin,” said Mostyn, “and consider yourself my prisoner, until I am in a

position to hand you over to the authorities on our arrival home."

"Your prisoner!" exclaimed Benson, waking up, and standing up, and coming forward towards the captain by a few paces. "What do you mean by holding such language to me, sir? I am the representative of the people who employ you, and, as such, have a right to be regarded by you even as though *I* employed you."

"If you're not in your cabin in two minutes," said Captain Mostyn, "a couple of seamen shall carry you there."

You noticed a movement amongst the men who were listening and waiting. Some keen spirits evidently there were eager to have the man-handling of Mr. Benson.

"I am a passenger in this ship, sir," cried Benson, who was of a ghastly yellow, painful to witness, about the brow, "and you dare not place me under confinement without stating my offence, and entering it in the official log-book."

"Your offence," shouted the captain, for the edification of all hands, "is, that you stole one thousand pounds of the insurers' gold to bribe the master and men of a schooner called the *Penguin*, to abduct me for purposes hereafter to be stated. Those purposes are well known to you. Go to your cabin, you——" He swallowed the mouthful of bad language that rose in acrid bile of wrath to his throat.

Just then Matthew Walker appeared, with the key of the chief officer's cabin.

"Take that man to his berth, and lock him up, Mr. Walker," said Mostyn, pointing to Benson. "We must get out of this before sunset."

Then came some cries from the men.

"In you go!"

"Don't stand snivelling there, whiskers!"



“Use your legs whilst we allows you.”

“If the ship’s to be wrecked, we’ll manage that job without you ’aving a ’and in it.”

This sarcasm raised a groan, in the midst of which Walker, probing Mr. Benson’s shoulder-blades with an unceremonious thump, drove him into the cabin, and the couple vanished.

The captain mounted the second of the steps leading to the deck-house top. The whole of the people were in front of him, grouped about the decks, thirty to thirty-five in all—I will not be sure of the number of this ship’s company—and every man looked aft as though a photograph of the scene was to be taken.

“My lads,” began the captain, “I want to haul out of this port as soon as ever I can, but those of you who have been good enough to tramp for me across country have had a hard march, as I can vouch, though I only went a little way, and my orders are that all hands should get dinner, and that an extra glass of grog should be served out to each man, and at three o’clock, six bells in the afternoon, I shall get under way, and leave Port Parry for Port London.”

“Hurrah for the girls!” shouted a voice; then the extra tot of grog inspired another voice to yell, “Three cheers for the skipper!” which was followed by three cheers for his lady. But there is little sentiment at sea. The men swung forward to await their dinner, and Mostyn, catching his wife by her arm, walked her into the cabin, after calling to Prince to put a meal upon the table. Mr. Dipp followed, and Matthew Walker modestly lurked in the gangway.

“The penguins will keep a look-out,” called Mostyn, cheerily, to him. “Step in, Walker,” and in came the worthy second mate, boatswain, carpenter, and sailmaker rolled up into one.

“What on earth made you go drawing hills instead of stopping here with me?” said Phyllis to her husband.

“This is the peremptory speech of the young wife, Mr. Dipp,” said Mostyn, laughing; “had it been a year ago——”

“I shouldn’t have felt the same anxiety,” interrupted Phyllis.

But there is no talk more sickening than by-talk, chaff-talk, coo-talk, and other matrimonial talks which I have known endure for forty years of conjugal life, and Mostyn and his wife had the good sense to drop further reference to each other by the former giving Dipp his attention.

“How came you to be sapperized, capt’n?” said the diver.

“It was done in a breath,” answered Mostyn. “And now you shall have the story. It’s the queerest yarn out of Yankee land. Scarce conceivable. I was doing my bit of drawing—here it is”—he slapped down the notebook out of his pocket—“when, before I could have said Lord Jesus, a gag was tightened over my mouth till I could scarce draw breath through the tension; my wrists were handcuffed. I sprang erect, and found myself in the grasp of two men, one of whom I instantly recognized as the master of the schooner *Penguin*, called Morell. He said to me in a low voice, ‘This is part of the play-acting; don’t be alarmed. It has to be done. Jump and tug that bough-rope, Bill.’ A third man ran and disappeared. What the captain meant by this order I don’t know.”

“It’ll refer to a bough on a big beech, sawed half-way through, for breaking short without falling,” said Walker. “The gap makes a whiteness which is as good as a sign, and you may see it plain from the deck.”

“Go on,” said Phyllis.

“Whilst a third man had run to this mysterious rope, the other two men, grasping me by the collar, were galloping me, at no comfortable speed, down a sort of natural lane or avenue, where the third man comes thundering after us, and we all four kept on running, though I thought I should expire, as the gag choked my mouth, and I could scarce draw breath for my lungs through my nostrils. Then we caught sight of water, the gag was thrown off, and Captain Morell said to me, ‘I’m truly sorry, captain, to have put you, a British sailor, to this inconvenience; but I’m doing of it for your sake, and for yours only, for if I didn’t carry this through, as it’s now doing, you’d be never able to get at the man who stole the money, and who’d steal your wife.’ I stared at him with amazement. ‘You put me to all this inconvenience and anxiety,’ I exclaimed, ‘that I may get at the man who’s wronged me?’ ‘Wait till we’re in the boat, and can talk smooth and with free breathing,’ answered Captain Morell; and then, laughing through his nose, he said, as though to himself, ‘I do allow that under the Eternal Eye never will be a man so bowsed as Benson, when you step aboard.’

“We continued to walk swiftly till we arrived at the edge of a creek, where lay a small boat. She was in care of one man. We entered, and, rounding a point, found the *Penguin* at anchor, lying close under the bluff concealed by the tall cliffs and heavy verdure which came down to the very sip of the salt water. The boat was got aboard and the order immediately given to make sail. I said to Captain Morell, ‘Are you carrying me to sea?’ ‘No, sir,’ he answered. ‘You stop, and you’ll see what’ll happen.’ I saw him go forward to the galley and give some orders to the cook; but I was too much occupied by my extraordinary situation to trouble myself with details. She was a small greasy old schooner with nothing

noteworthy in her appearance. She was perhaps forty years old; she carried six men, including the captain, and one fellow who I understood had run. It was near sunset when we tacked and headed in for the land, and at about ten o'clock in the evening we brought up in York Bay some cables to the westward of Seals Rookery, and in all this time the captain had never offered to address me or shown me any hospitality, but the moment the anchor was let go he stepped up to me, and taking me by the hand in as kindly a grip as a shipmate could ever wish to receive, said, 'Captain, will you step below and partake of such humble fare as a sealer is able to place upon his table?' I thanked him, and followed him into a little den, with shelves for bunks, like to those in smacks, and a small table, with a few chairs. The cabin lamp was burning. The table was dressed for a meal, and whilst it was coming, the captain, going to one of the bunks, pulled open the slide, and said, 'D'ye see that?' It was the case of sovereigns."

"The damned villain!" broke in Dipp, glancing towards Benson's berth; "to think that I should have dived for it."

"I said nothing," continued Captain Mostyn. "Just then a man came down with a tray of smoking dishes, a pie, a duck, a what not—I forget now. The captain asked me to sit down, and then another man came below and sat on the left of the captain, who introduced him to me as Bill, the mate of the schooner. I had thought this Captain Morell very fit for the hangman, to judge by his face, when he had introduced himself on board this ship; but, coming to look deeper into the fellow's physiognomy, I seemed somehow to find some sort of soul of kindness or of goodness, deep seated in his dark forbidding eyes, and the whole mask of rascality which his face wore, seemed to pass, when he talked to you

as a man with the kindness of a man, and to leave behind it nothing but the ordinary visage of a poor hard-worked sea-dog, toiling in a dead-broke calling. He asked me what I'd drink. I answered what he had. He said that he had nothing but a drop of Hollands on board. I told him I would rather drink sea-water than that stuff. 'Benson brought off a case of champagne,' he said. 'Would you like a bottle?' I suppose I laughed, for he laughed when I thanked him. 'We haven't opened the case,' said he. "Ne'er a man 'ud put his lips to it. Pour a little into a saucer and try a dog, he'd turn tail to it. You're welcome to the whole case if you can stand up under it.' He knocked the head off a bottle, and filled a pannikin foaming full—think, Phyl, of drinking champagne out of a tin mug! But he and Bill stuck to Hollands. 'This is a truly extraordinary adventure,' said the captain, 'and if I haven't bested one of the biggest scoundrels on earth sail me to the man who has. He comes aboard all smiles and inquiries about seals and their ways, and then asks for a little private talk with me in the cabin all alone—mind you, all alone; there must be no witnesses. And then he outs with his request in a manner that simply astonishes me. I knew you was sounding for gold, and that part of his yarn was all right. But what strook me like a fire-rod was his coming to me, a perfect stranger, and asking me to accept a thousand pounds of other people's money to carry you off so that he and the mate could get possession of the ship and your wife, sir.'"

Phyllis winced, and bit her lip. Dipp and Walker had the good taste not to heed her presence.

"'I'm not a man,' said Morell, 'to show astonishment, and I don't think Benson found it in me if he looked for it. On the contrary; I asked him to sit whilst I walked about and thought, and then it strook me what a good

thing it would be if me and my men could get hold of this here one thousand pounds, and ruin him by carrying out his plan by kidnappin' you, but in part only, jess as we're a now doing ; for, ye see, you couldn't bring a case against him if you hadn't been kidnapped. And that you've been, for here yer are, and my undertaking with Mr. Benson still holds good ; for I agreed with him to set you ashore after the *Dealman* had sailed. Instead of which I means to set you ashore to-morrow evening, and I have my reasons for that, which you'll please not ask."

"And that's the yarn ;" said Mr. Dipp, drawing a deep breath, whilst Matthew Walker exclaimed—

"He was bound to act as he did. What was he going to do with you aboard ? As for the sovereigns, that matter stands between him and the devil, beggin' your pardon, lady."

"He asked me what my pay was," continued Mostyn, "and when I told him I was to receive one per cent. commission on the salvage, he exclaimed, 'Durned if you lose a cent through me ;' " and, going to the bunk where the case of sovereigns lay, he picked out ten pounds. "There," says he, "there's your commission. It shan't be said that an American sailor ever robbed a British shipmate in distress."

Captain Mostyn pulled the money out of his pocket, and the ten sovereigns glittered on the table.

"Will you keep the money ?" said Phyllis.

"I'll hand it over to the directors as part of my commission to be received," he answered.

"Well, and what happened next, capt'n ?" inquired Walker.

"That night I lay in his bunk and slept soundly, for I felt safe. He kept me aboard all next day. He frequently sat and talked with me, but would not hint at his intentions, nor did I inquire them. He placed a

box of cigars upon the skylight for my use—Benson's cigars—and complained that they were manufactured in Germany, and shipped to the West Indies for transshipment for European consumption as Cuban tobacco. He said that Benson was a bad man, an artful villain; but, day and night, what puzzled him was how a man so knowing the ropes of life should place himself entirely at the mercy of a stranger like himself. 'He guessed the thousand pounds would seal your mouth,' said I. 'But I might have sailed away without doing his job.' 'A man must have faith in those he deals with,' said I, laughing."

"Ay," broke in Mr. Dipp, "but that there Captain Morell was right, captain. Who'd trust a scoundrel willing to undertake such an errand?"

"He was not to be trusted, for here you are, Charlie," said Phyllis.

"Morell's grievance," continued Mostyn, "was that neither he nor his men could appear. I should be without a witness when I charged the beggar."

"There is a witness on board," exclaimed Dipp.

Mostyn arched his eyebrows. The case of Palmer who represented himself as a shipwrecked man was explained.

"But why the dickens didn't he peach before?" shouted Mostyn.

"Ask him, and his grin will tell you," replied Phyllis. "Aren't you very hungry?"

"Yes. But I'll finish my yarn," said Mostyn, musing a few moments over the consideration that there was a witness for his case aboard.

"When the evening came, about half-past seven, the boat was launched, smack-fashion, through the gangway, and the captain, coming up to me, said, 'I'm going to send you ashore. D'ye know the road?' Not I. He took me to the compass and gave me the bearings with

the sharp of his hand. 'It's a bit of a scramble,' said he, 'to the creek; keep that there mountain to the right, and when you come to the creek walk round it, and do a bit of climbing, until you come in sight of Port Parry, and your ship, and then you'll know what to do!' Half an hour afterwards I was alone ashore. He never explained why he put me ashore alone to meet the night, when I might have regained the ship by travelling in the day, but I was much too thankful to be let off as I had been to ask questions. I watched the schooner hoist in her boat, and make sail, and I continued standing and watching, thinking what I should do, until the schooner was a mere thread of leaning silver in the distance, bound west. It was dark last night, as you remember, and the growths and verdure which are a dark green in the day became black as sooty oil with a gleam in it, and I made up my mind not to advance for fear of falling. An ankle is easily sprained; a leg is easily broken; when it comes to the neck, then 'tis a good thing over; I had no mind to fall down forty feet and be found in after years a bleached skeleton. So I looked about me for a soft plank, as they say at sea, and chose the foot of a tree, and slept, and woke, and walked, and slept again, refreshing myself with the two bottles of champagne, and some cold duck and biscuit, which the skipper had sent with me. It was desperately lonesome, Phyl. All the stars of God seemed to look down on me with one eye. Then there is a surf on that part of the shore, and it sounded as though some great master was sitting down to this island, as if it was an organ, and accompanying a chorus too deep for living ears."

"A man's mind will run away with him in such a situation," exclaimed Mr. Walker.

"I wonder you haven't caught your death of cold!" said Phyllis.

"Well, to cut this part," continued Mostyn, "when



day broke I set out, keeping the mountain on the right, and knowing the bearings well by the trend of the shore. But I do not think I had been walking an hour, when I heard a sound of halloing in the distance and saw Walker's party waving their caps. They had made a long roundabout course, and were worn out, and were making for the long-boat, as you had had enough of the coast, I think, Mr. Walker."

"Well, sir," answered the acting second mate, "you see I thought it might come to my having to coast it in search of yer, in which case the long-boat would have been handier than our legs, and so I kept her down in the bight ready, and I was the better pleased I'd done so when, in the evening, I caught sight of the schooner, which no doubt was the *Penguin*, standing to the westward across the low evening light."

"It's time to be off," cried Mostyn, jumping up. "Where's Prince? Oh, there you are! Bear a hand with this meal. We can't stop to be particular. This island must be astern of us by four."

He looked at the clock, and to make way for Prince they passed on to the quarter-deck and stood in earnest talk about Benson, the mate, the discipline of the ship, and the like. Although fourteen thousand pounds lay at hand, recoverable by help of another diver, they determined, under the circumstances, to sail straight home and report the full story to the directors, who would of course give further instructions as to the remainder of the submerged treasure. Walker, though no navigator, would act as chief mate; Dipp cheerfully consented to serve as second mate, and the captain said that, even if he was struck down during the passage, the art his wife had acquired, backed by Dipp's and Walker's practical and general information would enable them to keep a true course until Mostyn should get well again.

So there was nothing more to be done than dine—which in the cabin they did, and in a hurry; and then, going on deck, where all hands were assembled in readiness, for 'twas “Homeward bound!” with that ship, Mostyn ascended the deck-house top and gave orders to unmoor ship by getting in the stern anchor. This command was received with a cheer and a rush of men, and when presently the *Dealman* was riding to a single chain the sailors on the foc’sle broke into that rattling sea chanty, called, “For we are homeward bound,” which seemed to fetch an echo from the loftiest mountain-top as the throat-swelling volume poured away, timed by the castanets of the windlass pawls. Then “Up jib!” “Loose fore-topsail!” “Anchor away, sir!” The *Dealman’s* head paid round; a soft air was blowing a soldiers’ wind from the north. It swelled the topsails as they were loosed and hoisted, it set the staysails and jibs yearning as they were cheerily run aloft hand over hand. The shore slowly glided by. Foot by foot canvas was made until the royals of the *Dealman* crowned her spires, and her waterways were shadowed by her tacks. Then once more was to be heard the melody of the bow sea, as it arched from the metal stem and shook its feathers in rainbow to the sun; then was to be witnessed the old heave and fall of the sea-line ahead under the fore course, and again was to be felt all the weight of the huge ocean in the mere cradling of her hand that this afternoon dallied with the ship in southern holiday sport.

Husband and wife stood looking at the receding island.

“It’s been bitterly full of trouble to us, Charlie,” said Phyllis, running her eyes up the lordly region of snow whose virgin whiteness *her* feet were not to tread.

“I’d go through it again to-morrow,” answered Mostyn. “I hope they’ll send me out to recover the rest of the

money—Dipp, another, and me. Not you next time, Phyl, and no Bensons.”

“What’s to become of that unhappy man?” she exclaimed.

“He be damned!” was the sailor’s answer. “What was to become of me?”

She sucked in her pretty lips with a great sigh at the desperate thought.

“But,” said he, “I want to see that chap Palmer aft, and to log Mill and Benson officially, and I’ll do the dirty work now.”

Mostyn went to his cabin and sent for Palmer, whom he closely examined. He found the yokel of a deeper farmyard dye than he had been led to expect, for the profundity of the youth’s grin was in proportion to his fears, and the captain was no mean source of terror. However, Mostyn got all he wanted from him, and then, having made a full record of his own experience in the log-book, he carried it, accompanied by Palmer and Prince and Mr. Dipp, to Mr. Mill’s cabin.

He opened the door; he flung it open impetuously, Mill was seated in his bunk with the irons on his legs. He made no sign by movement, but the flush of wrath was followed by that cold pallor of hate which Coleridge speaks of, and with stooping head, over arms locked upon his breast, he fastened his eyes upon the captain. Mostyn put the book down on the little table and seated himself to write, the other three standing. He read over Palmer’s deposition. Not a syllable escaped the mate.

“You do not deny this young man’s statement?” said the captain.

A sudden convulsion blackened the face of Mr. Mill, who vehemently spat at the captain.

“That’s your answer,” he said; “and now go to hell for further information!”

It was, in fact, like dealing with a wild beast.

“You will sign these entries in this man’s presence,” said the captain, rising, and the witnesses signed, and then quitted the presence of Mr. Mill, the captain locking the door behind him.

All four next went to Mr. Benson’s cabin. There was no good in knocking. Mostyn had the key. He opened the door and looked in and what he saw rendered only one log entry necessary. In fact, if the *Dealman* was not to be posted as missing it was certain that in shipping circles Mr. Benson was to be overdue. He sat in a chair in front of his washstand, on which was a mirror, and he had done his ghastly work neatly. That livid throat, which was Phyllis’s abhorrence, was cut to the death; the basin was half full of blood, and the black head of the wretched man hung over it.

“Come!” cried Mostyn, with a sick shudder, “before my wife sees it!” and they all came out, pale as ghosts, and Mostyn locked the door.

Mr. Dipp, breathing hard, looked aghast at Mostyn, and exclaimed—

“’Twas the last thing I should have thought he had the ’cart to do.”

But then, Benson had proved himself a human problem unintelligible by the application of ordinary human interpretations, and some, guessing how high this man had staked, and how senselessly, for that fatal prize of beauty which he had lost, would have affirmed of him that this was just the ending they would have guessed he would make.

THE END

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