Voyages:
Stories of Ocean Exploration

Edited By: Nicole Clark

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Voyages: Stories of Ocean Exploration

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Nicole Clark

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INTRODUCTION


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Voyages
The Sea Raiders
HG Wells

I.
Until the extraordinary affair at Sidmouth, the peculiar species *Haplooteuthis ferox* was known to science only generically, on the strength of a half-digested tentacle obtained near the Azores, and a decaying body pecked by birds and nibbled by fish, found early in 1896 by Mr. Jennings, near Land’s End.

In no department of zoological science, indeed, are we quite so much in the dark as with regard to the deep-sea cephalopods. A mere accident, for instance, it was that led to the Prince of Monaco’s discovery of nearly a dozen new forms in the summer of 1895, a discovery in which the before-mentioned tentacle was included. It chanced that a cachalot was killed off Terceira by some sperm whalers, and in its last struggles charged almost to the Prince’s yacht, missed it, rolled under, and died within twenty yards of his rudder. And in its agony it threw up a number of large objects, which the Prince, dimly perceiving they were strange and important, was, by a happy expedient, able to secure before they sank. He set his screws in motion, and kept them circling in the vortices thus created until a boat could be lowered. And these specimens were whole cephalopods and fragments of cephalopods, some of gigantic proportions, and almost all of them unknown to science!

It would seem, indeed, that these large and agile creatures, living in the middle depths of the sea, must, to a large extent, for ever remain unknown to us, since under water they are too nimble for nets, and it is only by such rare, unlooked-for accidents that specimens can be obtained. In the case of *Hap-
loteuthis ferox, for instance, we are still altogether ignorant of its habitat, as ignorant as we are of the breeding-ground of the herring or the sea-ways of the salmon. And zoologists are altogether at a loss to account for its sudden appearance on our coast. Possibly it was the stress of a hunger migration that drove it hither out of the deep. But it will be, perhaps, better to avoid necessarily inconclusive discussion, and to proceed at once with our narrative.

The first human being to set eyes upon a living Haploteuthis —the first human being to survive, that is, for there can be little doubt now that the wave of bathing fatalities and boating accidents that travelled along the coast of Cornwall and Devon in early May was due to this cause—was a retired tea-dealer of the name of Fison, who was stopping at a Sidmouth boarding-house. It was in the afternoon, and he was walking along the cliff path between Sidmouth and Ladram Bay. The cliffs in this direction are very high, but down the red face of them in one place a kind of ladder staircase has been made. He was near this when his attention was attracted by what at first he thought to be a cluster of birds struggling over a fragment of food that caught the sunlight, and glistened pinkish-white. The tide was right out, and this object was not only far below him, but remote across a broad waste of rock reefs covered with dark seaweed and interspersed with silvery shining tidal pools. And he was, moreover, dazzled by the brightness of the further water.

In a minute, regarding this again, he perceived that his judgment was in fault, for over this struggle circled a number of birds, jackdaws and gulls for the most part, the latter gleaming blindingly when the sunlight smote their wings, and they seemed minute in comparison with it. And his curiosity was, perhaps, aroused all the more strongly because of his first insufficient explanations.

As he had nothing better to do than amuse himself, he decided to make this object, whatever it was, the goal of his afternoon walk, instead of Ladram Bay, conceiving it might perhaps be a great fish of some sort, stranded by some chance, and flapping about in its distress. And so he hurried down the
long steep ladder, stopping at intervals of thirty feet or so to take breath and scan the mysterious movement.

At the foot of the cliff he was, of course, nearer his object than he had been; but, on the other hand, it now came up against the incandescent sky, beneath the sun, so as to seem dark and indistinct. Whatever was pinkish of it was now hidden by a skerry of weedy boulders. But he perceived that it was made up of seven rounded bodies distinct or connected, and that the birds kept up a constant croaking and screaming, but seemed afraid to approach it too closely.

Mr. Fison, torn by curiosity, began picking his way across the wave-worn rocks, and finding the wet seaweed that covered them thickly rendered them extremely slippery, he stopped, removed his shoes and socks, and rolled his trousers above his knees. His object was, of course, merely to avoid stumbling into the rocky pools about him, and perhaps he was rather glad, as all men are, of an excuse to resume, even for a moment, the sensations of his boyhood. At any rate, it is to this, no doubt, that he owes his life.

He approached his mark with all the assurance which the absolute security of this country against all forms of animal life gives its inhabitants. The round bodies moved to and fro, but it was only when he surmounted the skerry of boulders I have mentioned that he realised the horrible nature of the discovery. It came upon him with some suddenness.

The rounded bodies fell apart as he came into sight over the ridge, and displayed the pinkish object to be the partially devoured body of a human being, but whether of a man or woman he was unable to say. And the rounded bodies were new and ghastly-looking creatures, in shape somewhat resembling an octopus, with huge and very long and flexible tentacles, coiled copiously on the ground. The skin had a glistening texture, unpleasant to see, like shiny leather. The downward bend of the tentacle-surrounded mouth, the curious excrescence at the bend, the tentacles, and the large intelligent eyes, gave the creatures a grotesque suggestion of a face. They were the size of a fair-sized swine about the body, and the tentacles seemed to him to be many feet in length. There were, he thinks, seven or eight at least of the creatures. Twenty yards beyond them, amid
the surf of the now returning tide, two others were emerging from the sea.

Their bodies lay flatly on the rocks, and their eyes regarded him with evil interest; but it does not appear that Mr. Fison was afraid, or that he realised that he was in any danger. Possibly his confidence is to be ascribed to the limpness of their attitudes. But he was horrified, of course, and intensely excited and indignant, at such revolting creatures preying upon human flesh. He thought they had chanced upon a drowned body. He shouted to them, with the idea of driving them off, and finding they did not budge, cast about him, picked up a big rounded lump of rock, and flung it at one.

And then, slowly uncoiling their tentacles, they all began moving towards him—creeping at first deliberately, and making a soft purring sound to each other.

In a moment Mr. Fison realised that he was in danger. He shouted again, threw both his boots, and started off, with a leap, forthwith. Twenty yards off he stopped and faced about, judging them slow, and behold! the tentacles of their leader were already pouring over the rocky ridge on which he had just been standing!

At that he shouted again, but this time not threatening, but a cry of dismay, and began jumping, striding, slipping, wading across the uneven expanse between him and the beach. The tall red cliffs seemed suddenly at a vast distance, and he saw, as though they were creatures in another world, two minute workmen engaged in the repair of the ladder-way, and little suspecting the race for life that was beginning below them. At one time he could hear the creatures splashing in the pools not a dozen feet behind him, and once he slipped and almost fell.

They chased him to the very foot of the cliffs, and desisted only when he had been joined by the workmen at the foot of the ladder-way up the cliff. All three of the men pelted them with stones for a time, and then hurried to the cliff top and along the path towards Sidmouth, to secure assistance and a boat, and to rescue the desecrated body from the clutches of these abominable creatures.

II.

And, as if he had not already been in sufficient peril that
day, Mr. Fison went with the boat to point out the exact spot of his adventure.

As the tide was down, it required a considerable detour to reach the spot, and when at last they came off the ladder-way, the mangled body had disappeared. The water was now running in, submerging first one slab of slimy rock and then another, and the four men in the boat—the workmen, that is, the boatman, and Mr. Fison—now turned their attention from the bearings off shore to the water beneath the keel.

At first they could see little below them, save a dark jungle of laminaria, with an occasional darting fish. Their minds were set on adventure, and they expressed their disappointment freely. But presently they saw one of the monsters swimming through the water seaward, with a curious rolling motion that suggested to Mr. Fison the spinning roll of a captive balloon. Almost immediately after, the waving streamers of laminaria were extraordinarily perturbed, parted for a moment, and three of these beasts became darkly visible, struggling for what was probably some fragment of the drowned man. In a moment the copious olive-green ribbons had poured again over this writhing group.

At that all four men, greatly excited, began beating the water with oars and shouting, and immediately they saw a tumultuous movement among the weeds. They desisted to see more clearly, and as soon as the water was smooth, they saw, as it seemed to them, the whole sea bottom among the weeds set with eyes.

“Ugly swine!” cried one of the men. “Why, there’s dozens!”

And forthwith the things began to rise through the water about them. Mr. Fison has since described to the writer this startling eruption out of the waving laminaria meadows. To him it seemed to occupy a considerable time, but it is probable that really it was an affair of a few seconds only. For a time nothing but eyes, and then he speaks of tentacles streaming out and parting the weed fronds this way and that. Then these things, growing larger, until at last the bottom was hidden by their intercoiling forms, and the tips of tentacles rose darkly here and there into the air above the swell of the waters.

One came up boldly to the side of the boat, and clinging to
this with three of its sucker-set tentacles, threw four others over
the gunwale, as if with an intention either of oversetting the
boat or of clambering into it. Mr. Fison at once caught up the
boat-hook, and, jabbing furiously at the soft tentacles, forced
it to desist. He was struck in the back and almost pitched over-
board by the boatman, who was using his oar to resist a similar
attack on the other side of the boat. But the tentacles on either
side at once relaxed their hold, slid out of sight, and splashed
into the water.

“We’d better get out of this,” said Mr. Fison, who was trem-
bling violently. He went to the tiller, while the boatman and
one of the workmen seated themselves and began rowing. The
other workman stood up in the fore part of the boat, with the
boat-hook, ready to strike any more tentacles that might ap-
pear. Nothing else seems to have been said. Mr. Fison had ex-
pressed the common feeling beyond amendment. In a hushed,
scared mood, with faces white and drawn, they set about es-
caping from the position into which they had so recklessly
blundered.

But the oars had scarcely dropped into the water before
dark, tapering, serpentine ropes had bound them, and were
about the rudder; and creeping up the sides of the boat with
a looping motion came the suckers again. The men gripped
their oars and pulled, but it was like trying to move a boat in a
floating raft of weeds. “Help here!” cried the boatman, and Mr.
Fison and the second workman rushed to help lug at the oar.

Then the man with the boat-hook—his name was Ewan, or
Ewen—sprang up with a curse and began striking downward
over the side, as far as he could reach, at the bank of tentacles
that now clustered along the boat’s bottom. And, at the same
time, the two rowers stood up to get a better purchase for the
recovery of their oars. The boatman handed his to Mr. Fison,
who lugged desperately, and, meanwhile, the boatman opened
a big clasp-knife, and leaning over the side of the boat, began
hacking at the spiring arms upon the oar shaft.

Mr. Fison, staggering with the quivering rocking of the boat,
his teeth set, his breath coming short, and the veins starting on
his hands as he pulled at his oar, suddenly cast his eyes sea-
ward. And there, not fifty yards off, across the long rollers of
the incoming tide, was a large boat standing in towards them, with three women and a little child in it. A boatman was rowing, and a little man in a pink-ribboned straw hat and whites stood in the stern hailing them. For a moment, of course, Mr. Fison thought of help, and then he thought of the child. He abandoned his oar forthwith, threw up his arms in a frantic gesture, and screamed to the party in the boat to keep away “for God’s sake!” It says much for the modesty and courage of Mr. Fison that he does not seem to be aware that there was any quality of heroism in his action at this juncture. The oar he had abandoned was at once drawn under, and presently reappeared floating about twenty yards away.

At the same moment Mr. Fison felt the boat under him lurch violently, and a hoarse scream, a prolonged cry of terror from Hill, the boatman, caused him to forget the party of excursionists altogether. He turned, and saw Hill crouching by the forward row-lock, his face convulsed with terror, and his right arm over the side and drawn tightly down. He gave now a succession of short, sharp cries, “Oh! oh! oh!—oh!” Mr. Fison believes that he must have been hacking at the tentacles below the water-line, and have been grasped by them, but, of course, it is quite impossible to say now certainly what had happened. The boat was heeling over, so that the gunwale was within ten inches of the water, and both Ewan and the other labourer were striking down into the water, with oar and boat-hook, on either side of Hill’s arm. Mr. Fison instinctively placed himself to counterpoise them.

Then Hill, who was a burly, powerful man, made a strenuous effort, and rose almost to a standing position. He lifted his arm, indeed, clean out of the water. Hanging to it was a complicated tangle of brown ropes, and the eyes of one of the brutes that had hold of him, glaring straight and resolute, showed momentarily above the surface. The boat heeled more and more, and the green-brown water came pouring in a cascade over the side. Then Hill slipped and fell with his ribs across the side, and his arm and the mass of tentacles about it splashed back into the water. He rolled over; his boot kicked Mr. Fison’s knee as that gentleman rushed forward to seize him, and in another moment fresh tentacles had whipped about his waist
and neck, and after a brief, convulsive struggle, in which the boat was nearly capsized, Hill was lugged overboard. The boat righted with a violent jerk that all but sent Mr. Fison over the other side, and hid the struggle in the water from his eyes.

He stood staggering to recover his balance for a moment, and as he did so he became aware that the struggle and the inflowing tide had carried them close upon the weedy rocks again. Not four yards off a table of rock still rose in rhythmic movements above the in-wash of the tide. In a moment Mr. Fison seized the oar from Ewan, gave one vigorous stroke, then dropping it, ran to the bows and leapt. He felt his feet slide over the rock, and, by a frantic effort, leapt again towards a further mass. He stumbled over this, came to his knees, and rose again.

“Look out!” cried someone, and a large drab body struck him. He was knocked flat into a tidal pool by one of the workmen, and as he went down he heard smothered, choking cries, that he believed at the time came from Hill. Then he found himself marveling at the shrillness and variety of Hill’s voice. Someone jumped over him, and a curving rush of foamy water poured over him, and passed. He scrambled to his feet dripping, and without looking seaward, ran as fast as his terror would let him shoreward. Before him, over the flat space of scattered rocks, stumbled the two workmen—one a dozen yards in front of the other.

He looked over his shoulder at last, and seeing that he was not pursued, faced about. He was astonished. From the moment of the rising of the cephalopods out of the water he had been acting too swiftly to fully comprehend his actions. Now it seemed to him as if he had suddenly jumped out of an evil dream.

For there were the sky, cloudless and blazing with the afternoon sun, the sea weltering under its pitiless brightness, the soft creamy foam of the breaking water, and the low, long, dark ridges of rock. The righted boat floated, rising and falling gently on the swell about a dozen yards from shore. Hill and the monsters, all the stress and tumult of that fierce fight for life, had vanished as though they had never been.

Mr. Fison’s heart was beating violently; he was throbbing to the finger-tips, and his breath came deep.
There was something missing. For some seconds he could not think clearly enough what this might be. Sun, sky, sea, rocks—what was it? Then he remembered the boat-load of excursionists. It had vanished. He wondered whether he had imagined it. He turned, and saw the two workmen standing side by side under the projecting masses of the tall pink cliffs. He hesitated whether he should make one last attempt to save the man Hill. His physical excitement seemed to desert him suddenly, and leave him aimless and helpless. He turned shoreward, stumbling and wading towards his two companions.

He looked back again, and there were now two boats floating, and the one farthest out at sea pitched clumsily, bottom upward.

III.

So it was *Haploleuthis ferox* made its appearance upon the Devonshire coast. So far, this has been its most serious aggression. Mr. Fison’s account, taken together with the wave of boating and bathing casualties to which I have already alluded, and the absence of fish from the Cornish coasts that year, points clearly to a shoal of these voracious deep-sea monsters prowling slowly along the sub-tidal coast-line. Hunger migration has, I know, been suggested as the force that drove them hither; but, for my own part, I prefer to believe the alternative theory of Hemsley. Hemsley holds that a pack or shoal of these creatures may have become enamoured of human flesh by the accident of a foundered ship sinking among them, and have wandered in search of it out of their accustomed zone; first waylaying and following ships, and so coming to our shores in the wake of the Atlantic traffic. But to discuss Hemsley’s cogent and admirably-stated arguments would be out of place here.

It would seem that the appetites of the shoal were satisfied by the catch of eleven people—for, so far as can be ascertained, there were ten people in the second boat, and certainly these creatures gave no further signs of their presence off Sidmouth that day. The coast between Seaton and Budleigh Salterton was patrolled all that evening and night by four Preventive Service boats, the men in which were armed with harpoons and cutlasses, and as the evening advanced, a number of more or less similarly equipped expeditions, organised by private individu-
als, joined them. Mr. Fison took no part in any of these expeditions.

About midnight excited hails were heard from a boat about a couple of miles out at sea to the south-east of Sidmouth, and a lantern was seen waving in a strange manner to and fro and up and down. The nearer boats at once hurried towards the alarm. The venturesome occupants of the boat—a seaman, a curate, and two schoolboys—had actually seen the monsters passing under their boat. The creatures, it seems, like most deep-sea organisms, were phosphorescent, and they had been floating, five fathoms deep or so, like creatures of moonshine through the blackness of the water, their tentacles retracted and as if asleep, rolling over and over, and moving slowly in a wedge-like formation towards the south-east.

These people told their story in gesticulated fragments, as first one boat drew alongside and then another. At last there was a little fleet of eight or nine boats collected together, and from them a tumult, like the chatter of a market-place, rose into the stillness of the night. There was little or no disposition to pursue the shoal, the people had neither weapons nor experience for such a dubious chase, and presently—even with a certain relief, it may be—the boats turned shoreward.

And now to tell what is perhaps the most astonishing fact in this whole astonishing raid. We have not the slightest knowledge of the subsequent movements of the shoal, although the whole south-west coast was now alert for it. But it may, perhaps, be significant that a cachalot was stranded off Sark on June 3. Two weeks and three days after this Sidmouth affair, a living *Haploteuthis* came ashore on Calais sands. It was alive, because several witnesses saw its tentacles moving in a convulsive way. But it is probable that it was dying. A gentleman named Pouchet obtained a rifle and shot it.

That was the last appearance of a living *Haploteuthis*. No others were seen on the French coast. On the 15th of June a dead carcass, almost complete, was washed ashore near Torquay, and a few days later a boat from the Marine Biological station, engaged in dredging off Plymouth, picked up a rotting specimen, slashed deeply with a cutlass wound. How the former had come by its death it is impossible to say. And on
the last day of June, Mr. Egbert Caine, an artist, bathing near Newlyn, threw up his arms, shrieked, and was drawn under. A friend bathing with him made no attempt to save him, but swam at once for the shore. This is the last fact to tell of this extraordinary raid from the deeper sea. Whether it is really the last of these horrible creatures it is, as yet, premature to say. But it is believed, and certainly it is to be hoped, that they have returned now, and returned for good, to the sunless depths of the middle seas, out of which they have so strangely and so mysteriously arisen.
In The Abyss
HG Wells

The lieutenant stood in front of the steel sphere and gnawed a piece of pine splinter. “What do you think of it, Steevens?” he asked.

“It’s an idea,” said Steevens, in the tone of one who keeps an open mind.

“I believe it will smash—flat,” said the lieutenant.

“He seems to have calculated it all out pretty well,” said Steevens, still impartial.

“But think of the pressure,” said the lieutenant. “At the surface of the water it’s fourteen pounds to the inch, thirty feet down it’s double that; sixty, treble; ninety, four times; nine hundred, forty times; five thousand, three hundred—that’s a mile—it’s two hundred and forty times fourteen pounds; that’s—let’s see—thirty hundredweight—a ton and a half, Steevens; a ton and a half to the square inch. And the ocean where he’s going is five miles deep. That’s seven and a half”

“Sounds a lot,” said Steevens, “but it’s jolly thick steel.”

The lieutenant made no answer, but resumed his pine splinter. The object of their conversation was a huge ball of steel, having an exterior diameter of perhaps nine feet. It looked like the shot for some Titanic piece of artillery. It was elaborately nested in a monstrous scaffolding built into the framework of the vessel, and the gigantic spars that were presently to sling it overboard gave the stern of the ship an appearance that had raised the curiosity of every decent sailor who had sighted it, from the Pool of London to the Tropic of Capricorn. In two places, one above the other, the steel gave place to a couple of
circular windows of enormously thick glass, and one of these, set in a steel frame of great solidity, was now partially unscrewed. Both the men had seen the interior of this globe for the first time that morning. It was elaborately padded with air cushions, with little studs sunk between bulging pillows to work the simple mechanism of the affair. Everything was elaborately padded, even the Myers apparatus which was to absorb carbonic acid and replace the oxygen inspired by its tenant, when he had crept in by the glass manhole, and had been screwed in. It was so elaborately padded that a man might have been fired from a gun in it with perfect safety. And it had need to be, for presently a man was to crawl in through that glass manhole, to be screwed up tightly, and to be flung overboard, and to sink down—down—down, for five miles, even as the lieutenant said. It had taken the strongest hold of his imagination; it made him a bore at mess; and he found Steevens, the new arrival aboard, a godsend to talk to about it, over and over again.

“It’s my opinion,” said the lieutenant, “that that glass will simply bend in and bulge and smash, under a pressure of that sort. Daubrée has made rocks run like water under big pressures—and, you mark my words”

“If the glass did break in,” said Steevens, “what then?”

“The water would shoot in like a jet of iron. Have you ever felt a straight jet of high pressure water? It would hit as hard as a bullet. It would simply smash him and flatten him. It would tear down his throat, and into his lungs; it would blow in his ears”

“What a detailed imagination you have!” protested Steevens, who saw things vividly.

“It’s a simple statement of the inevitable,” said the lieutenant.

“And the globe?”

“Would just give out a few little bubbles, and it would settle down comfortably against the day of judgment, among the oozes and the bottom clay—with poor Elstead spread over his own smashed cushions like butter over bread.”

He repeated this sentence as though he liked it very much. “Like butter over bread,” he said.

“Having a look at the jigger?” said a voice, and Elstead stood
behind them, spick and span in white, with a cigarette between his teeth, and his eyes smiling out of the shadow of his ample hat-brim. “What’s that about bread and butter, Weybridge? Grumbling as usual about the insufficient pay of naval officers? It won’t be more than a day now before I start. We are to get the slings ready to-day. This clean sky and gentle swell is just the kind of thing for swinging off a dozen tons of lead and iron; isn’t it?”

“It won’t affect you much,” said Weybridge.

“No. Seventy or eighty feet down, and I shall be there in a dozen seconds, there’s not a particle moving, though the wind shriek itself hoarse up above, and the water lifts halfway to the clouds. No. Down there”— He moved to the side of the ship and the other two followed him. All three leant forward on their elbows and stared down into the yellow-green water.

“Peace,” said Elstead, finishing his thought aloud.

“Are you dead certain that clockwork will act?” asked Weybridge presently.

“It has worked thirty-five times,” said Elstead. “It’s bound to work.”

“But if it doesn’t?”

“Why shouldn’t it?”

“I wouldn’t go down in that confounded thing,” said Weybridge, “for twenty thousand pounds.”

“Cheerful chap you are,” said Elstead, and spat sociably at a bubble below.

“I don’t understand yet how you mean to work the thing,” said Steevens.

“In the first place, I’m screwed into the sphere,” said Elstead, “and when I’ve turned the electric light off and on three times to show I’m cheerful, I’m swung out over the stern by that crane, with all those big lead sinkers slung below me. The top lead weight has a roller carrying a hundred fathoms of strong cord rolled up, and that’s all that joins the sinkers to the sphere, except the slings that will be cut when the affair is dropped. We use cord rather than wire rope because it’s easier to cut and more buoyant—necessary points, as you will see.

“Through each of these lead weights you notice there is a hole, and an iron rod will be run through that and will project
six feet on the lower side. If that rod is rammed up from below, it knocks up a lever and sets the clockwork in motion at the side of the cylinder on which the cord winds.

“Very well. The whole affair is lowered gently into the water, and the slings are cut. The sphere floats,—with the air in it, it’s lighter than water,—but the lead weights go down straight and the cord runs out. When the cord is all paid out, the sphere will go down too, pulled down by the cord.”

“But why the cord?” asked Steevens. “Why not fasten the weights directly to the sphere?”

“Because of the smash down below. The whole affair will go rushing down, mile after mile, at a headlong pace at last. It would be knocked to pieces on the bottom if it wasn’t for that cord. But the weights will hit the bottom, and directly they do, the buoyancy of the sphere will come into play. It will go on sinking slower and slower; come to a stop at last, and then begin to float upward again.

“That’s where the clockwork comes in. Directly the weights smash against the sea bottom, the rod will be knocked through and will kick up the clockwork, and the cord will be rewound on the reel. I shall be lugged down to the sea bottom. There I shall stay for half an hour, with the electric light on, looking about me. Then the clockwork will release a spring knife, the cord will be cut, and up I shall rush again, like a soda-water bubble. The cord itself will help the flotation.”

“And if you should chance to hit a ship?” said Weybridge.

“I should come up at such a pace, I should go clean through it,” said Elstead, “like a cannon ball. You needn’t worry about that.”

“And suppose some nimble crustacean should wriggle into your clockwork”

“It would be a pressing sort of invitation for me to stop,” said Elstead, turning his back on the water and staring at the sphere.

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They had swung Elstead overboard by eleven o’clock. The day was serenely bright and calm, with the horizon lost in haze. The electric glare in the little upper compartment beamed cheerfully three times. Then they let him down slowly to the
surface of the water, and a sailor in the stern chains hung ready to cut the tackle that held the lead weights and the sphere together. The globe, which had looked so large on deck, looked the smallest thing conceivable under the stern of the ship. It rolled a little, and its two dark windows, which floated uppermost, seemed like eyes turned up in round wonderment at the people who crowded the rail. A voice wondered how Elstead liked the rolling. “Are you ready?” sang out the commander. “Ay, ay, sir!” “Then let her go!”

The rope of the tackle tightened against the blade and was cut, and an eddy rolled over the globe in a grotesquely helpless fashion. Someone waved a handkerchief, someone else tried an ineffectual cheer, a middy was counting slowly, “Eight, nine, ten!” Another roll, then with a jerk and a splash the thing righted itself.

It seemed to be stationary for a moment, to grow rapidly smaller, and then the water closed over it, and it became visible, enlarged by refraction and dimmer, below the surface. Before one could count three it had disappeared. There was a flicker of white light far down in the water, that diminished to a speck and vanished. Then there was nothing but a depth of water going down into blackness, through which a shark was swimming.

Then suddenly the screw of the cruiser began to rotate, the water was crickled, the shark disappeared in a wrinkled confusion, and a torrent of foam rushed across the crystalline clearness that had swallowed up Elstead. “What’s the idee?” said one A.B. to another.

“We’re going to lay off about a couple of miles, ‘fear he should hit us when he comes up,” said his mate.

The ship steamed slowly to her new position. Aboard her almost everyone who was unoccupied remained watching the breathing swell into which the sphere had sunk. For the next half-hour it is doubtful if a word was spoken that did not bear directly or indirectly on Elstead. The December sun was now high in the sky, and the heat very considerable.

“He’ll be cold enough down there,” said Weybridge. “They say that below a certain depth sea water’s always just about freezing.”

“Where’ll he come up?” asked Steevens. “I’ve lost my bear-
ings.”

“That’s the spot,” said the commander, who prided himself on his omniscience. He extended a precise finger south-eastward. “And this, I reckon, is pretty nearly the moment,” he said. “He’s been thirty-five minutes.”

“How long does it take to reach the bottom of the ocean?” asked Steevens.

“For a depth of five miles, and reckoning—as we did—an acceleration of two feet per second, both ways, is just about three-quarters of a minute.”

“Then he’s overdue,” said Weybridge.

“Pretty nearly,” said the commander. “I suppose it takes a few minutes for that cord of his to wind in.”

“I forgot that,” said Weybridge, evidently relieved.

And then began the suspense. A minute slowly dragged itself out, and no sphere shot out of the water. Another followed, and nothing broke the low oily swell. The sailors explained to one another that little point about the winding-in of the cord. The rigging was dotted with expectant faces. “Come up, Elstead!” called one hairy-chested salt impatiently, and the others caught it up, and shouted as though they were waiting for the curtain of a theatre to rise.

The commander glanced irritably at them.

“Of course, if the acceleration’s less than two,” he said, “he’ll be all the longer. We aren’t absolutely certain that was the proper figure. I’m no slavish believer in calculations.”

Steevens agreed concisely. No one on the quarter-deck spoke for a couple of minutes. Then Steevens’ watchcase clicked.

When, twenty-one minutes after, the sun reached the zenith, they were still waiting for the globe to reappear, and not a man aboard had dared to whisper that hope was dead. It was Weybridge who first gave expression to that realisation. He spoke while the sound of eight bells still hung in the air. “I always distrusted that window,” he said quite suddenly to Steevens.

“Good God!” said Steevens; “you don’t think—?”

“Well!” said Weybridge, and left the rest to his imagination.

“I’m no great believer in calculations myself,” said the com-
mander dubiously, “so that I’m not altogether hopeless yet.” And at midnight the gunboat was steaming slowly in a spiral round the spot where the globe had sunk, and the white beam of the electric light fled and halted and swept discontentedly onward again over the waste of phosphorescent waters under the little stars.

“If his window hasn’t burst and smashed him,” said Weybridge, “then it’s a cursed sight worse, for his clockwork has gone wrong, and he’s alive now, five miles under our feet, down there in the cold and dark, anchored in that little bubble of his, where never a ray of light has shone or a human being lived, since the waters were gathered together. He’s there without food, feeling hungry and thirsty and scared, wondering whether he’ll starve or stifle. Which will it be? The Myers apparatus is running out, I suppose. How long do they last?”

“Good heavens!” he exclaimed; “what little things we are! What daring little devils! Down there, miles and miles of water—all water, and all this empty water about us and this sky. Gulfs!” He threw his hands out, and as he did so, a little white streak swept noiselessly up the sky, travelled more slowly, stopped, became a motionless dot, as though a new star had fallen up into the sky. Then it went sliding back again and lost itself amidst the reflections of the stars and the white haze of the sea’s phosphorescence.

At the sight he stopped, arm extended and mouth open. He shut his mouth, opened it again, and waved his arms with an impatient gesture. Then he turned, shouted “El-stead ahoy!” to the first watch, and went at a run to Lindley and the searchlight. “I saw him,” he said. “Starboard there! His light’s on, and he’s just shot out of the water. Bring the light round. We ought to see him drifting, when he lifts on the swell.”

But they never picked up the explorer until dawn. Then they almost ran him down. The crane was swung out and a boat’s crew hooked the chain to the sphere. When they had shipped the sphere, they unscrewed the manhole and peered into the darkness of the interior (for the electric light chamber was intended to illuminate the water about the sphere, and was shut off entirely from its general cavity).

The air was very hot within the cavity, and the indiarubber
at the lip of the manhole was soft. There was no answer to their eager questions and no sound of movement within. Elstead seemed to be lying motionless, crumpled up in the bottom of the globe. The ship’s doctor crawled in and lifted him out to the men outside. For a moment or so they did not know whether Elstead was alive or dead. His face, in the yellow light of the ship’s lamps, glistened with perspiration. They carried him down to his own cabin.

He was not dead, they found, but in a state of absolute nervous collapse, and besides cruelly bruised. For some days he had to lie perfectly still. It was a week before he could tell his experiences.

Almost his first words were that he was going down again. The sphere would have to be altered, he said, in order to allow him to throw off the cord if need be, and that was all. He had had the most marvellous experience. “You thought I should find nothing but ooze,” he said. “You laughed at my explorations, and I’ve discovered a new world!” He told his story in disconnected fragments, and chiefly from the wrong end, so that it is impossible to re-tell it in his words. But what follows is the narrative of his experience.

It began atrociously, he said. Before the cord ran out, the thing kept rolling over. He felt like a frog in a football. He could see nothing but the crane and the sky overhead, with an occasional glimpse of the people on the ship’s rail. He couldn’t tell a bit which way the thing would roll next. Suddenly he would find his feet going up, and try to step, and over he went rolling, head over heels, and just anyhow, on the padding. Any other shape would have been more comfortable, but no other shape was to be relied upon under the huge pressure of the nethermost abyss.

Suddenly the swaying ceased; the globe righted, and when he had picked himself up, he saw the water all about him greeny-blue, with an attenuated light filtering down from above, and a shoal of little floating things went rushing up past him, as it seemed to him, towards the light. And even as he looked, it grew darker and darker, until the water above was as dark as the midnight sky, albeit of a greener shade, and the water below black. And little transparent things in the water
developed a faint glint of luminosity, and shot past him in faint greenish streaks.

And the feeling of falling! It was just like the start of a lift, he said, only it kept on. One has to imagine what that means, that keeping on. It was then of all times that Elstead repented of his adventure. He saw the chances against him in an altogether new light. He thought of the big cuttlefish people knew to exist in the middle waters, the kind of things they find half digested in whales at times, or floating dead and rotten and half eaten by fish. Suppose one caught hold and wouldn’t let go. And had the clockwork really been sufficiently tested? But whether he wanted to go on or to go back mattered not the slightest now.

In fifty seconds everything was as black as night outside, except where the beam from his light struck through the waters, and picked out every now and then some fish or scrap of sinking matter. They flashed by too fast for him to see what they were. Once he thinks he passed a shark. And then the sphere began to get hot by friction against the water. They had underestimated this, it seems.

The first thing he noticed was that he was perspiring, and then he heard a hissing growing louder under his feet, and saw a lot of little bubbles—very little bubbles they were—rushing upward like a fan through the water outside. Steam! He felt the window, and it was hot. He turned on the minute glow-lamp that lit his own cavity, looked at the padded watch by the studs, and saw he had been travelling now for two minutes. It came into his head that the window would crack through the conflict of temperatures, for he knew the bottom water is very near freezing.

Then suddenly the floor of the sphere seemed to press against his feet, the rush of bubbles outside grew slower and slower, and the hissing diminished. The sphere rolled a little. The window had not cracked, nothing had given, and he knew that the dangers of sinking, at anyrate, were over.

In another minute or so he would be on the floor of the abyss. He thought, he said, of Steevens and Weybridge and the rest of them five miles overhead, higher to him than the very highest clouds that ever floated over land are to us, steaming slowly and staring down and wondering what had happened to
him.

He peered out of the window. There were no more bubbles now, and the hissing had stopped. Outside there was a heavy blackness—as black as black velvet—except where the electric light pierced the empty water and showed the colour of it—a yellow-green. Then three things like shapes of fire swam into sight, following each other through the water. Whether they were little and near or big and far off he could not tell.

Each was outlined in a bluish light almost as bright as the lights of a fishing smack, a light which seemed to be smoking greatly, and all along the sides of them were specks of this, like the lighter portholes of a ship. Their phosphorescence seemed to go out as they came into the radiance of his lamp, and he saw then that they were little fish of some strange sort, with huge heads, vast eyes, and dwindling bodies and tails. Their eyes were turned towards him, and he judged they were following him down. He supposed they were attracted by his glare.

Presently others of the same sort joined them. As he went on down, he noticed that the water became of a pallid colour, and that little specks twinkled in his ray like motes in a sunbeam. This was probably due to the clouds of ooze and mud that the impact of his leaden sinkers had disturbed.

By the time he was drawn down to the lead weights he was in a dense fog of white that his electric light failed altogether to pierce for more than a few yards, and many minutes elapsed before the hanging sheets of sediment subsided to any extent. Then, lit by his light and by the transient phosphorescence of a distant shoal of fishes, he was able to see under the huge blackness of the super-incumbent water an undulating expanse of greyish-white ooze, broken here and there by tangled thickets of a growth of sea lilies, waving hungry tentacles in the air.

Farther away were the graceful, translucent outlines of a group of gigantic sponges. About this floor there were scattered a number of bristling flattish tufts of rich purple and black, which he decided must be some sort of sea-urchin, and small, large-eyed or blind things having a curious resemblance, some to woodlice, and others to lobsters, crawled sluggishly across the track of the light and vanished into the obscurity again, leaving furrowed trails behind them.
Then suddenly the hovering swarm of little fishes veered about and came towards him as a flight of starlings might do. They passed over him like a phosphorescent snow, and then he saw behind them some larger creature advancing towards the sphere.

At first he could see it only dimly, a faintly moving figure remotely suggestive of a walking man, and then it came into the spray of light that the lamp shot out. As the glare struck it, it shut its eyes, dazzled. He stared in rigid astonishment.

It was a strange vertebrated animal. Its dark purple head was dimly suggestive of a chameleon, but it had such a high forehead and such a braincase as no reptile ever displayed before; the vertical pitch of its face gave it a most extraordinary resemblance to a human being.

Two large and protruding eyes projected from sockets in chameleon fashion, and it had a broad reptilian mouth with horny lips beneath its little nostrils. In the position of the ears were two huge gill-covers, and out of these floated a branching tree of coralline filaments, almost like the tree-like gills that very young rays and sharks possess.

But the humanity of the face was not the most extraordinary thing about the creature. It was a biped; its almost globular body was poised on a tripod of two frog-like legs and a long thick tail, and its fore limbs, which grotesquely caricatured the human hand, much as a frog's do, carried a long shaft of bone, tipped with copper. The colour of the creature was variegated; its head, hands, and legs were purple; but its skin, which hung loosely upon it, even as clothes might do, was a phosphorescent grey. And it stood there blinded by the light.

At last this unknown creature of the abyss blinked its eyes open, and, shading them with its disengaged hand, opened its mouth and gave vent to a shouting noise, articulate almost as speech might be, that penetrated even the steel case and padded jacket of the sphere. How a shouting may be accomplished without lungs Elstead does not profess to explain. It then moved sideways out of the glare into the mystery of shadow that bordered it on either side, and Elstead felt rather than saw that it was coming towards him. Fancying the light had attracted it, he turned the switch that cut off the current. In another
moment something soft dabbed upon the steel, and the globe swayed.

Then the shouting was repeated, and it seemed to him that a distant echo answered it. The dabbing recurred, and the globe swayed and ground against the spindle over which the wire was rolled. He stood in the blackness and peered out into the everlasting night of the abyss. And presently he saw, very faint and remote, other phosphorescent quasi-human forms hurrying towards him.

Hardly knowing what he did, he felt about in his swaying prison for the stud of the exterior electric light, and came by accident against his own small glow-lamp in its padded recess. The sphere twisted, and then threw him down; he heard shouts like shouts of surprise, and when he rose to his feet, he saw two pairs of stalked eyes peering into the lower window and reflecting his light.

In another moment hands were dabbing vigorously at his steel casing, and there was a sound, horrible enough in his position, of the metal protection of the clockwork being vigorously hammered. That, indeed, sent his heart into his mouth, for if these strange creatures succeeded in stopping that, his release would never occur. Scarcely had he thought as much when he felt the sphere sway violently, and the floor of it press hard against his feet. He turned off the small glow-lamp that lit the interior, and sent the ray of the large light in the separate compartment out into the water. The sea-floor and the man-like creatures had disappeared, and a couple of fish chasing each other dropped suddenly by the window.

He thought at once that these strange denizens of the deep sea had broken the rope, and that he had escaped. He drove up faster and faster, and then stopped with a jerk that sent him flying against the padded roof of his prison. For half a minute, perhaps, he was too astonished to think.

Then he felt that the sphere was spinning slowly, and rocking, and it seemed to him that it was also being drawn through the water. By crouching close to the window, he managed to make his weight effective and roll that part of the sphere downward, but he could see nothing save the pale ray of his light striking down ineffectively into the darkness. It occurred
to him that he would see more if he turned the lamp off, and allowed his eyes to grow accustomed to the profound obscurity.

In this he was wise. After some minutes the velvety blackness became a translucent blackness, and then, far away, and as faint as the zodiacal light of an English summer evening, he saw shapes moving below. He judged these creatures had detached his cable, and were towing him along the sea bottom.

And then he saw something faint and remote across the undulations of the submarine plain, a broad horizon of pale luminosity that extended this way and that way as far as the range of his little window permitted him to see. To this he was being towed, as a balloon might be towed by men out of the open country into a town. He approached it very slowly, and very slowly the dim irradiation was gathered together into more definite shapes.

It was nearly five o’clock before he came over this luminous area, and by that time he could make out an arrangement suggestive of streets and houses grouped about a vast roofless erection that was grotesquely suggestive of a ruined abbey. It was spread out like a map below him. The houses were all roofless enclosures of walls, and their substance being, as he afterwards saw, of phosphorescent bones, gave the place an appearance as if it were built of drowned moonshine.

Among the inner caves of the place waving trees of crinoid stretched their tentacles, and tall, slender, glassy sponges shot like shining minarets and lilies of filmy light out of the general glow of the city. In the open spaces of the place he could see a stirring movement as of crowds of people, but he was too many fathoms above them to distinguish the individuals in those crowds.

Then slowly they pulled him down, and as they did so, the details of the place crept slowly upon his apprehension. He saw that the courses of the cloudy buildings were marked out with beaded lines of round objects, and then he perceived that at several points below him, in broad open spaces, were forms like the encrusted shapes of ships.

Slowly and surely he was drawn down, and the forms below him became brighter, clearer, more distinct. He was being pulled down, he perceived, towards the large building in the
centre of the town, and he could catch a glimpse ever and again of the multitudinous forms that were lugging at his cord. He was astonished to see that the rigging of one of the ships, which formed such a prominent feature of the place, was crowded with a host of gesticulating figures regarding him, and then the walls of the great building rose about him silently, and hid the city from his eyes.

And such walls they were, of water-logged wood, and twisted wire-rope, and iron spars, and copper, and the bones and skulls of dead men. The skulls ran in zigzag lines and spirals and fantastic curves over the building; and in and out of their eye-sockets, and over the whole surface of the place, lurked and played a multitude of silvery little fishes.

Suddenly his ears were filled with a low shouting and a noise like the violent blowing of horns, and this gave place to a fantastic chant. Down the sphere sank, past the huge point-ed windows, through which he saw vaguely a great number of these strange, ghostlike people regarding him, and at last he came to rest, as it seemed, on a kind of altar that stood in the centre of the place.

And now he was at such a level that he could see these strange people of the abyss plainly once more. To his astonishment, he perceived that they were prostrating themselves before him, all save one, dressed as it seemed in a robe of placoid scales, and crowned with a luminous diadem, who stood with his reptilian mouth opening and shutting, as though he led the chanting of the worshippers.

A curious impulse made Elstead turn on his small glow-lamp again, so that he became visible to these creatures of the abyss, albeit the glare made them disappear forthwith into night. At this sudden sight of him, the chanting gave place to a tumult of exultant shouts; and Elstead, being anxious to watch them, turned his light off again, and vanished from before their eyes. But for a time he was too blind to make out what they were doing, and when at last he could distinguish them, they were kneeling again. And thus they continued worshipping him, without rest or intermission, for the space of three hours.

Most circumstantial was Elstead’s account of this astounding city and its people, these people of perpetual night, who have
never seen sun or moon or stars, green vegetation, nor any liv-
ing, air-breathing creatures, who know nothing of fire, nor any light but the phosphorescent light of living things.

Startling as is his story, it is yet more startling to find that scientific men, of such eminence as Adams and Jenkins, find nothing incredible in it. They tell me they see no reason why intelligent, water-breathing, vertebrated creatures, inured to a low temperature and enormous pressure, and of such a heavy structure, that neither alive nor dead would they float, might not live upon the bottom of the deep sea, and quite unsuspected by us, descendants like ourselves of the great Theriomorpha of the New Red Sandstone age.

We should be known to them, however, as strange, meteoric creatures, wont to fall catastrophically dead out of the myster-ious blackness of their watery sky. And not only we ourselves, but our ships, our metals, our appliances, would come raining down out of the night. Sometimes sinking things would smite down and crush them, as if it were the judgment of some unseen power above, and sometimes would come things of the utmost rarity or utility, or shapes of inspiring suggestion. One can understand, perhaps, something of their behaviour at the descent of a living man, if one thinks what a barbaric people might do, to whom an enhaloed, shining creature came suddenly out of the sky.

At one time or another Elstead probably told the officers of the Ptarmigan every detail of his strange twelve hours in the abyss. That he also intended to write them down is certain, but he never did, and so unhappily we have to piece together the discrepant fragments of his story from the reminiscences of Commander Simmons, Weybridge, Steevens, Lindley, and the others.

We see the thing darkly in fragmentary glimpses—the huge ghostly building, the bowing, chanting people, with their dark chameleon-like heads and faintly luminous clothing, and Elstead, with his light turned on again, vainly trying to convey to their minds that the cord by which the sphere was held was to be severed. Minute after minute slipped away, and Elstead, looking at his watch, was horrified to find that he had oxygen only for four hours more. But the chant in his honour kept on
as remorselessly as if it was the marching song of his approaching death.

The manner of his release he does not understand, but to judge by the end of cord that hung from the sphere, it had been cut through by rubbing against the edge of the altar. Abruptly the sphere rolled over, and he swept up, out of their world, as an ethereal creature clothed in a vacuum would sweep through our own atmosphere back to its native ether again. He must have torn out of their sight as a hydrogen bubble hastens upward from our air. A strange ascension it must have seemed to them.

The sphere rushed up with even greater velocity than, when weighted with the lead sinkers, it had rushed down. It became exceedingly hot. It drove up with the windows uppermost, and he remembers the torrent of bubbles frothing against the glass. Every moment he expected this to fly. Then suddenly something like a huge wheel seemed to be released in his head, the padded compartment began spinning about him, and he fainted. His next recollection was of his cabin, and of the doctor’s voice.

But that is the substance of the extraordinary story that Elstead related in fragments to the officers of the Ptarmigan. He promised to write it all down at a later date. His mind was chiefly occupied with the improvement of his apparatus, which was effected at Rio.

It remains only to tell that on February 2, 1896, he made his second descent into the ocean abyss, with the improvements his first experience suggested. What happened we shall probably never know. He never returned. The Ptarmigan beat about over the point of his submersion, seeking him in vain for thirteen days. Then she returned to Rio, and the news was telegraphed to his friends. So the matter remains for the present. But it is hardly probable that no further attempt will be made to verify his strange story of these hitherto unsuspected cities of the deep sea.
The Mermaid’s Child
Abbie Farwell Brown

In the rocks on the seashore, left bare by the tide, one often finds tiny pools of water fringed with seaweed and padded with curious moss. These are the cradles which the Mermaids have trimmed prettily for the sea-babies, and where they leave the little ones when they have to go away on other business, as Mermaids do. But one never spies the sea-children in their cradles, for they are taught to tumble out and slip away into the sea if a human step should approach. You see, the fishes have told the Mer-folk cruel tales of the Land-people with their nets and hooks and lines.

In the softest, prettiest little cradle of all a Sea-child lay one afternoon crying to himself. He cried because he was lonesome. His mother did not love him as a baby’s mother should; for she was the silliest and the vainest of all the Mermaids. Her best friend was her looking-glass of polished pearl, and her only care was to remain young and girlish. Indeed, she bore her thousand-odd years well, even for a Mermaid. She liked the Sea-baby well enough, but she was ashamed to have him follow her about as he loved to do, because she imagined it made her seem old to be called “Mer-mother” by his lisping lips. She never had time to caress or play with him; and finally she forbade him ever to speak to her unless she spoke first. Sometimes she seemed to forget him altogether, as she left him to take care of himself, while she sat on the rocks combing her long green
hair, or playing with the giddy Mermen in the caves below the sea.

So while the other sea-people sported or slept and were happy, her poor little Sea-child lay and cried in the green pool where the sea-anemones tickled his cheek with their soft fingers, seeking to make him laugh, and the sea-fringe curled about the scaly little tail which, like a fish, he had in place of legs. On this particular afternoon he was particularly lonesome.

“Ahoo!” he sobbed. “I am so unhappy! Ahoo! I want some one to love me very much!”

Now a kind old Stork was sitting on a rock above the baby’s head, preening his feathers in a looking-glass pool. He heard the Sea-child’s words, and he spoke in his kind, gruff voice.

“What is the matter, little one?” he asked.

At first the Sea-child was surprised to be addressed by a land bird. But he soon saw that this creature was friendly, and told him all his trouble, as babies do. “Tut tut!” said the Stork, frowning. “Your Mer-mother needs a lesson sadly.”

“What is a lesson?” lisped the Sea-child.

But the Stork was busy thinking and did not reply at once.

“What is a change?” asked the baby, for he was very young and ignorant.

“You shall see,” answered the Stork, “if you will take my advice; for I am your friend. Now listen. When next you hear a step upon the rocks do not stir from your cradle, but wait and see what will happen.” Without another word the Stork flapped away, leaving the baby to stare up at the blue sky with the tears still wet upon his cheeks, wondering what the Stork could have meant.

“I will not stir,” he said to himself. “Whatever happens I will wait and see.”

It was the Stork’s business to bring babies to the homes where babies were needed; and sometimes it was very hard to find babies enough. Even now he knew of a house upon the hill where a boy was longing for a little brother to play with. Every night Gil mentioned the matter in his prayers; every night he begged the Stork to bring him a playmate. But though the Stork had hunted far and wide through all the land he could
not find a human baby to spare for the cottage on the hill. Now he had a happy idea.

With his long legs dangling he flew swiftly up towards the hill; and halfway there he met the boy wandering about sulkily all alone. The Stork had never before spoken to this boy, because he well knew what Gil wanted, and he hated to be teased for what he could not give. So, though he had listened sadly to the boy’s prayers, by day he had kept carefully out of sight. But now he came close overhead, and settling down stood upon one leg directly in Gil’s path.

“Good-afternoon,” he said. “I think I have heard you say that you wanted a little brother.”

Gil was surprised to have a Stork address him like this, but he was still more pleased at the happy word. “I do! Oh, I do indeed!” he cried.

“Would you make a good brother to him?” asked the Stork. “Oh yes!” answered the boy eagerly. “A very good brother I should be.”

“H’m,” said the Stork. “One never can tell about these boys. I think you are selfish and jealous. But a little brother may be a good thing for you. In any case, there is little for him to lose. Will you be so good as to come with me?”

Without another word the Stork flew up and away toward the beach, leaving Gil staring. This certainly was a most extraordinary bird! But Gil soon decided to follow him and see what would happen, for who could tell what the Stork’s mysterious words might mean?

Presently, lying in his little cradle, the Sea-child heard the sound of feet scrambling up the rocks: the sound he had been taught to fear more than anything in the world. It was his first thought to flop out of the cradle, over into the sea below; and he half turned to do so. But in a moment he remembered the Stork’s last words, and although he was trembling with fear he remained where he was.

Soon over the top of the rock peered the face of the boy, Gil of the hill cottage, looking straight down into the pool where the Sea-baby lay snugly on the seaweed.

“Oh!” cried the boy, with round black eyes fixed upon the baby’s round blue ones. “Oh!” cried the Sea-child. And it would
be hard to say which of the two was more astonished. For to a Sea-child the sight of a clothed, two-legged land-boy is quite as strange as a naked little fish-tailed infant is to a human. But after the first look neither felt afraid, in spite of the terrible tales which each had heard of the other’s kind. They stared wistfully at each other, not knowing what to do next, until the Stork came forward and spoke wise words.

“You, land-boy Gil,” he said, “you want a little brother, do you not?” Gil nodded. “And you, Sea-child, want some one to love you? I think I can manage to please you both. But first you must kiss each other.”

Gil hesitated. He was a big boy of five or six, too old for kissing. Moreover the Sea-child looked cold and wet and somewhat fishy. But already the red lips of the little fellow were pouted into a round O, and the sad blue eyes were looking up at him so pleadingly that Gil bent low over the watery cradle. Then two little soft arms went about his neck, and Gil felt the heart of the Sea-child thump happily against his own.

“Very good,” said the Stork approvingly.

The Sea-child could not stand, on account of having no feet, but he lay in his pool holding Gil’s hand.

“Now the change is coming,” went on the Stork, and as he spoke the baby began to fall asleep. “In twelve hours,” he said to Gil, “he will become a tiny human child, and I shall carry him to the house on the hill, where he will find a loving family awaiting him. Look! Already he is losing the uniform of the sea,” and he pointed at the Sea-child’s fishy tail. Sure enough, the scales were falling away one by one, and already the shape of two little chubby legs could be seen under the skin, which was shrinking as a tadpole’s does before he becomes a frog.

“When this tail is wholly gone,” declared the Stork, “he will forget what we have said to-night. He will forget his sea-home and the caves of the Mer-people. He will forget that he was once a Sea-child; and no one will ever remind him. For only you, Gil, and I shall know the secret.”

“And I shall never tell,” declared Gil.

“No, surely you will never tell,” answered the Stork gravely, “for if you tell that will be the end of all. You will lose the little brother, and you will be sorry all the rest of your life. Do not
forget, Gil. Do not forget."
"I shall not forget," said Gil.

Again they looked at the Sea-child, and he had fallen sound asleep, still holding Gil's hand. Now there was scarcely anything of the fish left about his little pink body; he was growing younger and younger, smaller and smaller.

"You must go home now, Gil," said the Stork. "Go home and go to bed. And to-morrow when you wake there will be a little brother in the house, and you ought to be a very good boy because you have your wish."

Gil gently loosened the Sea-child's hand and ran home as the Stork bade him, but said no word of all this to any one.

Now early in the morning the Stork came to the house on the hill, bringing a rosy little new baby which he laid on the bed beside Gil's mother, and then flew away. What a hullabaloo there was then, to be sure! What a welcome for the little stranger! Gil was not the only one who had longed for a new baby in the house, and this was the prettiest little fellow ever seen. Loudest of all cheered Gil when he saw the present which the Stork had brought. "Hurrah for my little new brother!" he cried. "Now I shall have some one to play with." That was Gil's chief thought: now he would have some one to play with.

They called the baby's name Jan. And from the first little Jan was very happy in his new home. He was happy all day in his mother's arms; happy when his foster-father came home at night and tossed him high to the ceiling; happiest of all when Gil held him close and begged him to hurry and grow up, so that they could play together.

Little Jan did hurry to grow up, as fast as health and strength and happiness could make a baby grow. He grew bigger and bigger, handsomer and handsomer, the finest baby in the village, and his family loved him dearly. Every day he became more of a playmate for Gil, whom he admired more than any one in the world. Gil petted and teased the little fellow, who, as soon as he could walk, began to follow him about like a faithful dog. Grand times the brothers had together then. They dug in the sand on the seashore, and scrambled about the cliffs. They rowed out in the harbor boats with hooks and lines, and played at being fishermen like their father, who sailed away early and
came home late. They grew bigger and sturdier and handsomer, and their parents were very proud of them both, the finest lads in all the country round.

The years went by, and during all this time Jan never dreamed the truth which only Gil and the Stork knew about the bargain made at the sea-pool cradle. To Jan, indeed, the sea was full of strange thoughts which were not memories but were like them. He loved to look and listen alone upon the water, or in the water, or by the water. Gil often caught him staring down into the blue waves, and when he raised his head there would be a puzzled look in the little fellow’s blue eyes, as though he were trying to solve a riddle. Then Gil would laugh; whereat the wrinkle would smooth itself from Jan’s forehead, and a smile would come about his mouth. He would throw his arm about his brother’s shoulder, saying:

“What strange thing is it, brother, that the old sea does to me? I think sometimes that I am bewitched.” But Gil would only laugh again, thinking his own thoughts. It gave him a pleasant important feeling to know that he was the keeper of Jan’s secret.

Meantime what had become of the Sea-baby’s forgotten mother? What was the pretty Mermaid doing in her home under the waves? She was learning the lesson which the Stork had meant to teach.

At first she had not greatly missed the Sea-baby, having other things to interest her in the lovely world where she lived. But as the sea-days went by she began to find the grotto which had been their pretty home a very lonely place indeed. She missed the little fellow playing with the shells and starfish on the floor of shining sand. She longed to see him teasing the crabs in the crevices of the rocks, or tickling the sea-anemones to make them draw in their waving fingers. She missed the round blue eyes which used to look at her so admiringly, and the little hands which had once wearied her with their caresses. She even missed the mischievous tricks which the baby sometimes used to play upon his mother, and she would have been glad once more to see him running away with her pearly mirror, or with the golden comb with which she combed her long green hair.

As she watched the other sea-children playing merrily with
the fishes the lonely Mermaid grew very sad, for she knew that her own baby had been the prettiest of them all, and she wondered how she could ever have been ashamed of him. The other mothers were proud of their darlings, and now they scorned her because she had no little one to hold her mirror when she made her toilet, or to run her errands when she was busy at play. But the poor Mermaid was too sad to play nowadays. She no longer took any pleasure in the gay life which the Mer-folk lived beneath the waves. She wandered instead here and there, up and down the sea, calling, calling for her lost baby. The sound of her sobbing came from the sea at morning, noon, and night.

She did not know her child’s fate, but she feared that he had been captured by the dreadful Men-folk, who, so her people said, were ever seeking to snare the sea-creatures in their wicked nets. Day after day the unhappy Mermaid swam along the shore trying to see the places where the Men-folk dwelt, hoping that she might catch a glimpse of her lost darling. But that good hap never befell her. Indeed, even if she had seen Jan, she would not have known her baby in the sturdy boy dressed all in blue, like the other fisher-lads. Nor would Jan have known his mother in this beautiful creature of the sea. For he had quite forgotten the Mermaid who had neglected him, and if he thought of the Mer-folk at all it was as humans do, with wonder and with longing, and yet with fear.

Now the good old Stork who had first meddled in these matters kept one eye upon the doings in that neighborhood, and he had seen the sorrowful Mermaid wandering lonely up and down the shore. He knew it must be the Sea-child’s mother, sorry at last for her long carelessness. As the years passed he began to pity the poor creature; but when he found himself growing too soft-hearted he would shake his head firmly and say to himself:

“It will not do. She is not yet punished enough, for she was very cruel. If now she could have her baby again she would soon be as thoughtless as ever. Besides, there is my promise to Gil. So long as he keeps the secret so must I.”

But one day, several years later, when the Stork was flying over the harbor, he spied the Mermaid lying upon a rock over
which the waves dashed merrily, and she was weeping bitterly, tearing her lovely green hair. She looked so pretty and so forlorn that the bird's kind heart was touched, and he could not help stopping to comfort her a bit. Flying close to her head he said gently:

“Poor Mermaid! What is the matter?”

“Oh, oh!” wailed the Mermaid. “Long, long ago I lost my pretty little Sea-child, and he is not to be found anywhere, anywhere in the whole sea, for I have looked. I have been from ocean to ocean, from pole to pole. Oh, what shall I do? He is on the land, I know he is, and the wicked humans are ill-treating him.”

The Stork spoke slowly and gravely. “Was he so happy, then, in his sea-home? Did you love him and care for him very dearly?”

“No, no!” sobbed the Mermaid. “I did not love him enough. I did not make him happy. I neglected him and found him in the way, till one day he disappeared, and I shall never see him again. Oh, my baby, my little Sea-child!”

The Stork wiped a tear from his eye. “It is very sad,” he said. “But perhaps it will comfort you to know that he is not far away.”

“Oh!” cried the Mermaid, clasping her hands. “You know where he is? You will bring him back to me? Dear, dear Stork! I will give you a necklace of pearls and a necklace of coral if you will bring my baby to me again.”

The Stork smiled grimly, looking down at his long neck. “A necklace of pearls and a necklace of coral!” he repeated. “How becoming they would be!” Then he grew grave once more and said: “I cannot return your child to you, but I can tell you something of him. He is indeed among the humans, but he is very happy there. They love him and he loves them, and all is well--so far.”

“Oh, show him to me that I may take him away!” cried the Mermaid.

But the Stork shook his head. “No, no, for you deserted him,” he said solemnly; “now he has another mother in yonder village who loves him better than you did. He has a brother, also, whom he loves best of all. You cannot claim him so long as
he is happy there."

"Then shall I never see him again, wise Bird?" asked the Mermaid sadly.

"Perhaps," answered the Stork. "If he should become unhappy, or if the secret should be betrayed."

"Ah, then I must be again a cruel mother and hope that he may become unhappy," sobbed the Mermaid. "I shall look for him every day in the harbor near the village, and when his face is sad I shall claim him for my own."

"You will not know him," cried the Stork, rising on his wings and flapping away. "He wears a disguise. He is like a human; like any other fisher-boy; and he bears a human name."

"Oh, tell me that name!" begged the Mermaid.

But the Stork only cried, "I must not tell. I have told too much already," and he was gone.

"Oh, then I will love all fisher-boys for his sake," sobbed the Mermaid as she dived down into the sea. "And some day, some day I shall find him out; for my baby is sure to be the finest of them all."

Now the years went by, and the parents of Gil and Jan were dead. The two brothers were tall and sturdy and stout, the finest lads in the whole country. But as their shadows grew taller and broader when they walked together across the sand, so another shadow which had begun to fall between them grew and grew. It was the shadow of Gil’s selfishness and jealousy. So long as Jan was smaller and weaker than he, Gil was quite content, and never ceased to be grateful for the little brother who had come to be his playmate. But suddenly, as it seemed, he found that Jan was almost as big as himself; for the boy had thriven wondrously, though there were still several years which Jan could never make up. Gil was still the leader, but Jan was not far behind; and Jan himself led all the other boys when his brother was not by. Every one loved Jan, for he was kind and merry, while Gil was often gloomy and disagreeable. Gil wanted to be first in everything, but there began to be some things that Jan could do better than he. It made Gil angry to hear his brother praised; it made him sulky and malicious, and sometimes he spoke unkindly to Jan, which caused the blue eyes to fill with tears. For, big fellow though he was, Jan was five years younger,
and he was a sensitive lad, loving Gil more than anything else in the world. Gil’s unkindness hurt Jan deeply, but could not make him love his brother less.

Both boys were famous swimmers. Gil was still the stronger of the two, and he could outswim any lad in town. As for Jan, the fishermen declared that he took to the water like a fish. No one in all the village could turn and twist, dive and glide and play such graceful pranks, flashing whitely through the waves, as did Jan. This was a great trouble to Gil, who wished to be foremost in this as in everything else. He was a selfish fellow; he had wanted a playmate to follow and admire him. He had not bargained for a comrade who might become a rival. And he seemed to love his brother less and less as the days went by.

One beautiful summer day Gil and Jan called together the other boys, the best swimmers in the village, and they all went down to the bay to swim. They played all sorts of water-games, in which the two brothers were leaders. They dived and floated and chased one another like fishes through the water. Jan, especially, won shouts of applause for his wonderful diving, for the other boys liked him, and were proud of him, glad to see him win. This again made Gil jealous and angry. Jan dived once more and remained under water so long that the boys began to fear that he would never come up; and in his wicked heart Gil half hoped that it was to be so. For it had come about that Gil began to wish he had no brother at all. So different was he from the boy who made the eager bargain with the good old Stork.

At last Jan’s head came out of the water, bubbling and blowing, and the boys set up a cheer. Never before had any one in the village performed such a feat as that. But Jan did not answer their cheers with his usual merry laugh. Something was troubling him which made him look strange to the others. As soon as he reached the shore he ran up to Gil and whispered in his brother’s ear a curious story.

“Oh, Gil!” he cried. “Such a strange feeling I have had! Down below there as I was swimming along I seemed to hear a strange sound like a cry, and then, surely, I felt something cling close to me, like soft arms. Gil, Gil, what could it have been? I have heard tell of the Mermaidens who are said to live in these waters. Some even say that they have seen them afar off on the
rocks where the spray dashed highest. Gil, could it have been a Mermaid who touched me and seemed to pull me down as if to keep me under the water forever? I could hardly draw away, Gil. Tell me what you think it means?"

Gil was too angry at Jan’s success to answer kindly. He sneered, remembering the secret which only he and the Stork knew.

“There are slimy folk, half fish and half human, people say. The less one has to do with them the better. I think you are half fish yourself, Jan. It is no credit to you that you are able to swim!” So spoke Gil, breaking the promise which he had once given.

On the minute came a hoarse cry overhead, and a great Stork flapped down the sky, fixing his sharp eyes upon Gil, as if in warning.


Gil bit his lip and said no more, but from that moment he hated his brother wickedly, knowing that the Stork was still watching over the child whom he had taken from the sea.

But Jan had no time to ask Gil what he meant by the strange words which he had just spoken, for at that moment several of the boys came running up to them. “Ho, Gil! Ho, Jan!” they cried. “Let us have a race! Come, let us swim out to the Round Rock and back. And the winner of this race shall be champion of the village. Come, boys, make ready for the race!”

Gil’s face brightened, for he had ever been the strongest swimmer on the bay, and now he could afford to be kind to poor Jan, whose blue eyes were clouded and unhappy, because of Gil’s former harsh words and manner.

“Ho! The race, the race!” cried Gil. “Come, Jan, you can dive like a fish. Now let us see how you can swim. One, two, three! We are off!”

The boys sprang, laughing, into the water. Jan needed but a kind word from his brother to make him happy again. Off they started for the Round Rock, where the spray was dashing high.

The black heads bobbed up and down in the waves, drawing nearer and nearer to the rock. Gradually they separated, and some fell behind. The lads could not all keep up the gay strokes with which they had begun the race. Four held the lead; Boise
and Cadoc, the lighthouse-keeper’s sons, Gil, and Jan.

Almost abreast they rounded the rock, and began the long stretch back to the beach. Soon Boise began to fall behind. In a little while Cadoc’s strength failed also. They shouted, laughingly, that they were fairly beaten, and those who were on shore began to cry encouragement to the two brothers, who alone were left in the race.

“Gil! Jan! Oh, Gil! Oh, Jan! Hasten, lads, for one of you is the champion. Hurrah! Hurrah!”

Gil was in high spirits, for he was still in the lead. “Hurry, little brother,” he cried, “or I shall beat you badly. Oho! You can dive, but that is scarcely swimming; my fine lad. You had better hurry, or I win.”

And Jan did hurry. He put forth all his strength as he had never done before. Soon the black heads bobbed side by side in the water, and Gil ceased to laugh and jest, for it was now a struggle in good earnest. He shut his teeth angrily, straining forward with all his might. But push as he would, Jan kept close beside. At last, when within a few yards of the beach, Jan gave a little laughing shout and shot through the water like a flash. He had been saving his strength for this: and he had won!

The other boys dragged him up the beach with shouts and cheers of welcome to the new champion, while Gil, who had borne that title for so long, crawled ashore unaided.

“Hurrah for Jan!” they cried, tossing their caps and dancing happily, for Jan was a great favorite. “Hurrah for the little brother! Now Gil must take the second place. You are the big brother now!” And they laughed and jeered at Gil: not maliciously, but because they were pleased with Jan.

Jan ran to Gil and held out his hand for his brother’s congratulations, but Gil thrust it aside. “It was not a fair race!” he sputtered. “Unfair, unfair, I vow!”

The others gathered around, surprised to see Gil so angry and with such wild eyes.

“Gil, oh, Gil! What do you mean?” cried Jan, turning very pale. “Why was it not a fair race, brother?”

“Brother! You are no brother of mine!” shouted Gil, beside himself with rage. “You are a changeling: half fish, half sea-monster. You were helped in this race by the sea-people;
you cannot deny it. I saw one push you to the shore. You could not have beaten me else. Every one knows that I am the better swimmer, though I am no fish.”

“Nonsense!” cried Boise, clapping Gil on the shoulder with a laugh. “You talk foolishness, Gil. There are no sea-folk in these waters; those are old women’s tales. It was a fair race, I say, and Jan is our champion.”

But Jan heeded only the cruel words which his brother had spoken. “Gil, what do you mean?” he asked again, trembling with a new fear. “I was not helped by any one.”

“Ha!” cried Gil, pointing at him fiercely, “see him tremble, see his guilty looks! He knows that I speak true. The Mermaid helped him. He is half fish. He came out of the sea and was no real brother of mine, but a Merbaby. A Mermaid was his mother!”

At these words a whirring sound was heard in the air overhead, and a second time the Stork appeared, flapping across the scene out to sea, where he alighted upon the Round Rock. But Gil was too angry even to notice him.

“Gil, Gil, tell me how this can be?” begged Jan, going up to his brother and laying a pleading hand upon his arm.

But Gil shook him off, crying, “It is true! He is half fish and the sea-folk helped him. It was not a fair race. Let us try it again.”

“Nonsense!” cried the other boys indignantly. “It was a fair race. Jan need not try again, for he is our champion. We will have it so.”

But Jan was looking at Gil strangely, and the light was gone out of his eyes. His face was very white. “I did not know that you cared so much to win,” he said to Gil in a low voice. Then he turned to the others. “If my brother thinks it was not a fair race let us two try again. Let us swim once more to the Round Rock and back; and the winner shall be declared the village champion.” For Jan meant this time to let his brother beat. What did he care about anything now, since Gil hated him so much that he could tell that story?

“Well, let them try the race again, since Jan will have it so,” cried the boys, grumbling and casting scornful looks at Gil, who had never been so unpopular with them as at this mo-
ment.

Once more the two sprang into the waves and started for the Round Rock, where the spray was dashing merrily over the plumage of the Stork as he stood there upon one leg, trying not to mind the wetness which he hated. For he was talking earnestly with a pretty Mermaid who sat on the rock in the surf, wringing her hands.

“It is he! It is he!” she cried. “I know him now. It is the lad whom they call _Jan_, the finest swimmer of them all. Oh, he dives like a fish! He swims like a true Sea-child. He is my own baby, my little one! I followed, I watched him. I could hardly keep my hands from him. Tell me, dear Stork, is he not indeed my own?”

The Stork looked at her gravely. “It is no longer a secret,” he said, “for Jan has been betrayed. He who is now Jan the unhappy mortal boy was once your unhappy Sea-baby.”

“Unhappy! Oh, is he unhappy?” cried the Mermaid. “Then at last I may claim him as you promised. I may take him home once more to our fair sea-home, to cherish him and make him happier than he ever was in all his little life. But tell me, dear Stork, will he not be my own little Sea-child again? I would not have him in his strange, ugly human guise, but as my own little fish-tailed baby.”

“When you kiss him,” said the Stork, “when you throw your arms about his neck and speak to him in the sea-language, he will become a Sea-child once more, as he was when I found him in his cradle on the rocks. But look! Yonder he comes. A second race has begun, and they swim this way. Wait until they have turned the rock, and then it will be your turn. Ah, Gil! You have ill kept your promise to me!”

Yes, the race between the brothers was two thirds over. Side by side as before the two black heads pushed through the waves. Both faces were white and drawn, and there was no joy in either. Gil’s was pale with anger, Jan’s only with sadness. He loved his brother still, but he knew that Gil loved him no more.

They were nearing the shore where the boys waited breathlessly for the end of this strange contest. Suddenly Jan turned his face towards Gil and gave him one look. “You will win, brother,” he breathed brokenly, “my strength is failing. You are
the better swimmer, after all. Tell the lads that I confess it. Go
on and come in as the champion."

He thought that Gil might turn to see whether he needed
aid. But Gil made no sign save to quicken his strokes, which
had begun to lag, for in truth he was very weary. He pushed
on with only a desire to win the shore and to triumph over his
younger brother. With a sigh Jan saw him shoot ahead, then
turning over on his back he began to float carelessly. He would
not make another effort. It was then that he saw the Stork cir-
cling close over his head; and it did not seem so very strange
when the Stork said to him:

"Swim, Jan! You are the better swimmer; you can beat him
yet."

"I know; but I do not wish to beat," said Jan wearily. "He
would only hate me the more."

"There is one who loves you more than ever he did," said
the Stork gently. "Will you go home to your sea-mother, the
beautiful Mermaid?"

"The Mermaid!" cried Jan; "then it is true. My real home is
not upon the shore?"

"Your real home is here, in the waves. Beneath them your
mother waits."

"Then I need not go back to that other home," said Jan, "that
home where I am hated?"

"Ah, you will be loved in this sea-home," said the Stork. "You
will be very happy there. Come, come, Mermaid! Kiss your
child and take him home."

Then Jan felt two soft arms come around his neck and two
soft lips pressed upon his own. "Dear child!" whispered a soft
voice, "come with me to your beautiful sea-home and be happy
always." A strange, drowsy feeling came over him, and he forgot
how to be sad. He felt himself growing younger and younger.
The world beyond the waves looked unreal and odd. He forgot
why he was there; he forgot the race, the boys, Gil, and all his
trouble. But instead he began to remember things of a wonder-
ful dream. He closed his eyes; the sea rocked him gently, as in
a cradle, and slowly, slowly, with the soft arms of the Mermaid
about him, and her green hair twining through his fingers,
he sank down through the water. As he sank the likeness of a
human boy faded from him, and he became once more a fresh, fair little Sea-child, with a scaly tail and plump, merry face. The Mer-folk came to greet him. The fishes darted about him playfully. The sea-anemones beckoned him with enticing fingers. The Sea-child was at home again, and the sea was kind.

So Gil became the champion; but that was little pleasure to him, as you can fancy. For he remembered, he remembered, and he could not forget. He thought, like all the village, that Jan had been drowned through his brother’s selfishness and jealousy. He forgave himself less even than the whole village could forgive him for the loss of their favorite; for he knew better than they how much more he was to blame, because he had broken the promise which kept Jan by him. If he had known how happy the Sea-child now was in the home from which he had come to be Gil’s brother, perhaps Gil would not have lived thereafter so sad a life. The Stork might have told him the truth. But the wise old Stork would not. That was to be Gil’s punishment: to remember and regret and to reproach himself always for the selfishness and jealousy which had cost him a loving brother.
A Story Told by the Sea
W.C. Morrow

One night, when the storm had come up from the south, apparently for the sole purpose of renewing war with its old enemy, the Peninsula of Monterey, I left the ancient town, crossed the neck of the peninsula, and descended on the other side of the Santa Lucia slope to see the mighty battle on Carmel Bay. The tearing wind, which, charged with needles of rain, assailed me sharply, did nobler work with the ocean and the cypresses, sending the one upon a riotous course and rending the other with groans. I arrived upon a cliff just beyond a pebbly beach, and with bared head and my waistcoat open, stood facing the ocean and the storm. It was not a cold night, though a winter storm was at large; but it was a night of blind agonies and struggles, in which a mad wind lashed the sea and a maddened sea assailed the shore, while a flying rain and a drenching spray dimmed the sombre colors of the scene. It was a night for the sea to talk in its travail and yield up some of its mysteries.

I left the cliff and went a little distance to the neighborhood of a Chinese fishing-station, where there was a sand-beach; and here, after throwing off my coat and waistcoat, I went down to have a closer touch with my treacherous friend. The surf sprang at me, and the waves, retreating gently, beckoned me to further ventures, which I made with a knowledge of my ground, but with a love of this sweet danger also. A strong breaker lifted me from my footing, but I outwitted it and pur-
sued it in retreat; there came another afterwards, and it was
armed, for, towering above me, it came down upon me with a
bludgeon, which fell heavily upon me. I seized it, but there my
command upon my powers ceased; and the wave, returning,
bore me out. A blindness, a vague sense of suffocation, an un-
certain effort of instinct to regain my hold upon the ground, a
flight through the air, a soft fall upon the sand--it was thus that
I was saved; and I still held in my hand the weapon with which
my old friend had dealt me the blow.

It was a bottle. Afterwards, in my room at Monterey, I broke
it and found within it a writing of uncommon interest. After
weeks of study and deciphering (for age and imperfect exer-

cution made the task serious and the result uncertain), I put
together such fragments of it as had the semblance of coher-
ence; and I found that the sea in its travail had yielded up one
of its strangest mysteries. No hope of a profitable answer to this
earnest cry for help prompts its publication; it is brought forth
rather to show a novel and fearful form of human suffering,
and also to give knowledge possibly to some who, if they be yet
alive, would rather know the worst than nothing. The following
is what my labor has accomplished:

I am Amasa D. Keating, an unhappy wretch, who, with many
others, am suffering an extraordinary kind of torture; and so
great is the mental disturbance which I suffer, that I fear I shall
not be able to make an intelligent report. I am but just from
a scene of inconceivable terrors, and, although I am a man
of some education and usually equal to the task of intelligent
expression, I am now in a condition of violent mental distur-
bance, and of great physical suffering as well, which I fear will
prove a hindrance to the understanding of him who may find
this report. At the outset, I most earnestly beg such one to use
the swiftest diligence in publishing the matter of this writing, to
the end that haply an expedition for our relief may be outfitted
without delay; for, if the present state of affairs continue much
longer with those whom I have left behind, any measure taken
for their relief will be useless. As for myself and my compan-
ion, we expect nothing but death.

I will hasten to the material part of my narrative, with the
relation only of so much of the beginning as may serve for our
identification.

On the 14th of October, 1852, we sailed from Boston in the brig “Hopewell,” Captain Campbell, bound for the islands of the South Pacific Ocean. We carried a cargo of general merchandise, with the purpose of trading with the natives; but we desired also to find some suitable island which we might take possession of in the name of the United States and settle upon for our permanent home. With this end in view, we had formed a company and bought the brig, so that it might remain our property and be used as a means of communication between us and the civilized world. These facts and many others are so familiar to our friends in Boston, that I deem it wholly unnecessary to set them forth in fuller detail. The names of all our passengers and crew stand upon record in Boston, and are not needed to be written here for ampler identification.

No ill-fortune assailed us until we arrived in the neighborhood of the Falkland Islands. Cape Horn wore its ugliest aspect (for the brig was a slow sailer, and the Antarctic summer was well gone before we had encountered bad weather),--an unusual thing, Captain Campbell assured us; from that time forward we had a series of misfortunes, which ended finally, after two or three months, in a fearful gale, which not only cost some of the crew their lives, but dismasted our vessel. The storm continued, and, the brig being wholly at the mercy of the wind and the sea, we saw that she must founder. We therefore took to the boats with what provisions and other necessary things we could stow away. With no land in sight, and in the midst of a boiling sea, which appeared every moment to be on the eve of swamping us, we bent to our oars and headed for the northwest. It is hardly necessary to say that we had lost our reckoning; but, after a manner, we made out that we were nearly in longitude 136.30 west, and about upon the Tropic of Capricorn. This would have made our situation about a hundred and seventy miles from a number of small islands lying to the eastward of the one hundred and fortieth meridian. The prospect was discouraging, as there was hardly a sound person in the boats to pull an oar, so badly had the weather used us; and besides that, the ship’s instruments had been lost and our provisions were badly damaged.
Nevertheless, we made some headway. The poor abandoned brig, seemingly conscious of our desertion, behaved in a very singular fashion; urged doubtless by the wind, she pursued us with pathetic struggles—now beam on, again stern foremost, and still again plunging forward with her nose under the water. Her pitching and lurching were straining her heavily, and, with her hold full of water, she evidently could live but a few minutes longer. Meanwhile, it was no small matter for us to keep clear of her, for whether we would pull to this side or that she followed us, and sometimes we were in danger. There came an end, however, for the brig, now heavily water-logged, rose majestically on a great wave and came down side on into the trough; she made a brave struggle to right herself, but in another moment she went over upon her beam, settled, steadied herself a moment, and then sank straight down like a mass of lead. This brought upon us a peculiar sense of desolation; for, so far as we knew (and Captain Campbell had sailed these seas before), there was hardly a chance of our gaining land alive.

Much to our surprise, we had not rowed more than twenty knots when (it being about midnight) a fire was sighted off our port bow,—that is to say, due west. This gave us so great courage that we rowed heartily towards it, and at three in the morning, to our unspeakable happiness, we dragged our boats upon a beautiful sand-beach. So exhausted were we that with small loss of time we made ourselves comfortable and soon were sound asleep upon firm ground.

The next sun had done more than half its work before any of us were awake. Excepting some birds of lively plumage, there was not a living thing in sight; but no sooner had we begun to stir about than a number of fine brown men approached us simultaneously from different directions. A belt was around their waists, and from it hung a short garment, made of bark woven into a coarse fabric; and also hanging from the belt was a heavy sword of metal. Undoubtedly the men were savages; but there was a dignity in their manner which set them wholly apart from the known inhabitants of these South Sea Islands. Our captain, who understood many of the languages and dialects of the sub-tropical islanders, found himself at fault in attempting verbal intercourse with these visitors, but it was
not long before we found them exceedingly apt in understanding signs. They showed much commiseration for us, and with manifestations of friendship invited us to follow them and test their hospitality. This we were not slow in doing.

The island--we were made to know on the way--was a journey of ten hours long and seven wide, and our eyes gave us proof of its wonderful fecundity of soil, for there were great banana plantations and others of curious kinds of grain. The narrowness of the roads convinced us that there were no wagons or beasts of burden, but there were many evidences of a civilization which, for these parts, was of extraordinary development; such, for instance, as finely cultivated fields and good houses of stone, with such evidences of an æsthetic taste as found expression in the domestic cultivation of many of the beautiful flowers which grew upon the island. These matters I mention with some particularity, in order that the island may be recognized by the rescuers for whom we are eagerly praying.

The town to which we were led is a place of singular beauty. While there is no orderly arrangement of streets (the houses being scattered about confusedly), there is a large sense of comfort and room and a fine character of neatness. The buildings are all of rough stone and are not divided into apartments; the windows and doors are hung with matting, giving testimony of an absence of thieves. A little to one side, upon a knoll, is the house of the king, or chief. It is much like the others, except that it is larger, a chamber in front serving as an executive-room, where the king disposes of the business of his rulership.

Into this audience-room we were led, and presently the king himself appeared. He was dressed with more barbaric profusion than his subjects; about his neck and in his ears were many fine pieces of jewelry of gold and silver, evidently the work of European artisans, but worn with a complete disregard of their original purpose. The king, a large, strong, and handsome man, received us with a kindly smile; if ever a human face showed kindness of heart, it was his. He had us to understand at once that we were most welcome, that he sympathized with us in our distress, and that all our wants should be attended to un-
til means should be found for restoring us to our country, or
sending us whithersoever else we might desire to go.

It was not at all likely, he said (for he spoke German a lit-
tle), that any vessel from the outside world would ever visit the
island, as it appeared to be unknown to navigators, and it was
a law upon the island that the inhabitants of no other islands
should approach. At certain times of the moon, however, he
sent a boat to an island, many leagues away, to bear some rare
products of his people in exchange for other commodities, and,
should we so desire, we might be taken, one at a time, in the
boat, and thus eventually be put in the way of passing vessels.

With what appeared to be an embarrassed hesitation, he in-
formed us that he was compelled to impose a certain mild re-
stRAINT upon us--one which, he hurried to add, would in no way
interfere with our comfort or pleasure. This was that we be kept
apart from his people, as they were simple and happy, and he
feared that association with us would bring discontent among
them. Their present condition had come about solely through
the policy of complete isolation which had been followed in
the past.

We received this communication with a delight which we
took no pains to conceal; and the king seemed touched by our
expressions of gratitude. So in a little while we were established
as a colony about three miles from the town, the quick hands
of the natives having made for us, out of poles, matting, and
thatch, a sufficient number of houses for our comfort; and the
king placed at our disposal a large acreage for our use, if we
should desire to help ourselves with farming; for which pur-
pose an intelligent native was sent to instruct us. It was on the
10th day of May, 1853, that we went upon the island, and the
14th when we went into colony.

I cannot pause to give any further description of this beau-
tiful island and our delightful surroundings, but must hasten
away to a relation of the terrible things which presently befell
us. We had been upon the island about a month, when the king
(who had been to visit us twice) sent a messenger to say that
a boat would leave on the morrow, and that if any one of us
wished to go he could be taken. The messenger said that the
king's best judgment was that the sickly ones ought to go first,
as, in the event of serious illness, it would be better that they should die at home. We overlooked this singular and savage way of stating the case, for our sense of gratitude to the king was so great that the expression of a slight wish from him was as binding upon us as law. Hence from our number we selected John Foley, a carpenter, of Boston, as the hardships of the voyage had developed in him a quick consumption, and he had no family or relatives in the colony, as many others of us had. The poor fellow was overcome with gratitude, and he left us the happiest man I ever saw.

I must now mention a very singular thing, which upon the departure of Foley was given a conspicuous place in our attention. We were in a roomy valley, which was nearly surrounded by perpendicular walls of great height, and from no accessible point was the sea visible. On several occasions some of the younger men had sought to leave the valley for the shore, but at each attempt the native guards set over us had suddenly appeared at the few passes which nature had left in the wall, and kindly but firmly had turned our young men back, saying that it was the king’s wish we should not leave the valley. The older heads among us discouraged these attempts to escape, holding them to be breaches of faith and hospitality; but the knowledge of being absolute prisoners weighed upon us nevertheless, and became more and more irksome. When, therefore, our companion was taken away, an organized movement was made among the young men to gain an elevated position commanding a view of the sea, in order to observe the direction taken by Foley’s boat. The plan was to divide into bodies and move simultaneously in force upon all the points of egress, and overcome, without any resort to dangerous violence, the two or three guards who had been seen at those points. When our men arrived at these places they encountered the small number it was customary to see, and were pushing their way through, when suddenly there appeared a strong body of natives, who drew their heavy swords and assumed so threatening an attitude that our men lost no time in retreating. A report of this occurrence was made to the colony, each of the parties of young men having had an exactly similar experience. While there appeared to be no good ground for the feeling of uneasi-
ness which spread throughout the colony, a sense of oppression came over the stronger ones and of fear over the weaker; and, a council having been held, it was decided to ask an explanation of the king.

Other things of some interest had happened; among them, a surreptitious acquiring of considerable knowledge of the island language by me. For this reason I was chosen as ambassador to the king. My mission was a failure, as the king, though gracious, informed me that this plan was necessary in securing complete isolation from his people; and he instructed me to tell my people that any member of our colony found beyond the lines would be punished with death. In addition to this, the king, seemingly hurt that we should have questioned the propriety of his actions, said that thenceforward he himself would make the selections of our people for deportation. The man’s evident superiority of character impressed me with no little effect, and the sincerity with which he regarded us as belonging to a race inferior to his in mental and moral strength confounded me and placed me at a disadvantage.

When I took the news to the colony, a mood bordering upon hopelessness came upon our people. The ones of hastier temper suggested a revolt and a seizure of the island; but this was so insane an idea that it was put away at once.

Not long afterwards the king sent for Absalom Maywood, one of our young men, unmarried, but with a mother among us. Maywood, at first very low with scurvy on the brig, had drifted into other ailments, and was now an invalid and much wasted. I will not dwell upon the pathetic parting between him and his aged mother, nor upon the deeper gloom that fell upon the colony. What was becoming of these men? None might know whither they were taken and none could guess their after-fate. Behind our efforts to be cheerful and industrious there were heavy hearts, and possibly thoughts and fears that dared not seek expression.

The third man was taken—again a sickly one—this time a consumptive farmer, named Jackson; and some time afterward a fourth, an elderly woman, with a cancer; she was Mrs. Lyons, formerly a milliner in South Boston. Then the patience and hope which had sustained us gave way, and we were in a
condition close upon despair. The cooler ones among the men assembled quietly apart and debated what to do. Our captain, a man quiet and brave, still the leader in our councils, and always advising patience and obedience, presided at this meeting. There was one dreadful thought upon every mind, but no man had the courage to bring it forth; but after there had been some discussion without any profit, Captain Campbell made this speech:

“My friends, it does not become us longer to seek to conceal the thought which all of us have, and which, sooner or later, must be spoken. It is a matter of common knowledge that upon many of the islands of these seas there exists the horrible practice of cannibalism.”

Not a word was spoken for a long time, and all were glad that it had come out at last. Not one man looked at his neighbor or dared raise his glance from the ground, and there was a weight upon the hearts of all.

“Nevertheless,” resumed the captain, “it is extremely difficult to believe that this evil is upon us, for you must have noticed that only the lean and sickly ones have been taken, and surely this cannot mean cannibalism.”

Some had not thought of this, and they looked up quickly, with brighter faces; whereupon Captain Campbell proceeded:

“You must have observed, however, that all of the sick and weakly have gone, and this brings a new situation upon us. I have an idea, which I will not give expression to now, and my desire in calling you together was to determine its correctness or falsity. For this purpose, some man of daring and agility must risk his life.”

Nearly every man present made offer of his services, but the captain shook his head and begged them all to remain quiet.

“It is necessary,” he added, “that this man understand the language, and I fear there is not one among you.”

Each man, taken aback, looked at his neighbor and then all at me, as I stepped forward. The captain regarded me gratefully and said:

“Let there now be a binding secrecy among us, for the others of the colony must not know now, and perhaps never. If our fear find a ground in truth, there is all the greater reason
for keeping these matters secret among ourselves. Is that well understood? Then, Mr. Keating, the plan is this: When the next one of us is taken, you are by strategy, but in no event by violence, to escape from this imprisonment and discover the fate of that one and make report to us.”

A week afterwards (these things occurring now with greater frequency) Lemuel Arthur, a young man of twenty-two, was taken away about one o’clock in the afternoon. My whole plan having been studied out, I arrayed myself in the style of the natives, stained my skin with ochre, blackened my eyebrows and hair with a mixture of soot and tallow, and without difficulty slipped by the guards and found myself at large and free upon the island. I gained a high point and saw no sign of a boat making ready to put off with Arthur. When darkness had come I descended to the village. I kept upon the outskirts and remained as much as possible in shadow. I dared not talk with any one, but I could listen; and presently I learned something that made my heart stand still.

“It has been so long since we had one,” said a native to his fellow.

“Yes; and this one will be delicious. They say he is young and fat. Why, we have not touched any since the four men and their woman with the jewelry came upon the island from a wreck.”

“True; but this one will not go around among so many of us--many must go without.”

“What of that? Those not supplied now will have all the keener relish when their turn comes. All that are left now are good and fat, as the king has taken away all the lean and sickly ones. He would not allow the people to touch them, although some of them begged very hard. So, to make sure, they were placed in the kiln.”

So heavy a sickness fell upon me when I heard this that I was near upon a betrayal of my presence; and certainly I lost some of the talk which these men were having. Presently I realized that nothing indicating a horrible fate for my friends had been said; my own fears were sufficient to give a frightful color to their language. When I looked about me again they were gone, and so with much caution I moved to another part of
the town, keeping always in shadow. At a certain place I heard another conversation, as follows:

“Does he know what they will do with him?”

“No; but he fears something. He does not understand the language. He tried to get away this afternoon to go to the seashore, where he thought the boat was waiting, and when they made an effort to keep him quiet he became very angry.”

“What did they do then?”

“They took him to the king, who was so kind that the young man became quiet. Our king is so gentle, and they always believe what he tells them,”--whereupon the fellow broke into a hearty laugh.

“And do the others suspect nothing?”

“There is doubt about that. Kololu, the farmer, has reported that they appear uneasy and disturbed, and hold secret meetings.”

“What do you think they would do if they should discover everything?”

“Revolt, I think, for they appear to be fighters.”

“But they have no arms, and we are more than a hundred to one.”

“That is true, and so no lives would be lost on either side. After the revolt they would merely be kept in closer confinement, and no harm would come in the end. They could be taken one at a time, as is the present intention.”

“They might refuse to eat sufficient, and hence become lean.”

“That would come about surely, but it would last only for a time; for you have noticed that even our own people, when condemned, though they lose flesh at first, invariably become reconciled to their end, and at last become fatter than ever.”

The words of this man, who was evidently a functionary of the king, inspired me with so great a horror that I could bear to hear no more; so I moved away, considering whether I should return to the colony and report what I had heard already or remain to see this ghastly tragedy to the end. As there was nothing to be gained by returning at once, I decided to stay, for through the horror of it all might come some suggestion of a means of deliverance.
I soon became aware, by the making of all the people towards a certain quarter, that something of unusual importance was afoot; so as best I could I worked my way around to the point of convergence, which was in the neighborhood of the king’s house, and there I saw an extraordinary preparation under way. A large bonfire was burning in an open place; standing around it, in a circle having a generous radius, were hundreds of the strange half-savages of the island, kept at their proper distance by an armed patrol; in a clear space at one side, on higher ground, was an elevated seat, which I surmised was reserved for the king. Manifestly a matter of some moment was to be attended to, having likely a ceremonious character. The most curious feature of all this affair was the activity of a number of workers engaged in dragging large, hot stones from the fire and arranging them in the form of an oblong mound. This mound had one peculiar feature: a hollow space, about six feet long and two feet wide, was left within it, and the men, under the instructions of a leader, were fashioning it to a depth approaching two feet, all the stones being very hot and difficult to handle, even with the aid of barrows.

While they were still at work, the great repressed excitement under which the people labored found an excuse for expression in the arrival of the king, who, tricked out in unusual finery, walked solemnly ahead of his attendants to his elevated seat. Then he gave an order which, from my distance, I could not hear. I pushed a little closer under the safety which the occasion lent, and overheard this conversation:

“How many will get some of it?”

“Only forty, I hear. You know the women are not allowed to have it.”

“Yes.”

“The leading men will be supplied. It makes them strong and wise. The next one will be given to sixty of the men who carry swords.”

“And the next after that?”

“To more of the swordsmen; and so on until they all have had some, and then the common people will be taken in like rotation, but given a smaller allowance.”

At this juncture, a strange procession moved from the king’s
A STORY TOLD BY THE SEA

house. It was led by two priests chanting dolefully; behind them walked four men, armed with curious implements—flails, no doubt. Then came four warriors, and behind them, firmly bound and completely naked, walked my young friend, Arthur; after him came six warriors. Arthur’s white skin showed in strong contrast to that of the brown men around him. His face was very pale, and his eyes, staring wide, swept a quick glance around for a stray hope.

The group stopped in front of the king; the natives faced and made an obeisance and awaited further orders. Before all this had been done, a man in front of me said to another:

“Those hot stones will cool, I fear.”

“There is no danger; they will keep their heat a long time. If they were too hot, they would burn it.”

“True.”

“They are much too hot now, but it will be some time before they will be needed.”

“Will they use the sword first, as they did with those who had the jewelry?”

“No; the best part then was spilled. This is a new idea of the king’s. The flails will do just as well and will make it very tender besides. Our king is a wise man.”

By this time young Arthur (the king having given his order) was surrounded by the armed men, and between him and them were the four who carried flails. His hands had been bound to a strong post sunk in the ground. The king raised his hand as a signal, and the four men brought down their flails with moderate force upon Arthur’s naked body. These implements were heavy, and evidently care was taken not to break the skin. When the poor fellow felt the blows, he shrank and quivered, but uttered no sound. They fell again.

What was I doing all this time? What was I thinking? I do not know; but when the second blows had been delivered and Arthur had cried out in his agony, I sprang through the encircling line of savages, dashed into the midst of the group surrounding the prisoner, snatched a sword from a warrior, leaped upon the king and split his head in twain, turned, cut Arthur’s bonds, caught him by the hand, and fled at full speed with him into the darkness. Never had been a surprise more com-
plete--the people had seen one of their own number, as they supposed, free the prisoner and murder their king. Soon there came a howl, and some started in pursuit; but--there was the body of the king, and the stones were hot and waiting! There was no longer authority! Our pursuers fell off, one by one, and the others, thus discouraged, gave up the chase. We ran to the shore, found a boat, and put out to sea.

We are free--we two; but to what purpose? We have no idea of the direction of the land; we are without food; we dare not return to our friends, for only in the desperate hope of our finding land can there be the least encouragement for their rescue. We have rowed all night; it is now well into the following afternoon; we have had nothing to eat or drink, and we are beginning to suffer; we both are naked and the sun seemingly will burn us up. I therefore make this record with material which I had been prudent to provide for such an emergency, and I shall now give it to the sea, with such earnest prayers for its discovery as can come only from a most unhappy human being in a desperate extremity.
Chapter One

Have any of you made a passage on board a steamer between London and Leith? If you have, you will have seen no small number of brigs and brigantines, with sails of all tints, from doubtful white to decided black—some deeply-laden, making their way to the southward, others with their sides high out of the water, heeling over to the slightest breeze, steering north.

On board one of those delectable craft, a brig called the Naïad, I found myself when about fourteen summers had passed over my head. She must have been named after a negress naïad, for black was the prevailing colour on board, from the dark, dingy forecastle to the captain’s state cabin, which was but a degree less dirty than the portion of the vessel in which I was destined to live. The bulwarks, companion-hatch, and other parts had, to be sure, once upon a time been painted green, but the dust from the coal, which formed her usual cargo, had reduced every portion to one sombre hue, which even the salt seas not unfrequently breaking over her deck had failed to wash clean.

Captain Grimes, her commander, notwithstanding this, was proud of the old craft; and he especially delighted to tell how she had once carried a pennant when conveying troops to Corunna, or some other port in Spain.

I pitied the poor fellows confined to the narrow limits of her dark hold, redolent of bilge water and other foul odours. We, however, had not to complain on that score, for the fresh water
which came in through her old sides by many a leak, and had to be pumped out every watch, kept her hold sweet.

How I came to be on board the *Naiad* I'll tell you—

I had made up my mind to go to sea—why, it's hard to say, except that I thought I should like to knock about the world and see strange countries. I was happy enough at home, though I did not always make others happy. Nothing came amiss to me; I was always either laughing or singing, and do not recollect having an hour's illness in my life. Now and then, by the elders of the family, and by Aunt Martha especially, I was voted a nuisance; and it was with no small satisfaction, at the end of the holidays, that they packed me off again to school. I was fond of my brothers and sisters, and they were fond of me, though I showed my affection for them in a somewhat rough fashion. I thought my sisters somewhat demure, and I was always teasing them and playing them tricks. Somehow or other I got the name among them and my brothers of "Happy Jack," and certainly I was the merriest of the family. If I happened, which was not unfrequently the case, to get into a scrape, I generally managed to scramble out of it with flying colours; and if I did not, I laughed at the punishment to which I was doomed. I was a broad-shouldered, strongly-built boy, and could beat my elder brothers at running, leaping, or any other athletic exercise, while, without boasting, I was not behind any of them in the school-room. My father was somewhat proud of me, and had set his mind on my becoming a member of one of the learned professions, and rising to the top of the tree. Why should I not? I had a great-uncle a judge, and another relative a bishop, and there had been admirals and generals by the score among our ancestors. My father was a leading solicitor in a large town, and having somewhat ambitious aspirations for his children, his intention was to send all his sons to the university, in the hopes that they would make a good figure in life. He was therefore the more vexed when I declared that my firm determination was to go to sea. "Very well, Jack," he said, "if such is your resolve, go you shall; but as I have no interest in the navy, you must take your chance in the merchant service."

"It's all the same to me, sir," I replied; "I shall be just as happy in the one as in the other service;" and so I considered the
matter settled.

When the day of parting came, I was as merry and full of fun as ever, though I own there was a strange sensation about the heart which bothered me; however, I was not going to show what I felt—not I.

I slyly pinched my sisters when we were exchanging parting kisses, till they were compelled to shriek out and box my ears—an operation to which I was well accustomed—and I made my brothers roar with the sturdy grip I gave their fingers when we shook hands; and so, instead of tears, there were shouts of laughter and screeches and screams, creating a regular hulla-balloo which put all sentimental grief to flight. “No, no, Jack, I will have none of your tricks,” cried Aunt Martha, when I approached with a demure look to bid her farewell, so I took her hand and pressed it to my lips with all the mock courtesy of a Sir Charles Grandison. My mother! I had no heart to do otherwise than to throw my arms round her neck and receive the fond embrace she bestowed upon me, and if a tear did come into my eye, it was then. But there was another person to whom I had to say good-bye, and that was dear little Grace Goldie, my father’s ward, a fair, blue-eyed girl, three or four years younger than myself. I did not play her any trick, but kissed her smooth young brow, and promised that I would bring her back no end of pearls and ivory, and treasures of all sorts, from across the seas. She smiled sweetly through her tears. “Thank you, Jack, thank you! I shall so long to see you back,” she whispered; and I had to bolt, or I believe that I should have begun to pipe my eye in a way I had no fancy for. My father’s voice summoned me.

“No, Jack,” he said, “as you have chosen your bed, you must lie on it. But remember—after a year’s trial—if you change your mind, let me know.”

“No fear of that, sir,” I answered.

“We shall see, Jack,” he replied. He wrung my hand, and gave me his blessing. “I have directed Mr Junk to provide your outfit, and you will find it all right.” Who Mr Junk was I had no conception; but as my father said it was all right, I troubled my head no more about the matter.

My father’s old clerk, Simon Munch, was waiting for me at
the door, and hurried me off to catch the Newcastle coach. On our arrival there he took me to the office of Junk, Tarbox and Company, shipbrokers.

“Here is the young gentleman, Mr Junk,” he said, addressing a one-eyed, burly, broad-shouldered personage, with a ruddy countenance, in a semi-nautical costume. “You know what to do with him, and so I leave him in your hands. Good-bye, Jack, I hope you may like it.”

“No fear of that, Mr Munch,” I answered; “and tell them at home that you left me as jolly and happy as ever.”

“So, Master Brooke, you want to go to sea?” said Mr Junk, squirting a stream of tobacco-juice across his office, and eyeing me with his sole bloodshot blinker; “and you expect to like it?”

“Of course I do; I expect to be happy wherever I am,” I answered in a confident tone.

“We shall see,” he replied. “I have sent your chest aboard of the *Naiad*. Captain Grimes will be here anon, and I’ll hand you over to him.”

The person he spoke of just then made his appearance. I did not particularly like my future commander’s outside. He was a tall, gaunt man, with a long weather-beaten visage and huge black or rather grizzled whiskers; and his voice, when he spoke, was gruff and harsh in the extreme. I need not further describe him; only I will observe that he looked considerably cleaner than he usually did, as I afterwards found on board the brig. He took but little notice of me beyond a slight nod, as he was busy with the ship’s papers. Having pocketed them, he grasped me by the hand with a “Come along, my lad; I am to make a seaman on ye.” He spoke in a broad Northumbrian accent, and in a harsh guttural tone. I was not prepossessed in his favour, but I determined to show no signs of unwillingness to accompany him.

We were soon seated in the stern of an excessively dirty boat, with coal-dust-begrimed rowers, who pulled away with somewhat lazy strokes towards a deeply-laden brig lying out in mid-stream. “Get on board, leddie, with you,” said the captain, who had not since my first introduction addressed a single word to me. I clambered up on deck. The boat was hoisted in, the topsails let fall, and the crew, with doleful “Yeo-yo-o’s,” be-
gan working round the windlass, and the *Naiad* in due time was gliding down the Tyne.

She was a very different craft to what I had expected to find myself on board of. I had read about the white decks and snowy canvas, the bright polish and the active, obedient crew of a man-of-war; and such I had pictured the vessel I had hoped to sail in. The *Naiad* was certainly a contrast to this; but I kept to my resolve not to flinch from whatever turned up. When I was told to pull and haul away at the ropes, I did so with might and main; and, as everything on board was thickly coated with coal-dust, I very soon became as begrimed as the rest of the crew.

I was rather astonished, on asking Captain Grimes when tea would be ready—for I was very hungry—to be told that I might get what I could with the men forward. I went down accordingly into the forecastle, tumbling over a chest, and running my head against the stomach of one of my new shipmates as I groped my way amid the darkness which shrouded it. A cuff which sent me sprawling on the deck was the consequence.

“Where are your eyes, leddie?” exclaimed a gruff voice. “Ye’ll see where ye are ganging the next time.”

I picked myself up, bursting into a fit of laughter, as if the affair had been a good joke. “I beg your pardon, old fellow,” I said; “but if you had had a chandelier burning in this place of yours it would not have happened. How do you all manage to see down here?”

“As cats do—we’re accustomed to it,” said another voice; and I now began to distinguish objects around me. The watch below were seated round a sea-chest, with three or four mugs, a huge loaf of bread, and a piece of cheese and part of a flitch of fat cold bacon. It was rough fare, but I was too hungry not to be glad to partake of it.

A boy whom I had seen busy in the caboose soon came down with a kettle of hot tea. My inquiry for milk produced a general laugh, but I was told I might take as much sugar as I liked from a jar, which contained a dark-brown substance unlike any sugar I had before seen.

“Ye’ll soon be asking for your bed, leddie,” said Bob Tubbs, the old man whose acquaintance I had so unceremoniously
formed. “Ye’ll find it there, for’ard, if ye’ll grope your way. It’s not over airy, but it’s all the warmer in winter.”

After supper, I succeeded in finding the berth Bob had pointed out. It was the lowest berth, directly in the very bows of the vessel—a shelf-like space, about five feet in length, with height scarcely sufficient to allow me to sit upright,—Dirty Dick, the ship’s boy I have mentioned, having the berth above me. Mine contained a mattress and a couple of blankets. My inquiry for sheets produced as much laughter as when I asked for milk. “Well, to be sure, as I suppose you have not a washerwoman on board, they would not be of much use,” I sang out; “and so, unless the captain wants me to steer the ship, I will turn in and go to sleep. Good night, mates.”

“The leddie has got some spirit in him,” I heard Bob Tubbs observe. “What do you call yourself, boy?”

“Happy Jack!” I sang out; “and it’s not this sort of thing that’s going to change me.”

“You’ll prove a tough one, if something else doesn’t,” observed Bob from his berth. “But gang to sleep, boy. Ye’ll be put into a watch to-morrow, and it’s the last time, may be, that ye’ll have to rest through the night till ye set foot on shore again.” I little then thought how long a time that would prove; but, rolling myself up in my blanket, I soon forgot where I was.

Next morning I scrambled on deck, and found the brig plunging away into a heavy sea, with a strong southerly wind, the coast just distinguishable over our starboard quarter. The captain gave me a grim smile as I made my way aft.

“Well, leddie, how do you like it?” he inquired.

“Thank you, pretty well,” I answered; “but I hope we sha’n’t have to wait long for breakfast.”

He smiled again. “And you don’t feel queer?”

“No, not a bit of it,” I replied. “But I say, captain, I thought I was to come as a midshipman, and mess with the other young gentlemen on board.”

He now fairly laughed outright; and looking at me for some time, answered, “We have no young gentlemen on board here. You’ll get your breakfast in good time; but you are of the right sort, leddie, and little Clem shall show you what you have got to do,” pointing as he spoke to a boy who just then came on deck,
and whom I took to be his son.

"Thank you, captain," I observed; "I shall be glad of Clem's instruction, as I suppose he knows more about the matter than I do."

"Clem can hand, reef, and steer as well as any one, as far as his strength goes," said the captain, looking approvingly at him.

"I'll set to work as soon as he likes, then," I observed. "But I wish those fellows would be sharp about breakfast, for I am desperately hungry."

"Well, go into the cabin, and Clem will give you a hunch of bread to stay your appetite."

I followed Clem below. "Here, Brooke, some butter will improve it," he said, spreading a thick slice of bread. "And so you don't seem to be seasick, like most fellows. Well, I am glad of that. My father will like you all the better for it, and soon make a sailor of you, if you wish to learn."

I told Clem that was just what I wanted, and that I should look to him to teach me my duties.

"I'll do my best," he said. "Take my advice and dip your hands in the tar bucket without delay, and don't shirk anything the mate puts you to. My father is pretty gruff now and then, but old Growl is a regular rough one. He does not say much to me, but you will have to look out for squalls. Come, we had better go on deck, or old Growl will think that I have been putting you up to mischief. He will soon pick a quarrel with you, to see how you bear it."

"I'll take good care to keep out of his way, then," I said, bolting the last piece of bread and butter. "Thank you, Clem, you and I shall be good friends, I see that."

"I hope so," answered my young companion with a sigh. "I have not many on board, and till you came I had no one to speak to except father, and he is not always in the mood to talk."

Clem's slice of bread and butter enabled me to hold out till the forecastle breakfast was ready. I did ample justice to it. Directly I made my re-appearance on deck, old Growl set me to work, and I soon had not only my hands but my arms up to the elbows in tar. Though the vessel was pitching her head into the seas, with thick sheets of foam flying over her, he quickly sent
me aloft to black down the main rigging. Clem showed me how to secure the bucket to the shrouds while I was at work, and in spite of the violent jerks I received as the vessel plunged her bluff bows into the sea, I got on very well. Before the evening was over I had been out on the yards with little Clem to assist in reefing the topsails, and he had shown me how to steer and box the compass.

Nothing particular occurred on the voyage, though we were ten days in reaching the mouth of the Thames. Clem and I became great friends. The more I saw of him the more I liked him, and wondered how so well-mannered a lad could be the son of such a man as Captain Grimes.

I saw nothing of London. I should, indeed, have been ashamed to go on shore in my now thoroughly begrimed condition. We were but a short time in the Thames, for as soon as we had discharged our cargo we again made sail for the Tyne.

Before this time old Growl, the mate, had taught me what starting meant. He had generally a rope’s end in his fist, and if not, one was always near at hand. If I happened not to do a thing well enough or fast enough to please him, he was immediately after me, laying the rope across my shoulders, or anywhere he could most conveniently reach. I generally managed to spring out of his way, and turn round and laugh at him. If he followed me, I ran aloft, and, as I climbed much faster than he could, I invariably led him a long chase.

“I’ll catch you, youngster, the next time. Mark me, that I will,” he shouted out to me one day, when more than usually angry.

“Wait till the next time comes, mate,” I sang out, and laughed more heartily than before.

The men sympathised with me, especially Dirty Dick. His shoulders, till I came on board, had been accustomed to suffer most from the mate’s ill temper. Now and then old Growl, greatly to his delight, caught me unawares; but, suffering as I did from his blows, I never let him see that I cared for them, and used to laugh just as heartily as when I had escaped from him. On this, however, he would grin sardonically, and observe, “You may laugh as you like, young master, I know what a rope’s end tastes like; it’s a precious deal bitterer than you would have
me fancy. I got enough of it when I was a youngster, and haven't forgotten yet.”

One day when old Growl had treated me as I have described, and had gone below, Clement came up to me. “I am so sorry the mate has struck you, Brooke,” he said. “It’s a great shame. He dare not hit me; and when I told father how he treats you, he told me to mind my own business, and that it was all for your good.”

“I don’t know how that can be,” I answered; “but I don’t care for it, I can assure you. It hurts a little at the time, I’ll allow, but I have got used to it, and I don’t intend to let him break my spirit or make me unhappy.”

Clement all the time was doing his best to teach me what he knew, and I soon learned to steer in smooth water, and could hand and reef the topsails and knot and splice as well almost as he could. Some things I did better, as I was much stronger and more active. I was put to do all sorts of unpleasant work, such as blacking down the rigging, greasing the masts, and helping Dirty Dick to clean the caboose and sweep out the forecastle. Though I didn’t like it, I went about the duty, however, as if it was the pleasantest in the world. Pleasant or not, I was thus rapidly becoming a seaman.

Chapter Two

I had as before, on reaching the Tyne, to remain and keep ship, though little Clem went on shore and did not return till we had a fresh cargo on board, and were just about sailing.

Scarcely were we clear of the river than a heavy gale sprang up and severely tried the old collier. The seas came washing over her deck, and none of us for’ard had a dry rag on our backs. When my watch below came, I was glad to turn in between my now darkly-tinted blankets; but they soon became as wet as everything else, and when I went on deck to keep my watch, I had again to put on my damp clothes. The forecastle was fearfully hot and steamy. We had to keep the fore hatch closed to prevent the seas which, washing over our decks, would otherwise have poured down upon us. In a short time, as the ship strained more and more while she struggled amid the
waves, the water made its way through the deck and sides till there was not a dry space to lie on in our berths. Then I began really to understand the miseries of forecastle life on board a collier, and many other craft too, in which British seamen have to sail; with bad food, bad water, and worse treatment. Ay, I speak the truth, which I know from experience, they have to live like dogs, and, too often, die like dogs, with no one to care for them.

Day after day this sort of work continued. I wondered that the captain did not run back, till I heard him say that the price of coals was up in the London market, and he wanted to be there before other vessels arrived to lower it; so, tough seaman as he was, he kept thrashing the old brig along against the south-westerly gale, which seemed to increase rather than show any signs of moderating. We had always, during each watch, to take a spell at the pumps, and now we had to keep them going without intermission. I took my turn with the rest, and my shoulders ached before I had done; still I sang and laughed away as usual.

“It’s no laughing matter, youngster,” said old Growl, as he passed me. “You will be laughing the wrong side of your mouth before long.”

“Never fear, mate,” I replied; “both sides are the same to me.”

The captain and mate at last took their turns with the rest of us, for the crew were getting worn out. I did not know the danger we were in, but I was beginning to get tired of that dreadful “clank, clank, clank.”

At last, by dint of keeping at it, we had got a good way to the southward, when one night, just as we had gone about hoping to lay our course for the Thames, the wind shifted and came again right in our teeth. I had turned into my wet bunk all standing, when, having dropped off to sleep, I was awoke by a tremendous crash, and on springing up on deck I found that the mainmast had gone by the board. The gale had increased, and we were driving before it. As I made my way aft, the flashes of lightning revealed the pale faces of the crew, some endeavouring to clear away the wreck of the mast, others working with frantic energy at the pumps. The leaks had increased. As may
be supposed, the deeply-laden collier had but a poor chance under such circumstances. Presently the vessel gave a heavy lurch. A sea rolled up. The next instant I found myself struggling in the midst of the foaming surges. All around was dark; I felt for the deck of the vessel, it was not beneath me; I had been washed overboard. I struck out for life, and in another minute I was clinging to the mainmast, which had been cut clear. I clambered up on it, and looked out for the brig. She was nowhere to be seen; she must have gone down beneath the surge which washed me from her deck. What had become of my shipmates? I shouted again and again at the top of my voice. There was a faint cry, “Help me; help me.” I knew the voice; it was Clement’s. Leaving the mast, I swam towards him; he was lashed to a spar. The old captain’s last act had been to try and save the young boy’s life ere he himself sank beneath the waves. I caught hold of the spar, bidding Clement keep his head above the water while I towed it to the mast. I succeeded, and then clambering on it, and casting off the lashings, dragged him up and placed him beside me. We hailed again and again, but no voice replied. It may seem strange that we, the two youngest on board, should have survived, while all the men were drowned, but then, not one of them could swim. We could, and, under Providence, were able to struggle for our lives.

I did my best to cheer up little Clem, telling him that if we could manage to hold on till daylight, as a number of vessels were certain to pass, we should be picked up. “I am very, very sorry, Clem, for your father,” I said; “for though he was somewhat gruff to me, he was a kind-hearted man, I am sure.”

“That indeed he was,” answered Clement, in a tone of sorrow. “He was always good to me; but he was not my father, as you fancy—the more reason I have to be grateful to him.”

“Not your father, Clem!” I exclaimed. “I never suspected that.”

“No, he was not; though he truly acted the part of one to me. Do you know, Brooke, this is not the first time that I have been left alone floating on the ocean? I was picked up by him just as you hope that we shall be picked up. I was a very little fellow, so little that I could give no account of myself. He found a black woman and me floating all alone on a raft out in the
Atlantic. She died almost immediately we were rescued, without his being able to learn anything from her. He had to bury her at sea, and when he got home he in vain tried to find out my friends, though he preserved, I believe, the clothes I had on, and most of her clothes. He sent me to an excellent school, where I was well taught; and Mrs Grimes, who was a dear, kind lady, far more refined than you would suppose his wife to have been, acted truly like a mother to me. He was very fond of her, and when she died, nearly a year ago, he took me to sea with him. I did not, however, give up my studies, but used to sit in the cabin, and every day read as much as I could. Captain Grimes used to say that he was sure I was a gentleman born, and a gentleman he wished me to be, and so I have always felt myself.

I had been struck by little Clem’s refined manners, and this was now accounted for. “I am sure you are a gentleman, Clem,” I observed; “and if we ever get home, my father, who is a lawyer, shall try to find out your friends. He may be able to succeed though Captain Grimes could not. I wonder he did not apply to my father, as, from my having been sent on board his ship, the captain must have known him. I suspect that they wanted to sicken me of a sea life, and so sent me on board the Naiad; but they were mistaken; and now when they hear that she has gone down—if we are not picked up—how sorry they will be!”

The conversation I have described was frequently interrupted—sometimes by a heavier sea than usual rolling by, and compelling us to hold tight for our lives; at others we were silent for several minutes together. We were seated on the after-part of the maintop, the rigging which hung down on either side acting as ballast, and contributing to keep the wreck of the mast tolerably steady in one position. We were thus completely out of the water, though the spray from the crest of the seas which was blown over us kept us thoroughly wet and cold. Fortunately, we both had on thick clothing. Clement was always nicely dressed, for the captain, though not particular about himself, liked to see him look neat, while I, on the contrary, had on my oldest working suit, and was as rough-looking a sea-dog as could be imagined. My old tarry coat and trousers,
and sou’-wester tied under my chin, contributed, however, to keep out the wind, and enable me the better to endure the cold to which we were exposed. I sheltered Clem as well as I could, and held him tight whenever I saw a sea coming towards him, fearing lest he might be washed away. I had made up my mind to perish with him rather than let him go. Hour after hour passed by, till at length, the clouds breaking, the moon came forth and shone down upon us. I looked at Clem’s face: it was very pale, and I was afraid he would give way altogether. “Hold on, hold on, Clem,” I exclaimed. “The wind is falling, and the sea will soon go down; we shall have daylight before long, and in the meantime we have the moon to cheer us up. Perhaps we shall be on shore this time to-morrow, and comfortably in bed; and then we will go back to my father, and he will find out all about your friends. He is a wonderfully clever man, though a bit strict, to be sure.”

“Thank you, Jack, thank you,” he answered. “Don’t be afraid; I feel pretty strong, only somewhat cold and hungry.”

Just then I recollected that I had put the best part of a biscuit into my pocket at tea-time, having been summoned on deck as I was eating it. It was wet, to be sure; but such biscuits as we had take a good deal of soaking to soften thoroughly. I felt for it. There it was. So I put a small piece into Clem’s mouth. He was able to swallow it. Then I put in another, and another; and so I fed him, till he declared he felt much better. I had reserved a small portion for myself, but as I knew that I could go on without it, I determined to keep it, lest he should require more.

I continued to do my best to cheer him up by talking to him of my home, and how he might find his relations and friends, and then I bethought me that I would sing a song. I don’t suppose that many people have sung under such circumstances, but I managed to strike up a stave, one of those with which I had been accustomed to amuse my messmates in the Naiad’s forecastle. It was not, perhaps, one of the merriest, but it served to divert Clem’s thoughts, as well as mine, from our perilous position.

“I wish that I could sing too,” said Clem; “but I know I could not, if I was to try. I wonder you can, Jack.”
“Why? because I am sure that we shall be picked up before long, and so I see no reason why I should not try to be happy,” I answered thoughtlessly.

“Ah, but I am thinking of those who are gone,” said Clem. “My kind father, as I called him, and old Growl, and the rest of the poor fellows; it is like singing over their graves.”

“You are right, Clem,” I said; “I will sing no more, though I only did it to keep up your spirits. But what is that?” I exclaimed, suddenly, as we rose to the crest of a sea. “A large ship standing directly for us.”

“Yes; she is close-hauled, beating down Channel,” observed Clement. “She will be right upon us, too, if she keeps her present course.”

“We must take care to let her know where we are, by shouting together at the top of our voices when we are near enough to be heard,” I said.

“She appears to me to be a man-of-war, and probably a sharp look-out is kept forward,” Clement remarked. We had not observed the ship before, as our faces had been turned away from her. The sea had, however, been gradually working the mast round, as I knew to be the case by the different position in which the moon appeared to us.

“We must get ready for a shout, Clem, and then cry out together as we have never cried before. I’ll say when we are to begin.”

As the ship drew nearer Clem had no doubt that she was a man-of-war, a large frigate apparently, under her three topsails and courses.

“She is passing to windward of us,” I exclaimed.

“Not so sure of that,” cried Clem. “She will be right over us if we do not cry out in time.”

“Let us begin, then,” I said. “Now, shout away, Hip! Hip!”

“No, no!” cried Clem, “that will not do. Shout `Ship ahoy!’”

I had forgotten for the moment what to say, so together we began shouting as shrilly as we could, at the very top of our voices. Again and again we shouted. I began to fear that the ship would be right over us, when presently we saw her luff up. The moon was shining down upon us, and we were seen. So close, even then, did the frigate pass, that the end of the mast
we were clinging to almost grazed her side. Ropes were hove to us, but the ship had too much way on her, and it was fortunate we could not seize them. “Thank you,” I cried out. “Will you take us aboard?” There was no answer, and I thought that we were to be left floating on our mast till some other vessel might sight us. We were mistaken, though. We could hear loud orders issued on board, but what was said we could not make out, and presently the ship came up to the wind, the head yards were braced round, and she lay hove-to. Then we saw a boat lowered. How eagerly we watched what was being done. She came towards us. The people in her shouted to us in a strange language. They were afraid, evidently, of having their boat stove in by the wreck of the mast. At last they approached us cautiously.

“Come, Clem, we will swim to her,” I said. “Catch tight hold of my jacket; I have got strength enough left in me for that.”

We had not far to go, but I found it a tougher job than I expected. It would have been wiser to have remained till we could have leaped from the mast to the boat. I was almost exhausted by the time we reached her, and thankful when I felt Clem lifted off my back, I myself, when nearly sinking, being next hauled on board. We were handed into the stern-sheets, where we lay almost helpless. I tried to speak, but could not, nor could I understand a word that was said. The men at once pulled back to the ship, and a big seaman, taking Clem under one of his arms, clambered up with him on deck. Another carried me on board in the same fashion. The boat was then hoisted up, and the head yards being braced round, the ship continued her course. Lanterns being brought, we were surrounded by a group of foreign-looking seamen, who stared curiously at us, asking, I judged from the tones of their voices, all sorts of questions, but as their language was as strange to us as ours was to them, we couldn’t understand a word they said, or make them comprehend what we said.

“If you would give us some hot grog, and let us turn into dry hammocks, we should be much obliged to you,” I cried out at last, despairing of any good coming of all their talking.

Just as I spoke, an officer with a cloak on came from below, having apparently turned out of his berth. “Ah, you are English,” I heard him say. “Speak to me. How came you floating
out here?”

I told him that our vessel had gone down, and that we, as far as I knew, were the only survivors of the crew.

“And who is that other boy?”

“The captain’s son,” I answered.

“Ah, I thought so, by his appearance,” said the officer. “He shall be taken into the cabin. You, my boy, will have a hammock on the lower deck, and the hot grog you asked for. I’ll visit you soon. I am the doctor of the ship.”

He then spoke to the men, and while Clement was carried aft, I was lifted up and conveyed below by a couple of somewhat rough but not ill-natured-looking seamen. I was more exhausted than I had supposed, for on the way I fainted, and many hours passed by before I returned to a state of half consciousness.

Chapter Three

In three days I was quite well, and the doctor sending me a suit of seaman’s clothes, I dressed and found my way up on deck. I looked about eagerly for Clem, but not seeing him, I became anxious to learn how he was. I could make none of the men understand me. Most of them were Finns—big broad-shouldered, ruddy, light haired, bearded fellows; very good-natured and merry, notwithstanding the harsh treatment they often received. Big as they were, they were knocked about like so many boys by the petty officers, and I began to feel rather uncomfortable lest I should come in for share of the same treatment, of which I had had enough from the hands of old Growl. I determined, however, to grin and bear it, and do, as well as I could, whatever I was told.

I soon found that I was not to be allowed to eat the bread of idleness, for a burly officer, whom I took to be the boatswain, ordered me aloft with several other boys, to hand the fore royal, a stiff breeze just then coming on. Up I went; and though I had never been so high above the deck before, that made but little difference, and I showed that I could beat my companions in activity. When I came down the boatswain nodded his approval. I kept looking out for Clem. At last I saw my friend
the doctor, with several other officers, on the quarter-deck. I hurried aft to him, and, touching my cap, asked him how Clem was. The others stared at me as if surprised at my audacity in thus venturing among them. “The boy is doing well,” he answered; “but, lad, I must advise you not to infringe the rules of discipline. You were, I understand, one of the ship’s boys, and must remain for’ard. He is a young gentleman, and such his dress and appearance prove him to be, will be allowed to live with the midshipmen.”

“I am very glad to hear that,” I answered; “but I am a gentleman’s son also, and I should like to live with the midshipmen, that I may be with Clem.”

“Your companion has said something to the same effect,” observed the doctor; “but the captain remarks that there are many wild, idle boys sent to sea who may claim to be the sons of gentlemen; and as your appearance shows, as you acknowledge was the case, that you were before the mast, there you must continue till your conduct proves that you are deserving of a higher rank. And now go for’ard. I’ll recollect what you have said.” I took the hint. The seamen grinned as I returned among them, as if they had understood what I had been saying.

I kept to my resolution of doing smartly whatever I was told, and laughed and joked with the men, trying to understand their lingo, and to make myself understood by them. I managed to pick up some of their words, though they almost cracked my jaws to pronounce them; but I laughed at my own mistakes, and they seemed to think it very good fun to hear me talk.

Several days passed away, when at length I saw Clement come on deck. I ran aft to him, and he came somewhat timidly to meet me. We shook hands, and I told him how glad I was to see him better, though he still looked very pale. “I am very glad also to see you, Jack,” he said, “and I wish we were to be together. I told the doctor I would rather go and live for’ard than be separated from you; but he replied that that could not be, and I have hopes, Jack, that by-and-by you will be placed on the quarter-deck if you will enter the Russian service.”

“What! and give up being an Englishman?” I exclaimed. “I would do a great deal to be with you, but I won’t abandon my
country and be transmogrified into a Russian.”

“You are right, Jack,” said Clem, with a sigh; “however, the officers will not object to my talking with you, and we must hope for the best.” After this I was constantly thinking how I should act should I have the option of being placed on the quarter-deck and becoming an officer in the Russian service, for we were on board a Russian frigate.

Clem got rapidly better, and we every day met and had a talk together. Altogether, as the boatswain’s lash did not often reach me, though he used it pretty freely among my companions, I was as happy as usual. I should have been glad to have had less train-oil and fat in the food served out to us, and should have preferred wheaten flour to the black rye and beans which I had to eat. Still that was a trifle, and I soon got accustomed to the greasy fare. Clem was now doing duty as a midshipman, and I was in the same watch with him.

The weather had hitherto been generally fine; but one night as the sun went down, I thought I saw indications of a gale. Still the wind didn’t come, and the ship went gliding smoothly over the ocean. I was in the middle watch, and had just come on deck. I had made my way aft, where I found Clem, and, leaning against a gun, we were talking together of dear old England, wondering when we should get back there, when a sudden squall struck the ship, and the hands were ordered aloft to reef topsails. I sprang aloft with the rest, and lay out on the lee fore yard-arm. I was so much more active than most of my shipmates, that I had become somewhat careless. As I was leaning over to catch hold of a reef point, I lost my balance, and felt, as I fell head foremost, that I was about to have my brains dashed out on the deck below me. The instant before the wind had suddenly ceased, and the sail giving a flap, hung down almost against the mast. Just at that moment, filled with the breeze, it bulged out again, and striking me, sent me flying overboard. Instinctively I put my hands together, and, plunging down, struck the now foaming water head first. I sank several feet, though I scarcely for a moment lost consciousness, and when I came to the surface I found myself striking out away from the ship, which was gliding rapidly by me. I heard a voice sing out, “A man overboard.” I knew that it must have been Clem’s,
and I saw a spar and several other things thrown into the wa-
ter. I do not know whether the life-buoy was let go. I did not
see it. Turning round I struck out in the wake of the ship, but
the gale just then coming with tremendous fury, drove her on
fast away from me, and she speedily disappeared in the thick
gloom. I should have lost all hope had I not at that moment
come against a spar, and a large basket with a rope attached
to it, which was driven almost into my hands. Climbing on to
the spar, to which I managed to lash the basket, I then got into
the latter, where I could sit without much risk of being washed
out. It served, indeed, as a tolerably efficient life-preserver; for
although the water washed in and washed out, and the seas fre-
quently broke over my head, I was able to hold myself in with-
out much trouble. I still had some hopes that the ship would
come back and look for me.

At length I thought I saw her approaching through the
darkness. It raised my spirits, and I felt a curious satisfaction,
in addition to the expectation of being saved, at the thought
that I was not to be carelessly abandoned to my fate. I anxiously
gazed in the direction where I fancied the ship to be, but
she drew no nearer, and the dark void filled the space before
me. Still I did not give way to despair, though I found it a hard
matter to keep up. I had been rescued before, and I hoped to
be saved another time. Then, however, I had been in a com-
paratively narrow sea, with numerous vessels passing over it.
Now I was in the middle of the Atlantic, which, although rightly
called a highway, was a very broad one. I could not also help
recollecting that I was in the latitude where sharks abound, and
I thought it possible that one might make a grab at my basket,
and try to swallow it and me together, although I smiled at the
thought of the inconvenience the fish would feel when it stuck
its teeth into the yard, and got it fixed across its mouth. Happily
no shark espied me.

Day at last dawned. As I looked around when I rose to the
summit of a sea, my eyes fell alone on the dark, tumbling,
foaming waters, and the thick clouds going down to meet them.
I began to feel very hungry and thirsty, for though I had water
enough around me, I dare not drink it. I now found it harder
than ever to keep up my spirits, and gloomy thoughts began
to take possession of my mind. No one, I confess, would have called me Happy Jack just then. I was sinking off into a state of stupor, during which I might easily have been washed out of my cradle, when, happening to open my eyes, they fell on the sails of a large brig standing directly for me. I could scarcely fail to be seen by those on board. On she came before the breeze; but as she drew nearer I began to fear that she might still pass at some distance. I tried to stand up and shout out, but I was nearly toppling overboard in making the attempt. I managed, however, to kneel upon the spar and wave my handkerchief, shouting as I did so with all my might. The brig altered her course, and now came directly down for me. I made out two or three people in the forechains standing ready to heave me a rope. I prepared to seize it. The brig was up to me and nearly running me down, but I caught the first rope hove to me, and grasped it tightly. I could scarcely have expected to find myself capable of so much exertion. Friendly hands were stretched out to help me up, but scarcely was I safe than I sank down almost senseless on deck. I soon, however, recovered, and being taken below, and dry clothes and food being given me, I quickly felt as well as usual. “Where am I, and where are you bound to?” were the first questions I asked, hoping to hear that I was on board a homeward-bound vessel. “You are on board the American brig Fox bound out round the Horn to the Sandwich Islands and the west coast of North America,” was the answer. “But I want to go home to England,” I exclaimed. “Well, then, I guess you had better get into your basket, and wait till another vessel picks you up,” replied the captain, to whom I had addressed myself. “Thank you, I would rather stay here with dry clothes on my back and something to eat,” I said. “Perhaps, however, captain, you will speak any homeward-bound vessel we meet, and get her to take me?”

“Not likely to fall in with one,” he observed. “You had better make the best of things where you are.”

“That’s what I always try to do,” I replied. “You are the right sort of youngster for me, then,” he said. “Only don’t go boasting of your proud little venomous island among my people. We are true Americans, fore and aft, except some of the passengers, and they would be better off if they would sink their notions
and pay more respect to the stars and stripes. However, you will have nothing to do with them, for you will do your duty for’ard I guess.” I thought it wiser to make no reply to these remarks, and as the crew were just going to dinner, I gladly accompanied them into their berth under the top-gallant forecastle. The crew, I found, though American citizens, were of all nationalities—Danes, and Swedes, and Frenchmen, with too or three mulattoes and a black cook. They described Captain Pyke, for that was the master’s name, as a regular Tartar, and seemed to have no great love for him, though they held him in especial awe. I was thankful at being so soon picked up, but I would rather have found myself on board a different style of craft. The cabin passengers were going out to join one of the establishments of the great Fur Trading Company on the Columbia river. They were pleasant, gentlemanly-looking men, and I longed to introduce myself to them, as I was beginning to get somewhat weary of the rough characters with whom I was doomed to associate. But from what the men told me, I felt sure that if I did so I should make the captain my enemy. He and they were evidently not on good terms. I got on, however, pretty well with the crew, and as I could speak a little French, I used to talk to the Frenchmen in their own language, my mistakes affording them considerable amusement, though, as they corrected me, I gradually improved.

Among the crew were two other persons whom I will particularly mention. One went by the name of “Old Tom.” He was relatively old with regard to the rest of our shipmates, rather than old in years—a wiry, active, somewhat wizen-faced man, with broad shoulders, and possessing great muscular strength. I suspected from the first, from the way he spoke, that he was not a Yankee born. His language, when talking to me, was always correct, without any nasal twang; and that he was a man of some education I was convinced, when I heard him once quote, as if speaking to himself, a line of Horace. He never smiled, and there was a melancholy expression on his countenance, which made me fancy that something weighed on his mind. He did not touch spirits, but his short pipe was seldom out of his mouth. When, however, he sat with the rest in the forecastle berth, his manner completely changed, and he talked, and ar-
gued, and wrangled, and guessed, and calculated, with as much vehemence as any one, entering with apparent zest into their ribald conversation, though even then the most humorous remark or jest failed to draw forth a laugh from his lips.

Chapter Four
The other person was a lad a couple of years my senior, called always “Young Sam,” apparently one of those unhappy waifs cast on the bleak world without relations or friends to care for him. He was a fine young fellow, with a blue laughing eye, dauntless and active, and promised to become a good seaman. In spite of the rough treatment he often received from his shipmates, he kept up his spirits, and as our natures in that respect assimilated, I felt drawn towards him. The only person who seemed to take any interest in him, however, was old Tom, who saved him from many a blow; still, no two characters could apparently have more completely differed. Young Sam seemed a thoughtless, care-for-nothing fellow, always laughing and jibing those who attacked him, and ready for any fun or frolic which turned up. He appreciated, however, old Tom’s kindness; and the only times I saw him look serious were when he received a gentle rebuke from his friend for any folly he had committed which had brought him into trouble. I believe, indeed, that young Sam would have gone through fire and water to show his gratitude to old Tom, while I suspect that the latter, in spite of his harsh exterior, had a heart not altogether seared by the world, which required some one on whom to fix its kindlier feelings.

I had been some time on board when we put into a port at the Falkland Islands, then uninhabited, to obtain a supply of water. While the crew of the boats were engaged in filling the casks, Mr Duncan, one of the gentlemen, taking young Sam with him, went into the interior to shoot wild-fowl.

The casks were filled; and the boats, after waiting for some time the return of Mr Duncan and Sam, came back. Mr Symonds, the second mate, proposed to return for our shipmates after the casks had been hoisted on board. The captain seemed very angry at this; and when Mr Symonds was shoving off from
the brig’s side, ordered him back. He was hesitating, when another gentleman jumped into the boat, declaring that he would not allow his companion to be left behind, and promised the men a reward if they would shove off. Two of the men agreed to go in the boat, and the mate, with the rest, coming up the side, they pulled away for the shore.

The captain walked the deck, fuming and raging, every now and then turning an angry glance at the land and pulling out his watch. “He means mischief,” muttered old Tom in my hearing; “but if he thinks to leave young Sam ashore to die of starvation, he is mistaken.”

The night drew on, and the boat had not returned. My watch being over, I turned in, supposing that the brig would remain at anchor till the morning. I was, however, awakened in the middle watch by old Tom’s voice. “Come on deck, Jack,” he said; “there’s mischief brewing; the captain had a quarrel with Mr Duncan the other day, and he hates young Sam for his impudence, as he calls it, and so I believe he intends to leave them behind if he can do so; but he is mistaken. We will not lift anchor till they are safe on board, or a party has been sent to look for them. They probably lost their way, and could not get back to the harbour before dark. There are no wild beasts or savages on shore, and so they could not come to harm; you slip into the cabin, and call the other gentlemen, and I’ll manage the crew, who have just loosed topsails, and are already at the windlass with the cable hove short.”

I was on deck in an instant, and, keeping on one side, while the captain was on the other, managed to slip into the cabin. I told the gentlemen of old Tom’s suspicions, and observed that the captain probably thought those in the boat would return without Mr Duncan and Sam, when they saw the vessel making sail.

They instantly began to dress; and one of them, a spirited young Highlander, Mr McIvor, put a brace of pistols into his belt and followed me on deck. I tried to escape being seen by the captain, but he caught sight of me, I was sure, though I stooped down and kept close to the bulwarks as I crept for’ard.

By this time the men were heaving at the windlass, which they continued to do, in spite of what old Tom said to them.
The captain had overheard him, and threatened to knock the first man down with a handspike who ceased to work. Old Tom, however, had got one in his hand, and the captain did not dare to touch him. In another instant I heard Mr McIvor’s voice exclaiming, “What is this all about, Captain Pyke? What! are you going to leave our friends on shore?”

“If your friends don’t come off at the proper time they must take the consequences,” answered the captain. “Then, what I have got to say, Captain Pyke, is, that I’ll not allow them to be deserted, and that I intend to carry out my resolution with a pretty strong argument—the instant the anchor leaves the ground I’ll shoot you through the head.”

“Mutiny! mutiny!” shouted the captain, starting back, “seize this man and heave him overboard.” As he spoke the other two gentlemen made their appearance, and old Tom and I, with two or three others, stepped up close to them, showing the captain the side we intended to take. Neither of the mates moved, while the men folded their arms and looked on, showing that they did not intend to interfere.

“Very well, gentlemen,” cried the captain, “I see how matters stand—you have been bribing the crew. I’ll agree to wait for the boat, and if she does not come with the missing people we must give them up for lost.”

“That depends upon circumstances,” said Mr McIvor, returning his pistol to his belt. He and the rest continued to walk the deck, while the captain went, muttering threats of vengeance, into his cabin.

None of us after this turned in. In a short time the splash of oars was heard, and the boat came alongside. “We have come for food,” said Mr Fraser, one of the gentlemen who had gone in her. “I intend going back at daylight, and must get two or three others to accompany me. We will then have a thorough search for Duncan and the boy—there is no doubt that they have lost their way, and if we fire a few muskets, they will, with the help of daylight, easily find the harbour. Mr McIvor promised to accompany his friend, and I volunteered to go also.”

“No, Jack,” said old Tom, “you remain with me. If we all go, the captain may be playing us some trick.” I don’t know what side old Tom would have taken if it had not been for young
Sam. Judging by his usual conduct, I suspect that he would have stood with his arms folded, and let the rest, as he would have said, fight it out by themselves.

At daylight the boat pulled away with Mr McIvor and another additional hand, taking a couple of muskets with them. Shortly afterwards the captain appeared on deck—though he cast frequent angry glances towards the shore, he said nothing—probably he could not afford to lose so many hands, as there were now four away, besides the two gentlemen, while the aspect of old Tom, with the rest of the crew, kept him from attempting to carry out his evil intentions. Two or three times, notwithstanding this, I thought he was about to order the anchor to be hove up; but again he seemed to hesitate, and at length, towards noon, the boat was seen coming off, with Mr Duncan and Sam in her. The captain said nothing to the gentlemen, but, as soon as the boat was hoisted up, he began to belabour poor Sam with a rope’s end. He was still striking the lad, when old Tom stepped between them, grasping a handspike. “What has the lad done, sir?” he exclaimed. “Why not attack Mr Duncan? If anyone is to blame for the delay, he is the person, not young Sam.” The gentlemen were advancing while old Tom was speaking, and several of the crew cried out shame. The captain again found himself in the minority, and, without replying to old Tom, walked aft, muttering between his teeth.

These incidents will give some idea of the state of matters on board the ship.

We now made sail, with a gentle breeze right aft, but scarcely had we lost sight of the islands when a heavy gale sprang up. The lighter canvas was instantly handed—young Sam and one of the men who had gone in the boat were ordered out on the jibboom to furl the flying jib. As they were about this work, a tremendous sea struck the bows, the gaskets got loose, the jibboom was carried away, and with it the two poor fellows who were endeavouring to secure the sail. The captain, who had seen the accident, took no notice of it, but the first mate, not wishing to have their death on his conscience, sprang aft and ordered the ship to be brought to, while others hove overboard every loose piece of timber, empty casks, or hencoops, which they could lay hands on, to give our shipmates a chance
of escape. Old Tom and I instantly ran to the jolly-boat, and were easing off the falls, when I felt myself felled to the deck by a blow on the head, the captain’s voice exclaiming, “What, you fools, do you wish to go after them and be drowned too?” When I came to myself I saw the boat made fast, and could just distinguish the articles thrown overboard floating astern, while old Tom was standing gazing at them with sorrowful looks, the eyes of all on board, indeed, being turned in the same direction.

“It would have been no use, Jack,” he said, heaving a deep sigh; “the captain was right, the boat couldn’t have lived two minutes in this sea, but I would have risked my life to try and save young Sam, though, for your sake, my boy, it’s better as it is.”

After this the ship was put on her course, and we stood on, plunging away into the heavy seas which rose around us, and threatened every instant to break on board the brig. The passengers looked, and, I daresay, felt very melancholy at the accident, for young Sam especially, was liked by them, and on that account Mr Duncan had taken him on his expedition. Old Tom could scarcely lift up his head, and even the rest of the crew refrained from their usual gibes and jokes. The captain said nothing, but I saw by the way he treated the first mate that he was very savage with him for the part he had taken in attempting to save the poor fellows.

After this old Tom was kinder than ever to me, and evidently felt towards me as he had towards young Sam, whose duties as everybody’s servant I had now to take, being the youngest on board, and least able to hold my own against the captain’s tyranny, and the careless and often rough treatment of the crew.

I had some time before told poor young Sam how I used to be called “Happy Jack,” and he went and let out what I had said among the men. When one of them started me with a rope’s end, he would sing out, “That’s for you, ‘Happy Jack.’” Another would exclaim, “Go and swab the deck down, ‘Happy Jack;’” or, “‘Happy Jack,’ go and help Mango to clean out the caboose, I hope you are happy now—pleasant work for a young gentleman, isn’t it?”

“Look you,” I replied one day, when this remark was made
to me, “I am alive and well, and hope some day to see my home and friends, so, compared to the lot of poor young Sam and Dick Noland, who are fathoms deep down in the ocean, I think I have a right to say I am happy—your kicks and cuffs only hurt for a time, and I manage soon to forget them. If it’s any pleasure to you to give them, all I can say is, that it’s a very rum sort of pleasure; and now you have got my opinion about the matter.”

“That’s the spirit I like to see,” exclaimed old Tom, slapping me on the back soon afterwards, “You’ll soon put a stop to that sort of thing.” I found he was right; and, though I had plenty of dirty work to do, still, after that, not one of the men ever lifted his hand against me. The captain, however, was not to be so easily conquered, and so I took good care to stand clear of him whenever I could.

The rough weather continued till we had made Cape Horn, which rose dark and frowning out of the wild heaving ocean. We were some time doubling it, and were several days in sight of Terra del Fuego, but we did not see anything like a burning mountain—indeed, no volcanoes exist at that end of the Andes.

The weather moderated soon after we were round the Horn, but in a short time another gale sprung up, during which our bulwarks were battered in, one of our boats carried away, our bowsprit sprung, and the fore-topsail, the only canvas we had set, blown to ribbons. Besides this, we received other damages, which contributed still further to sour our captain’s temper. We were at one time so near the ironbound coast that there seemed every probability that we should finish off by being dashed to pieces on the rocks. Happily, the wind moderated, and a fine breeze springing up, we ran on merrily into the Pacific.

Shortly after, we made the island of Juan Fernandez, and, as I saw its wood-covered heights rising out of the blue ocean, I could not help longing to go on shore and visit the scenes I had read about in Robinson Crusoe. I told old Tom about my wish. Something more like a smile than I had ever yet seen, rose on his countenance. “I doubt, Jack, that you would find any traces of the hero you are so fond of;” he observed; “I believe once upon a time an Englishman did live there, left by one of the
ships of Commodore Anson’s squadron, but that was long ago, and the Spaniards have turned it into a prison, something like our Norfolk Island.”

Chapter Five

We, however, did call off another island in the neighbourhood, called Massafuera, to obtain a supply of wood and water. The ship was hove-to, and the pinnace and jolly-boat were sent on shore with casks. I was anxious to go, but old Tom kept me back. “You stay where you are, Jack,” he said, “or the skipper may play you some trick. It’s a dangerous place to land at, you are sure of a wetting, and may lose your life in going through the surf.”

In the evening, when the party returned, I found this to be the case. Still, I might have been tempted, I think, to run off and let the ship sail away without me, as I heard that there were plenty of goats on the island, abundance of water, and that the vegetation was very rich.

It is also an exceedingly picturesque spot, the mountains rising abruptly from the sea, surrounded by a narrow strip of beach. Those who went on shore had also caught a large quantity of fish, of various sorts, as well as lobsters and crabs, which supplied all hands for several days.

Perhaps old Tom had a suspicion of what I might have been tempted to do, and I fancied that was his chief reason for keeping me on board.

The idea having once taken possession of my mind, I resolved to make my escape at the next tempting-looking island we might touch at, should I find any civilised men living there, or should it be uninhabited. I had no wish to live among savages, as I had read enough of their doings to make me anxious to keep out of their way, and I was not influenced by motives which induce seamen to run from their ships for the sake of living an idle, profligate life, free from the restraints of civilisation.

A few days after leaving Massafuera, we got into the trade winds, which carried us swiftly along to the northward. Again we crossed the equator; and about three weeks afterwards
made the island of Owhyee, the largest of the Sandwich Islands. As we coasted along, we enjoyed the most magnificent view I had ever beheld. Along the picturesque shore were numerous beautiful plantations, while beyond it rose the rocky and dreary sides of the gigantic Mouna Roa, its snow-clad summit towering to the clouds. It was on this island that Captain Cook was murdered by the now friendly and almost civilised natives, who have, indeed, since become in many respects completely so, and taken their place among the nations of the world.

We sailed on, passing several islands, when we brought up in the beautiful bay of Whytetee. Near the shore was a village situated in an open grove of cocoa-nut trees, with the hills rising gently in the rear, presenting a charming prospect. The more I gazed at it, the more I longed to leave the brig, and go and dwell there, especially as I heard that there were several respectable Englishmen and Americans already settled on the island, and that they were held in high favour by the king and his chiefs. Still old Tom had been so kind to me, and I entertained so sincere a regard for him, that I could not bear the thoughts of going away without bidding him farewell. I was afraid, however, of letting him know my intentions. Often I thought that I would try and persuade him to go too. I began by speaking of the beautiful country, and the delicious climate, and the kind manners of the people, and how pleasantly our countrymen, residing there, must pass their lives. “I know what you are driving at, Jack,” he said, “You want to run from the ship; isn’t it so?” I confessed that such was the case, and asked him to go with me. “No, Jack,” he replied, “I am not one of those fellows who act thus; I have done many a thing I am sorry for, but I engaged for the voyage, and swore to stick by the brig; and while she holds together, unless the captain sets me free, I intend to do so. And Jack, though you are at liberty to do what you like, you wouldn’t leave me, would you?” He spoke with much feeling in his tone. “Since young Sam went, you are the only person I have cared to speak to on board, and if you were to go, I should feel as if I were left alone in the world. I should have liked to have made friends with those fine young men, Duncan and McIvor. Once, (you may be surprised to hear it) I
was their equal in position, but they don’t trouble themselves about such a man as I now am, and they will soon be leaving the brig for the shore. If I thought it was for your advantage, I would say, notwithstanding this, go; but it isn’t. You will get into bad ways if you go and live among those savages—for savages they are, whatever you may say about them. And you will probably be able to return home by sticking to the brig sooner than any other way.”

These arguments weighed greatly with me, and I finally abandoned my intention, greatly to old Tom’s satisfaction. He redoubled his kindness to me after this. Towards every one else he grew more silent and reserved.

I may just say, that the next day we anchored off Honolulu, the chief town, where the king and his court resided; and that we carried on some trading with the people, his majesty in particular, and taking some half-a-dozen Sandwich islanders on board to replace the men we had lost, and, as old Tom observed, any others we might lose, we sailed for the American coast.

From that day I could not help observing a more than usually sad expression on my friend’s countenance; indeed, every day he seemed to become more and more gloomy, and I determined to ask him what there was on his mind to make him so. I took the opportunity I was looking for one night when he was at the helm, and the second mate, who was officer of the watch, had gone forward to have a chat, as he sometimes did, with the men. The night was fine and clear, and we were not likely to have eaves-droppers. “Tell me, Tom,” I said, “what is the matter with you? I wish that I could be of as much use to you as you have been to me.”

“Thank you, Jack,” he answered; “the fact is, I have got something on my mind, and as you have given me an opportunity, I’ll tell you what it is. I think I shall be the better afterwards, and you may be able to do for me what I shall never have an opportunity of doing myself, for, Jack, I cannot help feeling sure that my days are numbered. If that captain of ours wishes to get rid of me, he will find means without staining his hands in my blood, he will not do that, there are plenty of other ways by which I may be expended, as they say of old stores
in the navy. For myself I care but little, but I should wish to remain to look after you, and lend you a helping hand should you need it.”

“Thank you, Tom,” I said, “I value the kind feelings you entertain for me, and I hope that we shall be together till we reach England again. But I was going to ask why you think that the captain wishes to get rid of you? He can have no motive that I can discover to desire your death.”

“He hates me, that’s enough; he’s a man who will go any lengths to gratify his hate,” answered old Tom. “But I promised to tell you about the matter which weighs on my mind. Jack, I did many things when I was a young man, which I am sorry for, but I was then chiefly my own enemy. A time came, however, when I was tempted to commit a crime against others, and it’s only since I began this voyage that I have had a wish to try and undo it as far as I have the power. You must know, Jack, I am the son of a gentleman, and I went to college. I had got into bad ways there, and spent all my property. When my last shilling was gone, I shipped on board a merchant vessel, and for years never again set foot on the shores of old England. I knocked about all that time in different climes and vessels, herding with the roughest and most abandoned class of seamen, till I became almost as abandoned and rough as they were. Still, during all my wanderings, I had a hankering for the associates and the refinements of society I had so long quitted. Thoughts of home would come back to me even in my wildest moments, although I tried hard to keep them out. At length I returned to England with more money in my pocket than I had ever again expected to possess. Throwing aside my seafaring clothes as soon as I got on shore, I dressed myself as a gentleman, and repairing to a fashionable watering-place, where I found several old friends, managed to get into respectable society. I forgot that unless I could obtain some employment my money must soon come to an end. It did so, but the taste for good society had been revived in me. It was now impossible to indulge in it, and I was compelled once more to seek for a berth on board ship. Thoughtlessly, I had never studied navigation while I was at sea, and consequently had again to go before the mast. I got on board an Indiaman, and reached Calcutta. On the return voy-
age we had a number of passengers. I of course knew but little about them, as I seldom went aft except to take my trick at the helm. I observed, however, among them a gentleman of refined appearance, with his wife and their little boy. They had a native nurse to take care of him. No one could be more affectionate than the gentleman was to his wife and child, but he seemed of a retiring disposition, and I seldom saw him speaking to any one else. We had had particularly fine weather during the greater part of the passage, when the ship was caught in a tremendous gale. During it the masts were carried away, several of the hands—Lascars and Englishmen—were lost overboard, while she sprung a leak, which kept all the crew hard at work at the pumps.

"It became evident, indeed, before long, that unless the weather moderated the ship would go down. We had four boats remaining, but as they would not carry a third of the people on board, the captain ordered all hands to turn to and build rafts. We were thus employed when night came on; such a night I never before had seen. The thunder roared and the lightning flashed around us, as if it would set the ship on fire. Some hours passed away; we could get on but slowly with our work. I was on the after-part of the deck, when I remember seeing the gentleman I have spoken of come up and make an offer to the captain to lend a hand at whatever might be required to be done. I observed at the time that he had a small case hanging to his side. He did not seem to think that there was any danger of the ship going down for many hours to come; nor indeed did any one; for the leaks were gaining but little on the pumps, although they were gaining. He seemed so well to understand what he was about that I suspected he was a naval officer. We worked away hard, and it was nearly morning, when a dreadful peal of thunder, such as I had never heard before, broke over our heads, and it's my belief that a bolt passed right through the ship. Be that as it may, a fearful cry arose that she was going down. The people rushed to the boats. Discipline was at an end. The gentleman I spoke of shouted to the men, trying to bring them back to their duty. Then I saw him, when all hope of doing so had gone, hurry into the cuddy. Directly afterwards he came out with his wife and child, together with the nurse.
Supposing, I fancy, that the boats were already full, or would be swamped alongside, he secured the nurse to the raft we had been building, and had given her the child to hold, calling on me and others to assist in launching it overboard, intending to take his place with his wife upon it. He was in the act of securing her—so it seemed to me—when the ship gave a fearful plunge forward, and a roaring sea swept over her. I at once saw that she would never rise again. On came the foaming waters, carrying all before them. Whether or not the gentleman and his wife succeeded in getting to the raft, I could not tell; there was no room, I knew, for me on it. Just before I had caught sight of one of the boats, which had shoved off with comparatively few people in her, dropping close under the ship’s quarter. I sprang aft, and, leaping overboard, struck out towards her, managing to get hold of her bow as it dipped into the sea. I hauled myself on board. By the time I had got in, and could look about me, I saw the stern of the ship sinking beneath a wave, and for a moment I thought the boat would have been drawn down with her. Such fearful shrieks and cries as I never wish to hear again rose from amid the foaming sea, followed by a perfect and scarcely less terrible silence. We had but three oars in the boat, which we could with difficulty, therefore, manage in that heavy sea. Most of the men in her were Lascars, and they were but little disposed to go to the assistance of our drowning shipmates. There were three Englishmen in the after-part of the boat, and I made my way among the Lascars to join them. Even the Englishmen belonged to the least respectable part of the crew. They, however, sided with me, and, seizing a stretcher, I swore that I would brain the fellows if they would not try to pick up some of the drowning people. Two or three on this drew their knives, flourishing them with threatening gestures. Knowing them pretty well, I felt sure that if we did not gain the day, they would take the first opportunity of heaving us overboard; and with all my might I dealt a blow at the head of the man nearest me, who held his weapon ready to strike. The stretcher caught him as he was in the act of springing up, and he fell overboard, sinking immediately. ‘Any more of you like to be treated in the same way?’ I exclaimed. The wretches sank down in their seats, thoroughly cowed; but in the
scuffle one of the oars was lost overboard, and was swept away before we could recover it. Some time was thus lost, and the boat had drifted a considerable distance from the spot where the Indiaman had gone down. We could hear, however, cries for help rising above the hissing and dashing sounds of the tumbling waters. Every instant I expected that the boat would be swamped; when at length the Lascars, who had the oars, were induced by my threats to pull away and keep her head to sea. I had taken the helm, and though we made no progress, the rafts and various articles which had floated up from the wreck came drifting down towards us, scattering far and wide over the tossing ocean. I caught sight of a boat and two or three other rafts, but they were too far off to enable me, through the gloom, to distinguish the people on them. The shrieks had gradually ceased; now and then the cry of some strong swimmer, who had hitherto bravely buffeted the sea, was heard ere he sank for the last time. Daylight was just breaking when, as I was standing up in the stern-sheets, I saw a person clinging to a piece of timber, and I determined, if possible, to save him. I pointed him out to the English seamen; and two of them, springing up, seized the oars from the hands of the Lascars, and by pulling away lustily we got up close to the spot. The man saw us coming. It was not without difficulty that we managed to haul him on board so as to avoid striking him or staving in the boat against the piece of wreck which had kept him up. To my surprise I found that he was the very gentleman who had assisted in forming the raft before the ship went down. I knew him by the case, which he still had secured to his side. He was so exhausted that for some minutes he could not speak, though he was evidently making an effort to do so. At length, beckoning me to put my ear down to his mouth, he asked in a low voice whether we had seen his wife and child, with the nurse. The only comfort I could afford him was by telling him that I had caught sight of several small rafts, and possibly they might be upon one of them. He had been washed away before he could secure himself when the ship foundered; and though he was carried down with her, on rising to the surface he had caught hold of the piece of wreck to which we had found him clinging.
“There we were, fourteen human beings in a small boat out in the middle of the Atlantic, the dark foaming seas surrounding us, without a particle of food or a drop of fresh water, while our two oars scarcely enabled us to keep her head to the sea, and save her from being capsized or swamped.

“I do not like to talk or even to think of the horrors which followed. Daylight had now come on, but all around was gloom, the dark clouds appearing like a pall just above our heads, and hanging round on either side, so as to circumscribe the horizon to the narrowest limits. Here and there I occasionally thought that I saw a few dark spots, which might have been the boats and rafts, or pieces of the wreck.

“The day passed by and there was no abatement of the gale. The Lascars had again taken the oars, but as night again approached, worn out with hunger and fatigue, they refused to pull any longer, and the gentleman offering to steer, the three other men and I took it by turns to labour at the oars.

“Thus the second night passed by. I had begun to feel faint and hungry, and to experience the pangs of thirst; and, judging by my own sensations, I felt sure that, should we not fall in with a ship during the coming day, some of my companions would give way. Another morning dawned, but no sail was in sight. One of the Lascars lay dead in the bows, the rest were stretched out under the thwarts, unable even to continue baling, and apparently no longer caring what might become of them. The gentleman, though the most delicate-looking of us all, held out the best. His eye was constantly ranging over the ocean in search of the raft or boat which might contain those he loved best on earth. I had great difficulty in persuading him to let me take the helm again while he got a little sleep.

“As the day drew on the gale moderated, and the sea went down. So weak were the three other Englishmen by this time, that I believe we should not otherwise have been able to prevent the boat being swamped. The Lascars were in a worse state. Two more died, and as their countrymen would not heave them overboard, we were obliged to do so. Eagerly we looked out for a sail, but none appeared. Before the next morning broke all the Lascars were dead, and I saw that one of my messmates was likely soon to follow them. Another, however,
died before him, but ere the sun rose high in the heavens, he
was gone.

"Besides the gentleman, only I and one man remained,
the latter indeed was near his last gasp. I will not tell you what
dreadful thoughts passed through my mind. Just then, as I
was stooping down, I put my hand under the after seat. There,
stowed away, was a large lump of grease. I felt round farther,
and drew forth two bones with a considerable amount of meat
on them. One of the dogs, I have no doubt, had made it his
hiding place. The selfish thought came across me, that had the
Lascars and the other two men been alive, this food would have
gone very little way, but now it might support the existence of
my two companions and me for another day or two. Eagerly
I seized the putrid meat in my mouth, offering a piece to my
companions. My messmate attempted to eat it, his jaws moved
for a few seconds, then his head fell back. He had died in the
effort. The gentleman could with difficulty swallow a few mor-
sels. `Water! water!' he muttered, `without water it is too late.' I
tried some of the grease, and felt revived.

"Not without difficulty we hove the last who had succumbed
into the sea, and then the gentleman and I were alone. His
spirits, which had hitherto kept up, were now, I saw, sinking. He
beckoned me to sit close to him, and I saw that he was engaged
in trying to loosen the strap which held the case to his side.
`You are strong, my friend,' he whispered, `and may possibly
survive till you are picked up, I feel that I can trust you. Take
charge of this case—it contains an important document, and
jewels and money of considerable value. Here, too, is a purse of
gold, to that you are welcome,' and he handed me a purse from
his pocket. `The case I as a dying man commit to your charge,
and solemnly entreat you to take care of it for the benefit of my
widow and orphan child, for the belief is still strong within me
that they survive. You will find within this metal case full direc-
tions as to the person to whom it is to be delivered.' He said this
with the greatest difficulty, and it seemed as if he had exhausted
all his strength in the effort. I promised to fulfil his wishes, and
fully intended doing so. He took my hand, and fixed his eyes
on me, as if he was endeavouring to read my thoughts. I tried
to make him take some more food, but he had no strength to
swallow it. Before the evening closed in he too was gone.

"I had not the heart at once to throw him overboard. As I stood looking at him, prompted I believe by the spirit of evil, an idea came into my head. Should I reach shore the purse of gold would enable me to enjoy myself for some time, and perhaps I might obtain permanent employment in a respectable position, instead of knocking about at sea. I took off the dead man's clothes, and dressed myself in them, though I was so weak that the task was a difficult one. I then lifted the body overboard. Having secured the box round my waist, I placed the metal case and purse in my pocket.

"I was alone, and though suffering greatly from thirst, I still felt that there was some life in me. I gazed around, but no sail was in sight. A light breeze only was blowing, and the sea had become tolerably calm, so eating a little more of the grease and meat, I lay down in the stern-sheets to sleep. I was awoke by feeling the water splashing over me. It was raining hard. There were two hats and a bucket in the boat. I quickly collected enough water to quench my thirst, and at once felt greatly revived. The rain continued long enough to enable me to fill the bucket. Had it not been for that shower I must have died.

"Two days longer I continued in the boat, when, just as the sun rose, my eyes fell on a sail in the horizon. How eagerly I watched her; she was standing towards me. Securing a shirt to the end of an oar, I waved it as high as I could reach. I was seen—the ship drew nearer. Being too weak to pull alongside I made no attempt to do so, and this being observed, the ship hove-to and lowered a boat, which soon had mine in tow. I was carefully lifted up the side, and on my dress being observed, I was at once treated as a gentleman. A cabin was given up to me, and every attention paid to my wants. I found that the ship was an emigrant vessel, outward bound, for Australia.

"I was some time in recovering my strength, and when I appeared among the passengers I took care to evade any questions put to me. I found the life on board very pleasant, and having purchased some clothes and other articles I was able to appear on an equality with the rest.

"We fell in with no other ship till Sydney was reached. I went on shore, purposing to amuse myself for a short time,
and then return home and fulfil the dying request of my un-
fortunate companion in the boat. Would that I had gone on
board a vessel sailing the very day of our arrival. Jack, never put
off doing your duty, under the idea that it may be done a little
time hence, lest that roaring lion we read of may catch hold of
you and tempt you to put it off altogether. I remained on day
after day, mixing in society, and rapidly spending my money.
It was all gone, and then, Jack,” and old Tom lowered his voice,
“I did that vile deed—I broke open the box and took possession
of the money I found within—the widow’s and orphan’s gold.
I tried to persuade myself that they had certainly been lost. At
first I only took the gold, intending to go home with the other
articles; then I got to the notes. I had some difficulty in getting
them changed, and was afraid of being discovered. At last I
began to dispose of the jewels.

“At length I got a hint that I was suspected, and securing the
case I once more dressed myself as a seaman, bought a chest,
and got a berth on board a homeward-bound ship. I was miser-
able—conscience stung me—I could get no rest.

“The ship was cast away on the west coast of Ireland, and
nearly all on board perished. I had secured about me the case,
which still contained the parchment, the title-deeds of a large
property, and a few jewels.

“I, with a few survivors, reached the shore. I was afraid to
go back to England to deliver the case to the person to whom it
was addressed, and so, making my way to Cork, where I found
a ship bound for America, I went on board her.

“Jack, I have been knocking about ever since, my conscience
never at rest, and yet not having the courage to face any danger
I might incur, and make the only reparation in my power to
those who, if still alive, I have deprived of their property. Now,
notwithstanding what you say, there’s something tells me that
I have not long to live. I never had such a notion in my head
before, but there it is now, and I cannot get rid of it. You are
young and strong, and I want you to promise me, if you get
home, to do what I ought to have done long ago. I will give you
the case when we go below. Take it to the lawyer to whom it
is addressed, and tell him all I have told you, and how it came
into your possession, he’ll believe you, I am sure, and though
the money and most of the jewels are gone, the remainder will, I hope, be of value to the rightful owners.”

I of course promised old Tom that I would do as he wished, at the same time I tried to persuade him to banish the forebodings which haunted him, from his mind. “That’s more than I can do, Jack,” he said, “I shouldn’t mind the thoughts of death so much, if I could find the means of undoing all the ill I have done in the world—that’s what tries me now.” Unhappily neither I nor any one on board could tell the poor fellow that there is but one way by which sins can be washed away. I did indeed suggest that he should try and borrow a Bible from one of the gentlemen in the cabin, if they had one among them, for there was not one for’ard nor in the captain’s or officers’ berths.

When our watch was over, old Tom sat down on his chest, waiting till the rest of the watch had turned in and gone to sleep. He then cautiously opened his chest, and exhibited within, under his clothes, a small box, strongly bound with silver, and the metal case he had spoken of. “Here, Jack,” he said, “I make you my heir, and give you the key of my chest: I’ll tell the men to-morrow that I have done so, and let the captain and mates know it also, that there may be no dispute about the matter.” I thanked old Tom, assuring him, at the same time, that I hoped not to benefit by his kindness.

In about three weeks we reached the mouth of the Columbia river. A strong gale from the westward had been blowing for several days, and as we came off the river a tremendous surf was seen breaking across the bar at its mouth. “I hope the captain won’t attempt to take the vessel in,” observed old Tom to me. “I have been in once while the sea was not so heavy by half as it is now, and our ship was nearly castaway.” Still we stood on. Presently, however, the captain seemed to think better of it, and indifferent as he was to the lives of others, he apparently did not wish to lose his own, and the brig into the bargain. She was accordingly hauled to the wind, and we again stood off. It was only, however, to heave-to, when he ordered a boat to be lowered. He then directed the first mate to take four hands to go in her and sound the bar. The mate expostulated, and declared that the lives of all would be sacrificed in the attempt. “You are a coward, and are afraid,” exclaimed the captain,
 stamping with rage. “Take old Tom and `Happy Jack,’ and two others,” he called out their names. “No man shall justly say I am a coward,” answered the mate; “I’ll go, but I’ll take none but volunteers. My death and theirs will rest on your head, Captain Pyke.”

“I’ll not go if the boy is sent,” exclaimed old Tom; “but I am ready to go if another man takes his place.”

“Let me go, Tom,” I said; “if you and the mate go I am ready to accompany you.”

“No, Jack, I’ll do no such thing,” answered my friend. “You stay on board. Unless others step forward the boat won’t go at all. The bar is not in a fit state for the vessel to cross, much less an open boat.” The captain, however, seemed determined to go into the river, and now ordered another man to go instead of me. “I’ll make you pay for this another day,” he cried out, looking at me. I saw the mate shaking hands with several on board before he stepped into the boat. “Remember the case, Jack,” said old Tom as he passed me, giving me a gripe by the hand. “You have got the key, lad.”

The boat shoved off and pulled towards the bar. I watched her very anxiously; now she rose to the top of a roller, now she was hidden by the following one. Every instant I expected her to disappear altogether. I couldn’t help thinking of what old Tom had said to me. Some time passed, when the captain ordered the helm to be put up, and the brig was headed towards the bar. He had been looking with his glass, and declared he had seen the mate’s signal to stand in. The wind by this time had moderated. The brig was only under her topsails and mainsail, and I began to wonder at the mate’s apprehensions. We had not stood on long when I saw the boat to the northward of us, much nearer the breakers than we were. She seemed to be carried by beyond the control of those in her. A strong current had caught hold of her. Presently she passed, not a pistol shot from us. The three men were shouting and shrieking for aid; old Tom was in the bows, sitting perfectly still; I could even distinguish the countenance of the mate, as he turned it with a reproachful glance, so it seemed to me, towards the captain. Beyond her appeared a high wall of hissing, foaming breakers, towards which she was driving. The captain seemed scarcely
to notice the unfortunate men; indeed his attention was occupied with attending to the brig, our position being extremely critical. I couldn’t take my eyes off the boat. Would she be able even yet to stem the current and get back into smooth water? Suddenly, however, it seemed as if the wall of foaming breakers came right down upon her, and she disappeared amidst them. A cry of horror escaped me. “We may be no better off ere long,” I heard one of the men exclaim. He had scarcely spoken when the brig struck, and the foaming waters leaped up on either side, as if about to break on board. Another sea came roaring on, and she again moved forward. Again and again the brig struck, and at last seemed fixed.

Darkness was coming on, the foaming waters roared around us, frequently breaking on board, and we had to hold on to escape being washed away. The hatches had been battened down, or the vessel would have filled. She must have been a strong craft, or she could not have held together. The passengers behaved like brave men, though they evidently thought that it was the captain’s obstinacy which had brought them into their present perilous position.

Hour after hour passed by, with no object discernible beyond the foaming waters surging round us. The men declared that they could hear the shrieks and cries of our shipmates. The captain swore at them as fools for saying so, declaring that their voices must long since have been silenced by the breakers. Every instant it seemed that the brig must go to pieces, and that we should be carried away to share their fate. Suddenly, however, I felt the brig move. The topsails were let fall and sheeted home, and we once more glided forward. In another hour we were safely at anchor in a sheltered bay within the mouth of the river.

The next morning several natives came off to us in their canoes. They were red-skinned painted savages, but appeared inclined to be friendly. By means of Mr Duncan, who understood something of their language, they were told of the accident which had happened to the boat, and they undertook to search along the shore, in the possibility of any of the crew having escaped, and been washed on to the beach. On hearing of this my hopes of seeing old Tom again somewhat revived,
though I scarcely believed it possible that any boat getting into those fearful breakers could have survived. Mr Duncan and two of the other gentlemen agreed to accompany the savages.

In the evening the boat which had taken them on shore was seen coming off. I anxiously watched her. Besides those who had gone away, I distinguished one other person, he turned his face towards the vessel as the boat approached, and, to my delight, I saw that he was old Tom. “And so you have escaped, have you?” said the captain, as he stepped on board. “Yes, sir, but the others have gone where some others among us will be before long,” answered Tom, gloomily, “and those who sent them there will have to render an account of their deeds.”

“What do you mean?” exclaimed the captain. “I leave that to others to answer,” said Tom, walking forward.

He told me that the boat, on entering the surf, was immediately capsized, and that all hands were washed out of her. That he had managed to cling on with one man, and that when they got through the surf they had righted the boat, and picking up two of the oars, after bailing her out, had succeeded in paddling, aided by the current, some distance to the northward. On attempting to land the boat was again capsized. He had swam on shore, but the other poor fellow was drowned, and he himself was almost exhausted when met by the party who brought him back. “You see, Tom,” I observed, “your prognostications have not come true, and you may still live to get back to old England again.”

“Oh no, Jack, though I have escaped this once, I am very sure my days are numbered,” he answered; do all I could, I was unable to drive this idea out of his head.

The crew were so indignant at the boat having been sent away, declaring that the captain wished to get rid of the mate and old Tom, that I felt sure another slight act of tyranny would produce a mutiny. While the gentlemen remained on board this was less likely to happen, but they were about to leave us, and take up their residence on shore.

Some time was occupied in landing their goods and stores, and then we found that we were to proceed to the northward, on a trading voyage with the Indians, and that Mr Duncan was to accompany us. We had also received on board an Indian,
who had long resided with the whites, and who was to act as our interpreter.

A fair wind carried us over the bar, and, steering to the northward, we continued on for several days, till we brought up in a deep bay, on the shore of which was situated a large native village. Large numbers of the Indians came off in their canoes, with furs to exchange for cutlery, cotton goods, looking-glasses, beads, and other ornaments. Many of them were fine looking, independent fellows, but veritable savages, dressed in skins, their heads adorned, after their fashion, with feathers, shells, and the teeth of different animals. The captain treated them with great contempt, shouting at them, and ordering them here and there, as if they were beings infinitely inferior to himself. I saw them frequently turn angry glances at him, but they did not otherwise exhibit any annoyance. One day, however, he had a dispute with one of their chiefs about a matter of barter, when, losing his temper, he struck the savage and knocked him over on the deck. The Indian, recovering himself, cast a fierce glance at him, then, folding his arms, walked away, uttering some words to his companions, which we did not understand.

The next day, Mr Duncan, who had gone on shore, returned on board hurriedly, with the interpreter, and warned the captain that the Indians intended to take vengeance for the insult their chief had received. The captain laughed, declaring that he did not fear what ten times the number of savages who as yet had come on board, would venture to do. “They are daring fellows, though, Captain Pyke, and treacherous, and cunning in the extreme,” observed Mr Duncan. “Take my advice and keep them out of the ship. We have already done a fair trade here, and the natives have not many more skins to dispose of.”

“I am not to be frightened as other people are,” answered the captain, scornfully. “If they have no skins they will not bring them, and if they have, I am not the man to be forgetful of the interests of the Company, by refusing to trade.”

This was said on deck in the hearing of the crew. “I’ll tell you what, Jack,” observed old. Tom to me, “the captain will repent not following Mr Duncan’s advice. If the Indians come on board, keep by me—we shall have to fight for our lives. I know these I people. When they appear most friendly, they are often
meditating mischief.”

That very evening several canoes came off, and in them was the chief whom the captain had knocked down. He seemed perfectly friendly, smiling and shaking hands with the captain as if he had entirely forgotten the insult he had received.

When the savages took their departure, they were apparently on the best of terms with us all.

Chapter Six

The next morning we were preparing to put to sea, when two large canoes came off, each carrying about twenty men. As they exhibited a considerable number of furs, the captain allowed them to come on board, and trade commenced as usual. In the meantime, three other canoes came off with a similar number of men, and a larger quantity of furs of the most valuable descriptions. They also were allowed to come up the side like the rest.

“Jack, I don’t like the look of things,” said old Tom.

“Do you observe that the savages are wearing cloaks such as they have not appeared in before. Just come down for’ard with me.”

I followed Tom below. “Here,” he said, “fasten this case under your jacket. If the savages attack us, we will jump into the boat astern; they will be too much intent on plunder to follow us, and we will make our escape out to sea. I propose to do this for your sake. As for me, I would as lief remain and fight it out. I have mentioned my suspicions to several of the men, and advised them to have an eye on the handspikes; with them we may keep the savages at bay till we can make good our retreat.”

I asked him why he did not warn the captain. “Because he is mad, and would only laugh at me,” he answered, “Mr Duncan and the interpreter have already done so, and they are as well aware as I am that mischief is brewing.”

On going on deck, we saw the captain speaking to the Indians, and ordering them to return to their canoes. They appeared as if they were going to obey him, when suddenly, each man drawing a weapon from beneath his cloak uttered a fearful yell, and leaped at the officers and us. The captain, with only a
jack-knife in his hand, defended himself bravely, killing four of his savage assailants.

Led by old Tom, I, with three or four other men, fought our way aft to join the officers, intending, should we be overpowered, to leap, as we had proposed, into the boat. I saw poor Mr Duncan struck down and hove into a canoe alongside. The captain was apparently trying to reach the cabin, probably to get his fire-arms, when he fell, struck by a hatchet on the head.

“Follow me,” cried Tom. “We may reach the boat through the cabin windows.” As he said this, he sprang down the companion-hatch, I and two others following him. The remainder of our number were overtaken by the savages before they could reach it. The last, Andrew Pearson, our boatswain, contrived to secure the hatch. This gave us time to get hold of the fire-arms fastened against the bulkheads, and to load and place them ready for use on the table. There were at least a dozen muskets, and as many brace of pistols. Had these been in our hands on deck, we should probably have driven the savages overboard, or they would have been deterred from making the attack. With them, we might now defend our lives against vastly superior numbers.

The scuffle on deck was still going on, the yells of the savages rising above the stifled groans and cries of our unfortunate shipmates. They soon ceased, and then arose a shout of triumph from our enemies, and we knew that we were the only survivors. But we too were in a desperate plight. Tom was severely wounded, and the boatswain and the other man had received several gashes. I, indeed, thanks to the way in which Tom had defended me, was the only person unhurt.

“Green, do you look after the hatchway,” said Pearson to the other man who had escaped. “Tom, do you and Jack show your muskets through the stern windows, I have some work to do. The savages think they have us in a trap, but they are mistaken.” He opened, as he spoke, a hatch which led to the magazine, and I saw him uncoiling a long line of match, one end of which he placed in the magazine, while he led the other along the cabin to the stern-port. Meantime, the savages had all clambered on board, and were shrieking and shouting in the most fearful manner, crowding down into the hold, as we could judge by the
sounds which reached us, and handing up the rich treasures they found there.

“No time to be lost,” said Pearson, hauling up the boat. He went to the locker, and collected all the provisions he could find. “Jump in, Tom and Jack,” he said. “Now for the fire-arms.” He handed them in, and told us to place them along the thwarts, ready for use. “Now, Green,” he said in a low voice, “jump in.” We three were now in the boat, which was hidden under the counter from those on deck. He struck a light, and placed it to the slow match, and, having ascertained that it was burning, slipped after us into the boat, in which the mast was fortunately stepped.

“Jack, do you take the helm, and steer directly for the mouth of the harbour,” he said, cutting the painter and seizing an oar. Tom and Green did the same, and pulled away lustily. We had already got several fathoms from the vessel before we were perceived. The sail had been placed ready for hoisting. It was run up and sheeted home. The savages were about to jump into one of the canoes, and chase us, but three muskets pointed towards them made them hesitate. We were rapidly slipping away from the doomed brig. We could see the savages dancing and leaping on deck, their shouts and yells coming over the water towards us.

“They will dance to another tune soon,” muttered Pearson between his teeth.

He and the other two had again taken to the oars. Even now a flight of arrows might have reached us, but fortunately the savages had not brought their bows with them, and probably that was the chief reason why they had not ventured to pursue us. They well knew that several of their number would have been shot down with our bullets had they made the attempt. Still we could see some of the chiefs apparently trying to persuade their warriors to follow us, and we knew that though we might fight till all our ammunition was expended, we should at last be overwhelmed by numbers.

Our chance of ultimate escape seemed small indeed. “They will not come,” said Pearson. “See!” We had got half-a-mile or more from the brig, when a deep thundering sound reached our ears. It seemed as if the whole vessel was lifted out of the
water, while up into the air shot her mainmast and spars, and fragments of her deck and bulwarks, and other pieces of timber, mingled with countless human bodies, with limbs torn off and mangled in a fearful manner. At the same time the canoes with those who had escaped were paddling with frantic energy towards the shore, probably believing that the Great Spirit had sent forth one of his emissaries to punish them for their treachery to the white people. We concluded that some such idea as this was entertained by them, as we saw no canoes coming off in pursuit of us.

Rowing and sailing, we continued to make our way out to the open ocean. It was blowing fresh but, the wind coming off-shore, the sea was tolerably calm, and we agreed that at all events it was better to undergo the dangers of a long voyage in an open boat than trust ourselves in the power of the revengeful savages. We had reached the mouth of the harbour, and could still see the village far off on its shore, when, to our dismay, we found the sea breeze setting in. We had accordingly to haul our wind, though we still hoped to weather the headland which formed its southern point, and get an offing.

Tom all this time had uttered no complaint, though I saw the blood flowing down his side. The boatswain and Green had, with my help, bound up their wounds. I wanted Tom to let me assist him. “No,” he said; “it’s of no use. If you were to swathe me up, I could not pull. It will be time enough for that when we get round the headland.” He was evidently getting weaker, and at last the boatswain persuaded him to lay in his oar, and try to stop the blood. The wounds were in his back and neck, inflicted by the savages as he fought his way onward to the cabin. I bound our handkerchiefs round him as well as I could; but it was evident that he was not fit for rowing, and that the only chance of the blood stopping was for him to remain perfectly quiet.

During the last tack we made I fancied, as I looked up the harbour, that I saw the canoes coming out. I told the boatswain. “We will give them a warm reception, if they come near us,” he answered.

I felt greatly relieved when we at last weathered the point, and were now able to stand along shore, though we couldn’t get
the offing which was desirable.

Night was coming on. The weather looked threatening, and our prospects of ultimately escaping were small.

At last we got so near the surf that the boatswain determined to put the boat about and stand out to sea. Although the other tack might bring us almost in front of the harbour’s mouth, it was the safest course to avoid being cast on shore.

The night came on very dark, but the wind was moderate, and there was not much sea. Still the weather was excessively cold, and my companions suffered greatly from their wounds. Tom had been placed in the stern-sheets near me. Though he said less, he suffered more than the rest, and I could every now and then hear low groans escaping from his bosom. At last I heard him calling me. “Jack,” he whispered, “what I told you is coming true. I am going; I feel death creeping over me. Remember the case. Do all you know I ought to have done. I have been a great sinner; but you once said there is a way by which all sins can be blotted out. I believe in that way. Jack, give me your hand. It’s darker than ever; and I am cold, very cold.” He pressed my hand, and I heard him murmuring to himself. It might have been a prayer, but his words were indistinct; I could not understand what he said. I kept steering with one hand, looking up at the sails, and casting a glance now and then at him, while the other two men pulled away to keep the boat to windward. Presently I felt his fingers relax; an icy chill came from his hand. I knew too well that my friend was dead. It was some time before I could bring myself to tell the boatswain what had happened. “Poor fellow! But it may be the lot of all of us before another day is over,” he said; “yet, as men, we will struggle to the last.”

The night passed on, and we still persevered in endeavouring to obtain an offing, though so indistinct was the land that we could not tell whereabouts we were. What was our dismay, when morning broke, to find that we were directly off the mouth of the harbour, and at such a distance that the keen eyes of the savages on the hills around might easily perceive our sail. We at once put the boat about, hoping to get again to the south’ard before we were discovered. “It’s too late,” cried Green; “I see the canoes coming.”
“We must fight them, then,” said the daring boatswain, calmly. “We don’t just expect mercy at their hands after the treat we gave them,” and he laughed at the fearful act he had committed. Still I thought what could we three, in a small boat, with our dozen muskets, do against a whole fleet of fierce savages.

We could now see the canoes coming out of the harbour. The sea was smooth, and they would without fail venture after us. Our only chance of escape seemed in a sudden gale springing up, but of that there was little probability. I was turning my eyes anxiously towards the offing in hopes of seeing signs of a stronger breeze coming, when I caught sight of a sail. I pointed her out to the boatswain. “She is a large vessel,” he exclaimed, “and standing this way.”

“Perhaps the savages will be more than ever anxious to catch us, for fear we should persuade the people on board yonder ship to punish them for what they have done,” I observed. “They will catch us if they can,” answered Pearson; “but they will have to pay a good price yet if they make the attempt,” and he cast his eyes at the muskets which lay ready loaded. The canoes were drawing nearer and nearer, and we could now distinguish the figures of the plumed warriors as they stood up in the bows. The boat at the same time was slipping pretty quickly through the water. “The breeze is freshening,” I observed; “we may escape them yet.”

“I don’t much care if we do or do not,” said Pearson; “I should like to knock over a few of these boasting fellows; we may hit them long before they can get near enough to hurt us.” I for my part did not wish to see more of the savages killed, for they had only followed the instinct of their untutored natures, and we had already inflicted a terrible punishment on them in return. In a few minutes the breeze came down even stronger than before, and greatly to my satisfaction, the canoes appeared to be scarcely gaining on us, even if they did so at all. I continued to give a glance every now and then at the ship, for I was afraid after all she might alter her course, and stand away from us.

At length, to my joy, I saw the savages in the canoes cease paddling. They apparently were afraid of venturing farther
out into the ocean, or saw that it would be hopeless to attempt overtaking us. For some minutes they waited, as if holding a consultation, and then round they paddled and made their way back into the harbour.

“Just like them,” exclaimed Pearson. “Those cowardly redskins will never fight unless they can take their enemies at an advantage.”

We had to make several tacks towards the ship, and then when we got near enough for the sound of our muskets to reach her, we fired several as a signal. They were at length, we concluded, heard on board. She kept away towards us. She drew nearer. We saw that she was a whaler, with the English colours flying at the peak. She rounded to, and we went alongside. “What has happened?” exclaimed several voices, as old Tom’s body was seen lying in the stern-sheets. A few words told our tale. I was able to climb up the side, but Pearson and Green were so stiff from their wounds that they had to be helped up. They were far more hurt indeed than they had supposed, especially Pearson; but his dauntless spirit had hitherto kept him up. Our boat was hoisted on board, and old Tom’s body was taken out and laid on deck. We were treated with great kindness, and the captain, greatly to my satisfaction, volunteered to give old Tom Christian burial. He had, as we supposed, intended to go into the harbour to obtain wood and water, and to trade with the natives; but when he heard of what had occurred he resolved to steer for a port farther south, and he told me that he was very grateful to us for giving him warning of the danger which he otherwise would have run.

In the evening I saw my poor friend lashed up in a hammock, and committed to his ocean grave.

All night long I was dreaming of him and of the dreadful scenes I had witnessed.

The ship was the Juno. Her commander, Captain Knox, was a very different sort of person to my late captain; and from his kind manner, and the way he spoke to the officers and men, he seemed truly to act the part of a father to his crew. The ship had been out a year and a half, and it was expected she would remain another year in the Pacific.

Though I was anxious to get home, yet when the captain
asked me to enter on board, I was very glad to do so. Pearson continued to suffer fearfully from his wounds. Whether the deed he had done preyed on his mind, I cannot say; but a high fever coming on, he used to rave about the savages, and the way he had blown them up. At the moment he committed the deed I daresay he had persuaded himself that he was only performing a justifiable act of vengeance. The day before we entered the harbour to which we were bound he died, and poor Green did not long survive him, so that I alone was left of all the crew of the ill-fated Fox.

Chapter Seven

The captain of the Juno took every precaution to prevent her being surprised by the Indians. Boarding nettings were triced up round the ship every night, and the watch on deck had arms ready at hand. None of the natives were allowed to come on board, and only two or three canoes were permitted alongside at a time. We judged by their manner, though they were willing enough to trade, that they had already heard of what had occurred to the northward.

Having got our wood and water on board, we again put to sea, cruising in various parts of the ocean known to be frequented by whales. A bright look-out was kept for their spouts as the monsters rose to the surface to breathe. The instant a spout was seen all was life and animation on board; the boats were lowered, generally two or three at a time, and away they pulled to be ready to attack the whale as it again rose to the surface. I remember, the first time I saw one of the monsters struck, I shouted and jumped about the deck as eagerly as if I myself were engaged in the work. Now I saw the lines flying out of the boat at a rapid rate, as the animal sounded; now the men in the boats hauled it in again, as the whale rose once more to the surface; now they pulled on, and two more deadly harpoons were plunged into its sides, with several spears; now they backed to avoid the lashing strokes of its powerful tail; now the creature was seen to be in its death-flurry, tumbling about and turning over and over in its agony. At length it lay an inert mass on the surface, and the boats came back, towing it in
triumph. Next there was the work of “cutting in,” or taking off the blubber which surrounded it; the huge body being turned round and round during the operation, as the men stood on it cutting off with their sharp spades huge strips, which were hoisted with tackles on deck. Last of all came the “trying out,” when the blubber, cut into pieces, was thrown into huge caldrons on deck, with a fire beneath them; the crisp pieces, from which the oil had been extracted, serving as fuel. It was a curious scene when night came on, and fires blazed up along the deck, surrounded by the crew, begrimed with oil and smoke, looking like beings of another world engaged in some fearful incantation.

This scene was repeated over and over again. We visited several islands in the Pacific. At some, where Christian missionaries had been at work, the inhabitants showed by their conduct that they were worthy of confidence; but at others the captain deemed it necessary to be constantly on his guard, lest they might attempt to cut off the crew and take possession of the ship, as we heard had frequently occurred.

At length, to my delight and that of all the crew, the last cask we had on board was filled with oil, and with a deeply-laden ship we commenced our homeward voyage. We encountered a heavy gale going round the Horn, but the old Juno weathered it bravely, though, as she strained a good deal, we had afterwards to keep the pumps going for an hour or so during each watch. We, however, made our way at a fair rate northward, and once more crossed the line.

It may seem surprising that I had not hitherto examined the metal case which old Tom had committed to my charge. The box itself I had resolved not to open. I did not suppose that I should be induced to act as he had done, but yet I thought it wiser not to run the risk of temptation. We for several days lay becalmed, and one evening, while the crew were lying about the decks overcome with the heat, I stowed myself away for’ard, at a distance from the rest, and drew the paper out of the case. Great was my surprise to find that it was addressed to my own father. It contained a reference to the parchment in the box, and gave a list both of the jewels, the notes, and gold. The writer spoke of his wife and infant son, and charged
my father, should any accident happen to him, to act as their
guardian and friend as well as their legal adviser. The letter was
signed “Clement Leslie.”

“This is strange,” I thought. “Then there can be no doubt
that little Clem is the very child old Tom saw placed in his
nurse’s arms on the raft, and his poor mother must have been
washed away when the ship went down. Those Indian nurses,
I have often heard, will sacrifice their own lives for the sake of
preserving the children committed to their charge, and Clem’s
nurse must have held him fast in her arms, in spite of the
buffeting of the waves and the tossing of the raft during that
dreadful night when the Indiaman went down; and if she had
any food, I dare say she gave it to him rather than eat it herself.
But, poor fellow, what may have happened to him since we
parted.”

I now felt more anxious than ever to reach home, and
longed for the breeze to spring up which might carry us for-
ward through the calm latitudes. It came at last, and the Juno
again made rapid progress homeward. We were bound up
the Irish Channel to Liverpool; when, however, we got within
about a week’s sail of the chops of the Channel, it came on to
blow very hard. The leaks increased, and we were now com-
pelled to keep the pumps going during nearly the whole of
each watch. The weather was very thick, too, and no observa-
tions could be taken. The crew were almost worn out; yet there
was no time for rest. The gale was blowing from the south-west,
and the sea running very high, when in the middle watch the
look-out shouted the startling cry of “Land! on the starboard
bow.” The yards were at once braced sharply up, and soon af-
fterwards the captain ordered the ship to be put about. We were
carrying almost more canvas than she could bear, but yet it
would not then do to shorten sail. Just as the ship was in stays, a
tremendous squall struck her, and in an instant the three masts
went by the board.

There we lay on a lee shore, without a possibility of getting
off it. The order was at once given to range the cables, that
immediately the water was sufficiently shallow to allow of it we
might anchor.

I will not describe that dreadful night. Onward the ship
drove towards the unknown shore. We had too much reason to
dread that it was the western coast of Ireland, fringed by reefs
and rugged rocks. As we drove on it grew more and more fear-
fully distinct. We fired guns of distress, in the faint hope that
assistance might be sent to us; but no answering signal came.
Too soon the roar of the surf reached our ears, and it became
fearfully probable that the ship and her rich cargo, with all
on board, would become the prey of the waves. I secured the
precious box and case as usual, determined, if I could save my
own life, to preserve them. The lead was continually hove, and
at last the captain ordered the anchors to be let go. They held
the ship but for a few minutes; then a tremendous sea struck
her, and sweeping over her deck, they parted, and again on-
ward she drove. A few minutes more only elapsed before she
struck the rocks, and the crashing and rending sounds of her
timbers warned us that before long she would be dashed into
a thousand fragments. The sea was breaking furiously over the
wreck, and now one, now another of the crew was washed away.
I was clinging with others to a part of the bulwarks, when I felt
them loosening beneath us. Another sea came, and we were
borne forward towards the shore. For an instant I was beneath
the boiling surf; when I rose again my companions were gone,
and in a few seconds I found myself dashed against a rock. I
clung to it for my life, then scrambled on, my only thought
being to get away from the raging waters. I succeeded at length
in scrambling out of their reach, and lay down on a dry ledge
to rest. I must have dropped to sleep or fainted from fatigue.
When I came to myself, the sun was up, and I heard voices
below me. The tide had fallen, and numbers of country peo-
ple were scrambling along the rocks, and picking up whatever
was thrown on shore. I managed to get on my feet and wave
to them. Several came up to me, and the tones of their voices
showed me at once that they were Irish.

Out of the whole crew, I was the only person who had been
saved, and I was very doubtful how I might be treated. Howev-
er, I wronged them. It was a matter of dispute among several
who should take charge of me; and at length a young woman,
whose cottage was not far off, carried me up to it. She and her
husband gave me the best of everything they had; that is to say,
as many potatoes and as much buttermilk and bacon as I could swallow. I was so eager to get home that, after a night’s rest, I told them I wished to start on my journey. I was, I knew, on the west of Ireland, and I hoped that, if I could manage to get to Cork, I might from thence find means of crossing to England. Though my host had no money to give me, he agreed to drive me twenty miles on the way, promising to find a friend who would pass me on; and his wife pressed on me a change of linen, and a few other articles in a bundle. With these I started on my long journey.

I was not disappointed, for when I told my story I was fully believed, and I often got help where I least expected it.

At length I reached Cork, where I found a vessel just sailing for Liverpool. The captain agreed to give me a free passage, and at last I safely landed on the shores of old England. I must confess that I had more difficulty after this in making my way homeward, and by the time I reached the neighbourhood of my father’s house my outer clothing, at all events, was pretty well worn to rags and tatters.

Chapter Eight

It was the early summer when one evening I came in sight of my home. The windows and doors were open. Without hesitation I walked up the steps, forgetting the effect which my sudden appearance might produce on my family. One of my youngest sisters was in the passage. I beckoned to her. “What do you want?” she asked; “you must not stop here; go away.” “What! don’t you know me?” I asked. “No,” she answered; “who are you?”

“Jack—your brother Jack,” I answered. On this she ran off into the drawing-room, and I heard her exclaim, “There’s a great big beggar boy, and he says he is Jack—our brother Jack.”

“Oh no, that cannot be!” I heard one of my other sisters reply. “Poor Jack was drowned long ago in the Naiad.”

“No, he was not,” I couldn’t help exclaiming; and without more ado I ran forward.

My appearance created no small commotion among three or four young ladies who were seated in the room. “Go away;
how dare you venture in here?” exclaimed one or two of them. “Will you not believe me?” I cried. “I am Jack, I assure you, and I hope soon to convince you of the fact.”

“It is Jack, I know it is!” exclaimed one of them, jumping up and coming forward. I knew her in an instant to be Grace Goldie, though grown almost into a young woman. “It is Jack, I am sure it is,” she added, taking my hand and leading me forward. “Oh, how strange that you do not know him!”

My sisters now came about me, examining me with surprised looks. “How strange, Grace,” said one; “surely you must be mistaken?”

“No, I am sure I am not,” answered Grace, looking into my face, and putting back the hair from my forehead; “Are you not Jack?”

“Yes, I believe I am,” I answered, “though if you did not say so I should begin to doubt the fact, since Ann, and Mary, and Jane, do not seem to know me.”

“Well, I do believe it is Jack,” cried Jane, coming up and taking my other hand, though I was so dirty that she did not, I fancy, like to kiss me. “So he is—he must be!” cried the others; and now, in spite of my tattered dress, their sisterly affection got the better of all other considerations, and they threw their arms about me like kind girls as they really were, and I returned their salutes, in which Grace Goldie came in for a share, with long unaccustomed tears in my eyes. Just then a shriek of astonishment was heard, and there stood Aunt Martha at the door. “Who have you got there?” she exclaimed. “It’s Jack come back,” answered my sisters and Grace in chorus. “Jack come back! impossible!” cried out Aunt Martha, in what I thought sounded a tone of dismay. “Yes, I am Jack, I assure you,” I said, going up to her; “and I hope to be your very dutiful and affectionate nephew, whatever you may once have thought me;” and I took her hand and raised it to my lips. “If you are Jack I am glad to see you,” she said, her feelings softening; “and it will at all events be a comfort to your poor mother to know that you are not drowned.”

“My mother! where is she?” I asked. “I trust she is not ill.”

“Yes, she is, I am sorry to say, and up-stairs in bed,” replied my aunt; “but I’ll go and break the news to her, lest the sound
of all this hubbub should reach her ears, and make her inquire what is the matter.”

I had now time to ask about the rest of my family. My father was out, but was soon expected home, and in the meantime, while Aunt Martha had gone to tell my mother, by my sisters’ advice I went into the bedroom of one of my brothers, and washed, and dressed myself in his clothes. By the time Aunt Martha came to look for me I was in a more presentable condition than when I entered the house.

I need not dwell on my interview with my mother. She had no doubts about my identity, but drawing me to her, kissed me again and again, as most mothers would do, I suspect, under similar circumstances. She was unwilling to let me go, but at length Aunt Martha, suggesting that I might be hungry, a fact that I could not deny, as I was almost ravenous, I quickly joined the merry party round the tea-table, when I astonished them not a little by the number of slices of ham and bread which I shortly devoured. My father soon arrived. He was not much given to sentiment, but he wrung my hand warmly, and his mind was evidently greatly relieved on finding that his plan for breaking me of my desire for a sea life had not ended by consigning me to a watery grave. He was considerably astonished, and evidently highly pleased, when I put into his hands the box and case which old Tom had given into my care; and I told him how I had fallen in, on board the Naiad, with the boy I fully believed to be Mr Clement Leslie’s heir.

“This is indeed strange,” he muttered, “very strange, and we must do our best to find him out Jack. It’s a handsome estate, and it will be a pity if the young fellow is not alive to enjoy it. I must set Simon Munch to work at once.”

“Perhaps if the Russian frigate has returned home, we may learn from her officers what has become of him,” I suggested. “We will think the matter over. Would you like a trip to Russia, Jack?”

“Above all things, sir,” I answered. “I could start to-morrow if it were necessary;” though I confess I felt very unwilling to run away again so soon from home, especially as my mother was so ill. Perhaps, also, Grace Goldie entered somewhat into my considerations.
Next morning while we were at breakfast, and my father was looking over the newspaper, he exclaimed, “We are in luck, Jack! Did you not say that the name of the Russian frigate which picked you up was the Alexander? I see that she has just arrived at Spithead, from China and the Western Pacific. If so, there is not a moment to be lost, for she will probably be off again in a few days. You must start at once. Get your sisters to pack up such of your brother’s things as will fit you, and I’ll order a post-chaise to the door immediately.”

“I shall be ready, sir, directly I have swallowed another egg or two, and a few more slices of toast,” I answered. “Munch must go with you, that there may be no mistake about the matter,” said my father. “He will be of great assistance.”

All seemed like a dream. In a quarter of an hour I was rattling away as fast as a couple of posters could go, along the road to London. I sat in a dignified and luxurious manner, feeling myself a person of no little consequence—remembering that, at the same hour on the previous day, I had been trudging along the road ragged and hungry, with some doubt as to the reception I was to meet with at home. My tongue was kept going all the time, for Munch wished to hear all about my adventures. “Well, Master Jack, I am glad to have you back,” he said. “To tell the truth, my conscience was a little uncomfortable at the part I had taken in shipping you off on board the collier, though I might have known,”—he cast a quizzical look at me—”that those are never drowned who are—”

“Born to end their lives comfortably in bed,” I added, interrupting him. “You needn’t finish the sentence in the way you were about to do; I was never much of a favourite of yours, Mr Munch, I know.”

“I hope we shall be better friends in future, Master Jack,” he remarked. “You used, you know, to try my temper not a little sometimes.”

As the old clerk was accustomed to long and sudden journeys, we stopped nowhere, except for a few minutes to get refreshments, till we rattled up to the George Inn at Portsmouth.

Much to our satisfaction, we heard from the waiter that the Russian frigate was still at Spithead, and as the weather was fine, we hurried down the High Street, intending at once to engage
a wherry and go off to her. As we reached the point a man-of-war’s boat pulled up, and several officers stepped on shore. “That is not the English uniform,” observed Munch; “perhaps they have come from the Russian frigate.” He was right, I was sure, for I thought that I recognised the countenances of several I had known on board the *Alexander*. Among them was a tall, slight young man, dressed as a sub-lieutenant. I looked at him earnestly, scanning his features. It might be Clement, yet I should not under other circumstances have thought it possible. The young man stopped, observing the way I was regarding him, and I began to doubt that he could be Clement, as he did not appear to know me. I could bear the uncertainty no longer, so, walking up to him, I said, “I am Happy Jack! Don’t you know me?” His whole countenance lighted up. With a cry of pleasure he seized both my hands, gazing earnestly in my face. “Jack, my dear fellow, Jack!” he exclaimed. “You alive, and here! Happy you may be, but not so happy as I am to see you. I mourned you as lost, for I could not hope that you had escaped a second time.” His surprise was great indeed when I told him I came especially to search for him, and we at once agreed to repair to the “George,” that I might give him the important information I had to afford, and settle, with the aid of Mr Munch, what course it would be advisable for him to pursue.

He was overwhelmed, as may be supposed, with astonishment and thankfulness when I told him of the wonderful way in which I had become possessed of the title-deeds and jewels, which would, I hoped, establish his claims to a fair estate.

This matter occupied some time. “With regard to quitting the ship,” he observed, “there will, I trust, be no difficulty. I am but a supernumerary on board, and as I could not regularly enter the service till the frigate returned to Russia, the captain will be able to give me my discharge when I explain the circumstances in which I am placed.”

Having settled our plans, Mr Munch and I went on board with Clement. The captain at once agreed to what Clement wished, though he expressed his regret at losing him. My friend the doctor recognised me, and treated me, as did several of the other officers, with much kindness and politeness. I was, however, too anxious to get Clement home to accept their courtesy,
and the next morning we were again on the road northward.

Clement had studied hard while on board the Russian frigate, and had become a polished and gentlemanly young man, in every way qualified for the position he was destined to hold. He was made not a little of by my family, and though at one time I felt a touch of jealousy at the preference I fancied he showed to Grace Goldie, he soon relieved my fears by telling me that he hoped to become the husband of one of my sisters.

My father, after a considerable amount of labour, proved his identity with the son of Mr Clement Leslie, who perished with his wife at sea, and established his claims to the property.

I had had quite enough of a “life on the ocean wave,” and though I had no great fancy for working all day at a desk, I agreed to enter my father’s office and tackle to in earnest, my incentive to labour, I confess, being the hope of one day becoming the husband of Grace Goldie. We married, and I have every reason still to call myself “Happy Jack.”
The Sea And Its Legends
Benjamin Taylor

One of the oldest superstitions connected with the sea is undoubtedly that which associated peril with the malefic influence of some individual on shipboard. We find it in the case of the seamen of Joppa, who, when overtaken by a “mighty tempest” on the voyage to Tarshish, said to each other, “Come and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil is cast upon us.” The lot, as we know, fell upon Jonah, and after some vain wrestling with the inevitable, the men at last “took up Jonah and cast him forth into the sea, and the sea ceased from her raging.”

Without offering here any comment on, or explanation of, the Scriptural narrative, let us compare it with the following remarkable story, which that indefatigable delver after old-world wonders, Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe, reproduced.

Somewhere about midsummer of the year 1480, a ship, sailing out of the Forth for a port in Holland, was assailed by a furious tempest, which increased to such a remarkable degree for the mild season of the year, that the sailors were overcome with fear, and gave themselves up for lost. At length an old woman, who was a passenger by the vessel, came on deck and entreated them to throw her overboard as the only means of preserving their own lives, saying that she had long been haunted by an “incubus” in the shape of a man, from whose grasp she could not free herself. Fortunately for all parties there was another
passenger on board—a priest—who was called to the rescue. After a long admonition, and many sighs and prayers, “there issued forth of the pumpe of the ship,” says Hollinshed, “a foul and evil-favoured blacke cloud, with a mightie terrible noise, flame, smoke, and stinke, which presentlie fell into the sea, and suddenlie, thereupon, the tempest ceased, and the ship passing in great quiet the residue of her journie, arrived in safetie at the place whither she was bound.”

There is doubtless some association between this class of superstition and the old Talmudic legend, according to which the devils were specially angered when, at the creation, man received dominion over the things of the sea. This was a realm of unrest and tempest, which the devils claimed as belonging to themselves. But, says the legend, although denied control of the life that is in the sea, the devils were permitted a large degree of power over its waters, while over the winds their rule was supreme.

There is scarcely a current legend or superstition which cannot be traced to very remote sources. Thus, in the Chaldæo-Babylonian cosmogony there was a Triad which ruled the three zones of the universe: the heaven, by Anu; the surface of the earth and the atmosphere, by Bel; and the under-world, by Nonah. Now, Nonah is held to be both the same as the Assyrian Hea, or Saviour, and as the Noah of the Bible. So when Tiamat, the dragon, or leviathan, opens “the fountains of the great deep,” and Anu, “the windows of heaven,” it is Hea, or Noah, who saves the life of man.

This legend is supposed by M. François Lenormant to explain an allusion in one of the most ancient Accadian manuscripts in the British Museum to “the serpent of seven heads, that beats the sea.” This Hydra was the type of the destructive water-demon who figures in the legends of all countries.

In the same way, to the Syrian fish deities, Dagon and Artergatis, must we look for the origin of our Undines and fish-maidens, and mermaidens.

The “Nixy” of Germany has by some been supposed traceable to “Old Nick”; but this is not probable, since St. Nicholas has been the patron-saint of sailors for many centuries. It was during the time of the Crusades that a vessel on the way to the
Holy Land was in great peril, and St. Nicholas assuaged a tem-pest by his prayers. Since then he has been supposed to be the protector of mariners, even as Neptune was in ancient times; and in most Roman Catholic countries you will find in seaport towns churches dedicated to St. Nicholas, to which sailors resort to return thanks for preservation at sea, and to make votive offerings.

The German Nixy was, no doubt, a later form of the old Norse water-god Nikke. You meet with him again, in another form, in Neckan, the soulless, of whom Matthew Arnold sings:

“In summer on the headlands The Baltic sea along Sits Neckan with his harp of gold, And sings his plaintive song.”

The “Nixa” along the Baltic coast was once, however, much feared by the fishermen. It was the same spirit which appears as the Kelpie in Scotland—a water-demon which caused sudden floods to carry away the unwary, and then devoured them.

There was a river-goddess in Germany, whose temple stood at Magdeburg, of whom a legend exists that she also once visited earth and went to market in a Christian costume, where she was detected by a continual dripping of water from the corner of her apron. Generally speaking, however, the Nixies may be described as the descendants of the Naiads of ancient times, and as somewhat resembling the Russian Rusalkas, of which the peasantry live in much dread.

A Russian peasant, it is said, is so afraid of the water-spirits that he will not bathe without a cross round his neck, nor ford a stream on horseback without signing a cross on the water with a scythe or knife. In some parts these water-spirits are supposed to be the transformed souls of Pharaoh and his host, when they were drowned, and the number is always being increased by the souls of those who drown themselves.

It is said that “in Bohemia” fishermen have been known to refuse aid to drowning persons lest “Vodyany” would be offended and prevent the fish from entering the nets.

This “Vodyany,” however, seems rather a variant of the old Hydra, who reappears in the diabolical names so frequently given to boiling springs and dangerous torrents. The “Devil’s Tea-kettles” and “Devil’s Punch-bowls” of England and America have the same association as the weird legends connected with
the Strudel and Wirbel whirlpools of the Danube, and with
the rapids of the Rhine, and other rivers. Curiously enough,
we find the same idea in The Arabian Nights, when “The sea
became troubled before them, and there arose from it a black
pillar ascending towards the sky, and approaching the meadow,
and behold it was a Jinn of gigantic stature.”

This demon was a waterspout, and waterspouts in China
are attributed to the battles of dragons. “The Chinese,” says Mr.
Moncure Conway, “have canonised of recent times a special
protectress against the storm-demons of the coast, in obedi-
ence to the wishes of the sailors.”

The swan-maidens, who figure in so many legends, are
mere varieties of the mer-maiden, and, according to the Ice-
landic superstition, they and all fairies were children of Eve,
whom she hid away on one occasion when the Lord came to
visit her, because they were not washed and presentable! They
were, therefore, condemned to be invisible for ever.

A Scotch story, quoted by Mr. Moncure Conway, rather
bears against this theory. One day, it seems, as a fisherman
sat reading his Bible, a beautiful nymph, lightly clad in green,
came to him out of the sea, and asked if the book contained
any promise of mercy for her. He replied that it contained an
offer of salvation to “all the children of Adam,” whereupon she
fled away with a loud shriek, and disappeared in the sea. But
the beautiful stories of water-nymphs, of Undines and Loreleis,
and mer-women, are too numerous to be even mentioned, and
too beautiful, in many cases, to make one care to analyze.

There is a tradition in Holland that when, in 1440, the dikes
were broken down by a violent tempest, the sea overflowed the
meadows. Some women of the town of Edam, going one day
in a boat to milk their cows, discovered a mermaid in shallow
water floundering about with her tail in the mud. They took
her into the boat, brought her to Edam, dressed her in wom-
en’s clothes, and taught her to spin, and to eat as they did. They
even taught her something of religion, or, at any rate, to bow
reverently when she passed a crucifix; but they could not teach
her to speak. What was the ultimate fate of this remarkable
creature is not disclosed.

Everybody, of course, is familiar with the old sea-legend of
the *Flying Dutchman*, whether in stories of phantom ships, or in the opera of Wagner. The spirit of Vanderdecken, which is still supposed to roam the waters, is merely the modern version of our old friend, Nikke, the Norwegian water-demon. This is a deathless legend, and used to be as devoutly believed in as the existence of Mother Carey, sitting away up in the north, despatching her “chickens” in all directions to work destruction for poor Jack. But Mother Carey really turns out on inquiry to be a most estimable being, as we shall presently see.

“Sailors,” says Brand, in his Popular Antiquities, “usually the boldest Men alive, are yet frequently the very abject slaves of superstitious Fear. They have various puerile Apprehensions concerning Whistling on Shipboard, carrying a Corpse, etc., all which are Vestiges of the old Woman in human Nature, and can only be erased by the united Efforts of Philosophy and Religion.”

It is to be regretted, however, that the good Brand did not devote as much attention to the superstitions of sailors as he did to those of some other folks.

As is the case with almost all folk-lore, little variety is to be found in the sea superstitions of different nations. The ideas of the supernatural on shipboard are pretty much the same, whether the flag flown be the Union Jack, the German Eagle, the French Tricolor, the American Stars and Stripes, or even the Chinese Dragon. These superstitions are numerous, and are tenaciously preserved, but yet it would not be fair to say that seamen are, as a class, more superstitious than landsmen of their own rank. The great mystery of the sea; the uncertainty of life upon its bosom; the isolation and frequent loneliness; the wonder of the storms, and calms, and lights—everything connected with a sailor’s occupation is calculated to impress him with the significance of signs and omens.

That mariners do not like to have a corpse on board is not remarkable, for many people ashore get rather “creepy” if they have to sleep in a house where lies a dead body. Moreover, the old idea of bad luck which led to the throwing overboard of Jonah, is in this case transferred from the living to the dead. The objection to whistling is also explainable by the time-honoured practice of “whistling for a wind,” for an injudicious whistler
might easily bring down a blow from the wrong quarter.

There are some animals and birds which have a peculiar significance at sea. The cat, for instance, is generally disliked, and many sailors will not have one on board at any price. If there is one which becomes unusually frisky, they will say the cat has got a gale of wind in her tail. On one part of the Yorkshire coast, it is said, sailors’ wives were in the habit of keeping black cats to insure the safety of their husbands at sea, until black cats became so scarce and dear that few could afford to buy one. Although Jack does not like a cat in the ship, he will not throw one overboard, for that would bring on a storm.

Miss L. A. Smith, in her book about the Music of the Waters, states that a dead hare on a ship is considered a sign of an approaching hurricane; and Cornish fishermen declare that a white hare seen about the quays at night indicates that there will be rough weather.

The pig is an object of aversion to Japanese seamen, and also to Filey fishermen, who will not go to sea if they meet one in the early morning. But, indeed, the pig seems to be generally disliked by all seafarers—except in the form of salt pork and bacon.

Rats, however, are not objected to; indeed, it would be useless to object, for they overrun all ships. And rats are supposed to leave a vessel only when it is going to sink. A Welsh skipper, however, once cleared his ship of them without the risk of a watery grave, by drawing her up to a cheese-laden ship in harbour. He quietly moored alongside, and, having left the hatches open all night, cast off with a chuckle in the morning, leaving a liberal legacy to his neighbour.

The stormy petrel is supposed to herald bad weather, and the great auk to tell that land is very near. This is true enough as regards the auk, which never ventures beyond soundings; but one doubts the truth of the popular belief that when the sea-gulls hover near the shore, a storm is at hand. The Scotch rhyme runs:

“Seagull, seagull, sit on the sand; It’s never good weather when you’re on the land!”

Mr. Thiselton-Dyer quotes from Sinclair’s Statistical Account of Scotland, in confirmation of this belief, that in the
county of Forfar, “when they appear in the fields, a storm from the southeast generally follows; and when the storm begins to abate, they fly back to the shore.” This does not accord with the present writer’s experience of the west coast of Scotland, where the sea-gulls frequent the lochs and hillsides far inland all the summer. Naturally there are storms sometimes after their appearance, but just as often fine weather continues. As well say that the flocks of these beautiful birds that follow in the wake of a tourist steamer, to pick up unconsidered trifles, presage sea-sickness to the passengers!

One has heard that in Cornwall sailors will not walk at night along portions of the shore where there have been many wrecks, because they believe that the souls of the drowned haunt such localities, and that the ‘calling of the dead” is frequently audible. Some even say that they have heard the voices of dead sailors hailing them by name. One can readily excuse a timorousness in Jack in such circumstances. Many persons besides sailors shrink from localities which have been the scenes of murder or sudden death.

Friday is the sailor’s pet aversion, as an unlucky day on which to sail or begin work. But this is not surprising, when we remember that Friday has everywhere more superstition and folk-lore attached to it than any other day in the week, originating, perhaps, as Mr. Thiselton-Dyer suggests, from the fact that it was the day on which Christ was crucified. Lord Byron had the superstitious aversion to Friday; and even among the Brahmins no business must be commenced on this day. In Lancashire a man will not “go a-courting on Friday”; and Brand says: “A respectable merchant of the city of London informed me that no person will begin any business, that is, open his shop for the first time, on a Friday.” The “respectable merchant” might be hard to find nowadays, but still one does not need to go to sailors to find a prejudice against Friday.

Other things which are accounted unlucky by superstitious seamen are: to sneeze on the left side at the moment of embarking; to count the men on board; to ask fishermen, before they start, where they are bound for; to point with the finger to a ship when at sea; to lose a mop or water-bucket; to cut the hair or nails at sea, except during a storm.
These are a few of the sea superstitions as preserved in rhyme:

“The evening gray, and the morning red, Put on your hat or you’ll wet your head.”
(Meaning that it will rain.)
“When the wind shifts against the sun, Trust it not, for it will run.”
(That is, soon change again.)
“When the sun sets in the clear, An easterly wind you need not fear.
“The evening red and morning gray Are sure signs of a fine day.”
(A distich not peculiar to followers of the sea.)
“But the evening gray and morning red Makes the sailor shake his head.”
This refers to the barometer:
“First rise, after low, Indicates a stronger blow.”
And this:
“Long foretold, long last; Short notice, soon past.”
These, however, are hardly superstitions, but maxims based on experience. Of the same character are the following:
“In squalls When the rain’s before the wind Halyards, sheets, and braces mind.”
Also,
“When the wind’s before the rain Soon you may make sail again.”
And
“When the glass falls low, Prepare for a blow; When it rises high, Let all your kites fly.”
“A rainbow in the morning, Sailors take warning; A rainbow at night Is the sailor’s delight.”

The Manx fishermen have some curious sayings about herrings. Thus the common expression, “As dead as a herring,” is due to them. They say also, “Every herring must hang by its own gills”; and their favourite toast is, “Life to man and death to fish.” They count one hundred and twenty-four fish to the hundred, thus: they first sort out lots of one hundred and twenty, then add three to each lot, which is called “warp,” and then a single herring, which is called “tally.” Before shooting the
nets at sea, every man goes down on his knees at a sign from
the skipper of the boat, and, with his head uncovered, prays for
a blessing on the fishing. This, at least, used to be the general
practice, but in how prevailing at the present day is doubtful.

The sound of the death-bell is often supposed to be heard at
sea before a wreck, and this idea may be either associated with
the bell-buoy which marks many sunken, dangerous rocks, or
with the religious ceremonies of the old days.

At Malta it is, or was, usual to ring the church bells for an
hour during a storm “that the wind may cease and the sea be
calmed,” and the same custom prevails both in Sicily and Sar-
dinia.

A Cornish legend of the bells of a church, which were sent
by ship that was lost in sight of the town, owing to the blasphe-
my of the captain, says that the bells are supposed to be in the
bay, and they announce by strange sounds the approach of a
storm.

There is a suggestion of Sir Ralph the Rover in this legend;
but, indeed, the superstitions of those connected with the sea
are so interwoven, that it is not easy to disentangle them, and
they are numerous enough to need a book to themselves. No
doubt our mariners derived many of them from the old Span-
ish navigators who once swayed the main, for the Spaniards are
one of the most superstitious peoples in the world.
The Lost Poacher
Jack London

“But they won’t take excuses. You’re across the line, and that’s enough. They’ll take you. In you go, Siberia and the salt mines. And as for Uncle Sam, why, what’s he to know about it? Never a word will get back to the States. ‘The Mary Thomas,’ the papers will say, ‘the Mary Thomas lost with all hands. Probably in a typhoon in the Japanese seas.’ That’s what the papers will say, and people, too. In you go, Siberia and the salt mines. Dead to the world and kith and kin, though you live fifty years.”

In such manner John Lewis, commonly known as the “sea-lawyer,” settled the matter out of hand.

It was a serious moment in the forecastle of the Mary Thomas. No sooner had the watch below begun to talk the trouble over, than the watch on deck came down and joined them. As there was no wind, every hand could be spared with the exception of the man at the wheel, and he remained only for the sake of discipline. Even “Bub” Russell, the cabin-boy, had crept forward to hear what was going on.

However, it was a serious moment, as the grave faces of the sailors bore witness. For the three preceding months the Mary Thomas sealing schooner, had hunted the seal pack along the coast of Japan and north to Bering Sea. Here, on the Asiatic side of the sea, they were forced to give over the chase, or rather, to go no farther; for beyond, the Russian cruisers patrolled forbidden ground, where the seals might breed in peace.

A week before she had fallen into a heavy fog accompanied by calm. Since then the fog-bank had not lifted, and the only wind had been light airs and catspaws. This in itself was not so
bad, for the sealing schooners are never in a hurry so long as they are in the midst of the seals; but the trouble lay in the fact that the current at this point bore heavily to the north. Thus the *Mary Thomas* had unwittingly drifted across the line, and every hour she was penetrating, unwillingly, farther and farther into the dangerous waters where the Russian bear kept guard.

How far she had drifted no man knew. The sun had not been visible for a week, nor the stars, and the captain had been unable to take observations in order to determine his position. At any moment a cruiser might swoop down and hale the crew away to Siberia. The fate of other poaching seal-hunters was too well known to the men of the *Mary Thomas*, and there was cause for grave faces.

“Mine friends,” spoke up a German boat-steerer, “it vas a pad piziness. Shust as ve make a big catch, und all honest, somedings go wrong, und der Russians nab us, dake our skins and our schooner, und send us mit der anarchists to Siberia. Ach! a pretty pad piziness!”

“Yes, that’s where it hurts,” the sea lawyer went on. “Fifteen hundred skins in the salt piles, and all honest, a big pay-day coming to every man Jack of us, and then to be captured and lose it all! It’d be different if we’d been poaching, but it’s all honest work in open water.”

“But if we haven’t done anything wrong, they can’t do anything to us, can they?” Bub queried.

“It strikes me as ‘ow it ain’t the proper thing for a boy o’ your age shovin’ in when ’is elders is talkin’,” protested an English sailor, from over the edge of his bunk.

“Oh, that’s all right, Jack,” answered the sea-lawyer. “He’s a perfect right to. Ain’t he just as liable to lose his wages as the rest of us?”

“Wouldn’t give thruppence for them!” Jack sniffed back. He had been planning to go home and see his family in Chelsea when he was paid off, and he was now feeling rather blue over the highly possible loss, not only of his pay, but of his liberty.

“How are they to know?” the sea-lawyer asked in answer to Bub’s previous question. “Here we are in forbidden water. How do they know but what we came here of our own accord? Here we are, fifteen hundred skins in the hold. How do they know
whether we got them in open water or in the closed sea? Don’t you see, Bub, the evidence is all against us. If you caught a man with his pockets full of apples like those which grow on your tree, and if you caught him in your tree besides, what’d you think if he told you he couldn’t help it, and had just been sort of blown there, and that anyway those apples came from some other tree—what’d you think, eh?”

Bub saw it clearly when put in that light, and shook his head despondently.

“You’d rather be dead than go to Siberia,” one of the boat-pullers said. “They put you into the salt-mines and work you till you die. Never see daylight again. Why, I’ve heard tell of one fellow that was chained to his mate, and that mate died. And they were both chained together! And if they send you to the quicksilver mines you get salivated. I’d rather be hung than salivated.”

“Wot’s salivated?” Jack asked, suddenly sitting up in his bunk at the hint of fresh misfortunes.

“Why, the quicksilver gets into your blood; I think that’s the way. And your gums all swell like you had the scurvy, only worse, and your teeth get loose in your jaws. And big ulcers forms, and then you die horrible. The strongest man can’t last long a-mining quicksilver.”


The vessel had suddenly heeled over. The decks were aslant. A tin pannikin rolled down the inclined plane, rattling and banging. From above came the slapping of canvas and the quivering rat-tat-tat of the after leech of the loosely stretched foresail. Then the mate’s voice sang down the hatch, “All hands on deck and make sail!”

Never had such summons been answered with more enthusiasm. The calm had broken. The wind had come which was to carry them south into safety. With a wild cheer all sprang on deck. Working with mad haste, they flung out topsails, flying jibs and staysails. As they worked, the fog-bank lifted and the black vault of heaven, bespangled with the old familiar stars, rushed into view. When all was shipshape, the Mary Thomas was
lying gallantly over on her side to a beam wind and plunging ahead due south.

“Steamer’s lights ahead on the port bow, sir!” cried the lookout from his station on the forecastle-head. There was excitement in the man’s voice.

The captain sent Bub below for his night-glasses. Everybody crowded to the lee-rail to gaze at the suspicious stranger, which already began to loom up vague and indistinct. In those unfrequented waters the chance was one in a thousand that it could be anything else than a Russian patrol. The captain was still anxiously gazing through the glasses, when a flash of flame left the stranger’s side, followed by the loud report of a cannon. The worst fears were confirmed. It was a patrol, evidently firing across the bows of the *Mary Thomas* in order to make her heave to.

“Hard down with your helm!” the captain commanded the steersman, all the life gone out of his voice. Then to the crew, “Back over the jib and foresail! Run down the flying jib! Clew up the foretopsail! And aft here and swing on to the mainsheet!”

The *Mary Thomas* ran into the eye of the wind, lost headway, and fell to courtesying gravely to the long seas rolling up from the west.

The cruiser steamed a little nearer and lowered a boat. The sealers watched in heartbroken silence. They could see the white bulk of the boat as it was slacked away to the water, and its crew sliding aboard. They could hear the creaking of the davits and the commands of the officers. Then the boat sprang away under the impulse of the oars, and came toward them. The wind had been rising, and already the sea was too rough to permit the frail craft to lie alongside the tossing schooner; but watching their chance, and taking advantage of the boarding ropes thrown to them, an officer and a couple of men clambered aboard. The boat then sheered off into safety and lay to its oars, a young midshipman, sitting in the stern and holding the yoke-lines, in charge.

The officer, whose uniform disclosed his rank as that of second lieutenant in the Russian navy went below with the captain of the *Mary Thomas* to look at the ship’s papers. A few minutes
later he emerged, and upon his sailors removing the hatch-covers, passed down into the hold with a lantern to inspect the salt piles. It was a goodly heap which confronted him—fifteen hundred fresh skins, the season’s catch; and under the circumstances he could have had but one conclusion.

“I am very sorry,” he said, in broken English to the sealing captain, when he again came on deck, “but it is my duty, in the name of the tsar, to seize your vessel as a poacher caught with fresh skins in the closed sea. The penalty, as you may know, is confiscation and imprisonment.”

The captain of the Mary Thomas shrugged his shoulders in seeming indifference, and turned away. Although they may restrain all outward show, strong men, under unmerited misfortune, are sometimes very close to tears. Just then the vision of his little California home, and of the wife and two yellow-haired boys, was strong upon him, and there was a strange, choking sensation in his throat, which made him afraid that if he attempted to speak he would sob instead.

And also there was upon him the duty he owed his men. No weakness before them, for he must be a tower of strength to sustain them in misfortune. He had already explained to the second lieutenant, and knew the hopelessness of the situation. As the sea-lawyer had said, the evidence was all against him. So he turned aft, and fell to pacing up and down the poop of the vessel over which he was no longer commander.

The Russian officer now took temporary charge. He ordered more of his men aboard, and had all the canvas clewed up and furled snugly away. While this was being done, the boat plied back and forth between the two vessels, passing a heavy hawser, which was made fast to the great towing-bitts on the schooner’s forecastle-head. During all this work the sealers stood about in sullen groups. It was madness to think of resisting, with the guns of a man-of-war not a biscuit-toss away; but they refused to lend a hand, preferring instead to maintain a gloomy silence.

Having accomplished his task, the lieutenant ordered all but four of his men back into the boat. Then the midshipman, a lad of sixteen, looking strangely mature and dignified in his uniform and sword, came aboard to take command of the captured sealer. Just as the lieutenant prepared to depart his
eye chanced to alight upon Bub. Without a word of warning, he seized him by the arm and dropped him over the rail into the waiting boat; and then, with a parting wave of his hand, he followed him.

It was only natural that Bub should be frightened at this unexpected happening. All the terrible stories he had heard of the Russians served to make him fear them, and now returned to his mind with double force. To be captured by them was bad enough, but to be carried off by them, away from his comrades, was a fate of which he had not dreamed.

“Be a good boy, Bub,” the captain called to him, as the boat drew away from the *Mary Thomas*’s side, “and tell the truth!”

“Aye, aye, sir!” he answered, bravely enough by all outward appearance. He felt a certain pride of race, and was ashamed to be a coward before these strange enemies, these wild Russian bears.

“Und be politeful!” the German boat-steerer added, his rough voice lifting across the water like a fog-horn.

Bub waved his hand in farewell, and his mates clustered along the rail as they answered with a cheering shout. He found room in the stern-sheets, where he fell to regarding the lieutenant. He didn’t look so wild or bearish after all—very much like other men, Bub concluded, and the sailors were much the same as all other man-of-war’s men he had ever known. Nevertheless, as his feet struck the steel deck of the cruiser, he felt as if he had entered the portals of a prison.

For a few minutes he was left unheeded. The sailors hoisted the boat up, and swung it in on the davits. Then great clouds of black smoke poured out of the funnels, and they were under way—to Siberia, Bub could not help but think. He saw the *Mary Thomas* swing abruptly into line as she took the pressure from the hawser, and her side-lights, red and green, rose and fell as she was towed through the sea.

Bub’s eyes dimmed at the melancholy sight, but—but just then the lieutenant came to take him down to the commander, and he straightened up and set his lips firmly, as if this were a very commonplace affair and he were used to being sent to Siberia every day in the week. The cabin in which the commander sat was like a palace compared to the humble fittings of the
Mary Thomas, and the commander himself, in gold lace and
dignity, was a most august personage, quite unlike the simple
man who navigated his schooner on the trail of the seal pack.

Bub now quickly learned why he had been brought aboard,
and in the prolonged questioning which followed, told nothing
but the plain truth. The truth was harmless; only a lie could
have injured his cause. He did not know much, except that they
had been sealing far to the south in open water, and that when
the calm and fog came down upon them, being close to the
line, they had drifted across. Again and again he insisted that
they had not lowered a boat or shot a seal in the week they had
been drifting about in the forbidden sea; but the commander
chose to consider all that he said to be a tissue of falsehoods,
and adopted a bullying tone in an effort to frighten the boy.
He threatened and cajoled by turns, but failed in the slightest
to shake Bub’s statements, and at last ordered him out of his
presence.

By some oversight, Bub was not put in anybody’s charge,
and wandered up on deck unobserved. Sometimes the sailors,
in passing, bent curious glances upon him, but otherwise he
was left strictly alone. Nor could he have attracted much atten-
tion, for he was small, the night dark, and the watch on deck
intent on its own business. Stumbling over the strange decks,
he made his way aft where he could look upon the side-lights
of the Mary Thomas, following steadily in the rear.

For a long while he watched, and then lay down in the
darkness close to where the hawser passed over the stern to the
captured schooner. Once an officer came up and examined the
straining rope to see if it were chafing, but Bub cowered away
in the shadow undiscovered. This, however, gave him an idea
which concerned the lives and liberties of twenty-two men,
and which was to avert crushing sorrow from more than one
happy home many thousand miles away.

In the first place, he reasoned, the crew were all guiltless
of any crime, and yet were being carried relentlessly away to
imprisonment in Siberia—a living death, he had heard, and
he believed it implicitly. In the second place, he was a prison-
er, hard and fast, with no chance to escape. In the third, it was
possible for the twenty-two men on the Mary Thomas to escape.
The only thing which bound them was a four-inch hawser. They dared not cut it at their end, for a watch was sure to be maintained upon it by their Russian captors; but at this end, ah! at his end—

Bub did not stop to reason further. Wriggling close to the hawser, he opened his jack-knife and went to work. The blade was not very sharp, and he sawed away, rope-yarn by rope-yarn, the awful picture of the solitary Siberian exile he must endure growing clearer and more terrible at every stroke. Such a fate was bad enough to undergo with one’s comrades, but to face it alone seemed frightful. And besides, the very act he was performing was sure to bring greater punishment upon him.

In the midst of such somber thoughts, he heard footsteps approaching. He wriggled away into the shadow. An officer stopped where he had been working, half-stooped to examine the hawser, then changed his mind and straightened up. For a few minutes he stood there, gazing at the lights of the captured schooner, and then went forward again.

Now was the time! Bub crept back and went on sawing. Now two parts were severed. Now three. But one remained. The tension upon this was so great that it readily yielded. Splash the freed end went overboard. He lay quietly, his heart in his mouth, listening. No one on the cruiser but himself had heard.

He saw the red and green lights of the *Mary Thomas* grow dimmer and dimmer. Then a faint hallo came over the water from the Russian prize crew. Still nobody heard. The smoke continued to pour out of the cruiser’s funnels, and her propellers throbbed as mightily as ever.

What was happening on the *Mary Thomas*? Bub could only surmise; but of one thing he was certain: his comrades would assert themselves and overpower the four sailors and the midshipman. A few minutes later he saw a small flash, and straining his ears heard the very faint report of a pistol. Then, oh joy! both the red and green lights suddenly disappeared. The *Mary Thomas* was retaken!

Just as an officer came aft, Bub crept forward, and hid away in one of the boats. Not an instant too soon. The alarm was given. Loud voices rose in command. The cruiser altered her course. An electric search-light began to throw its white rays
across the sea, here, there, everywhere; but in its flashing path no tossing schooner was revealed.

Bub went to sleep soon after that, nor did he wake till the gray of dawn. The engines were pulsing monotonously, and the water, splashing noisily, told him the decks were being washed down. One sweeping glance, and he saw that they were alone on the expanse of ocean. The _Mary Thomas_ had escaped. As he lifted his head, a roar of laughter went up from the sailors. Even the officer, who ordered him taken below and locked up, could not quite conceal the laughter in his eyes. Bub thought often in the days of confinement which followed that they were not very angry with him for what he had done.

He was not far from right. There is a certain innate nobility deep down in the hearts of all men, which forces them to admire a brave act, even if it is performed by an enemy. The Russians were in nowise different from other men. True, a boy had outwitted them; but they could not blame him, and they were sore puzzled as to what to do with him. It would never do to take a little mite like him in to represent all that remained of the lost poacher.

So, two weeks later, a United States man-of-war, steaming out of the Russian port of Vladivostok, was signaled by a Russian cruiser. A boat passed between the two ships, and a small boy dropped over the rail upon the deck of the American vessel. A week later he was put ashore at Hakodate, and after some telegraphing, his fare was paid on the railroad to Yokohama.

From the depot he hurried through the quaint Japanese streets to the harbor, and hired a sampan boatman to put him aboard a certain vessel whose familiar rigging had quickly caught his eye. Her gaskets were off, her sails unfurled; she was just starting back to the United States. As he came closer, a crowd of sailors sprang upon the forecastle head, and the windlass-bars rose and fell as the anchor was torn from its muddy bottom.

“‘Yankee ship come down the ribber!’“ the sea-lawyer’s voice rolled out as he led the anchor song.

“‘Pull, my bully boys, pull!’“ roared back the old familiar chorus, the men’s bodies lifting and bending to the rhythm.

Bub Russell paid the boatman and stepped on deck. The an-
chor was forgotten. A mighty cheer went up from the men, and almost before he could catch his breath he was on the shoulders of the captain, surrounded by his mates, and endeavoring to answer twenty questions to the second.

The next day a schooner hove to off a Japanese fishing village, sent ashore four sailors and a little midshipman, and sailed away. These men did not talk English, but they had money and quickly made their way to Yokohama. From that day the Japanese village folk never heard anything more about them, and they are still a much-talked-of mystery. As the Russian government never said anything about the incident, the United States is still ignorant of the whereabouts of the lost poacher, nor has she ever heard, officially, of the way in which some of her citizens “shanghaied” five subjects of the tsar. Even nations have secrets sometimes.