

Project Gutenberg

by Day, Holman, 1865-1935

Project Gutenberg eBook #24793

Produced by David Widger

BLOW THE MAN DOWN

A ROMANCE OF THE COAST

By Holman Day

Copyright, 1916, by Harper & Brothers

TO MY GOOD FRIEND

Captain John W. Christie

BRITISH MASTER MARINER
WHO HAS SUNG ALL THE SHANTIES
AND HAS SAILED ALL THE SEAS

?_O, blow the man down, bullies, blow the man down!
Way-ay, blow the man down.
O, blow the man down in Liverpool town!
Give me some time to blow the man down.?
--Old Shanty of the Atlantic Packet Ships._

CONTENTS:

I ~ CAPTAIN BOYD MAYO GETS OUT OF SOUNDINGS

II ~ THEN CAPTAIN MAYO SEES SHOALS

III ~ THE TAVERN OF THE SEAS

IV ~ OVER THE ?POLLY'S? RAIL

V ~ ON THE BRIDGE OF YACHT ?OLENIA?

VI ~ AND WE SAILED

VII ~ INTO THE MESS FROM EASTWARD

VIII ~ LIKE BUGS UNDER A THIMBLE

IX ~ A MAN'S JOB

X ~ HOSPITALITY, PER JULIUS MARSTON

XI ~ A VOICE FROM HUE AND CRY

XII ~ NO PLACE FOR THE SOLES OF THEIR FEET

XIII ~ A CAPTAIN OF HUMAN FLOTSAM

XIV ~ BEARINGS FOR A NEW COURSE

XV ~ THE RULES OF THE ROAD

XVI ~ MILLIONS AND A MITE

XVII ~ "EXACTLY!" SAID MR. FOGG

XVIII ~ HOW AN ANNUAL MEETING WAS HELD "ONCE!"

XIX ~ THE PRIZE PACKAGE FROM MR. FOGG

XX ~ TESTING OUT A MAN

XXI ~ BITTER PROOF BY MORNING LIGHT

XXII ~ SPECIAL BUSINESS OF A PASSENGER

XXIII ~ THE MONSTER THAT SLIPPED ITS LEASH

XXIV ~ DOWN A GALLOPING SEA

XXV ~ A GIRL AND HER DEBT OF HONOR

XXVI ~ THE FANGS OF OLD RAZEE

XXVII ~ THE TEMPEST TURNS ITS CARD

XXVIII ~ GIRL'S HELP AND MAN'S WORK

XXIX ~ THE TOILERS OF OLD RAZEE

XXX ~ THE MATTER OF A MONOGRAM IN WAX

XXXI ~ THE BIG FELLOW HIMSELF

XXXII ~ A GIRL'S DEAR "BECAUSE!"

BLOW THE MAN DOWN

I ~ CAPTAIN BOYD MAYO GETS OUT OF SOUNDINGS

When in safety or in doubt,

Always keep a safe lookout;
Strive to keep a level head,
Mind your lights and mind your lead.
--Pilot-house Ditty.

For days he had been afraid of that incredible madness of his as a man fears a nameless monster. But he was sure of his strength even while admitting his weakness. He was confident that he had the thing securely in leash.

Then all at once it happened!

Without preface of word or look he whirled and faced her, swept her into his arms and kissed her. He did not attempt to absolve himself or mitigate his offense by telling her that he loved her. He was voiceless--he could not control his speech. He did not dare to show such presumption as talk of love must seem to be to her. He knew he must not speak of love; such proffer to her would be lunacy. But this greater presumption, this blind capture of her in his arms--this was something which he had not intended any more than a sane man considers flight to the moon.

He did not understand; he had been himself--then, instantly, in time measured by a finger-snap, he had become this wretch who seemed to be somebody else.

He had ceased, for an insane moment, to be master of all his senses. But he released her as suddenly as he had seized her, and staggered to the door of the chart-room, turning his back on her and groaning in supreme misery.

In that moment of delirium he had insulted his own New England sense of decency and honor.

He was afraid to look back at her. With an agony of apprehension he dreaded the sound of her voice. He knew well enough that she was striving to get command of herself, to recover from her utter amazement. He waited. The outrage must have incensed her beyond measure; the silence was prolonged.

In the yacht's saloon below a violin sang its very soul out upon the summer night, weaving its plaint into the soft, adagio rippling of a piano's chords.

He searched his soul. The music, that distant, mellow phrasing of the call of love, the music had unstrung him. While he paced the bridge before her coming that music had been melting the ice of his natural reserve. But he did not pardon himself because he had acted the fool.

He stared at the night framed in the door of the chart-house. Little waves were racing toward him, straight from the moon, on the sea-line, like a flood of new silver pouring from the open door of plenty!

But the appealing beauty of that night could not excuse the

unconscionable insult he had just offered her. He knew it, and shivered.

She had come and leaned close to him over the outspread chart, her breath on his cheek--so close to him that a roving tress of her hair flicked him. But because a sudden fire had leaped from the touch to his brain was no reason for the act by which he had just damned himself as a presumptuous brute.

For he, Boyd Mayo, captain of her father's yacht, a hireling, had just paid the same insulting courtship to Alma Marston that a sailor would proffer to an ogling girl on the street.

"I'll jump overboard," he stammered at last. "I'll take myself out of your sight forever."

The ominous silence persisted.

"I don't ask you to forgive me. It is not a thing which can be forgiven. Tell them I was insane--and jumped overboard. That will be the truth. I am a lunatic."

He lurched through the door. In that desperate moment, in the whirl of his emotions, there seemed to be no other way out of his horrible predicament. He had grown to love the girl with all the consuming passion of his soul, realizing fully his blind folly at the same time. He had built no false hopes. As to speaking of that love--even betraying it by a glance--he had sheathed himself in the armor of reserved constraint; he had been sure that he sooner would have gone down on his hands and knees and bayed that silver moon from the deck of the yacht _Olenia_ than do what he had just done.

"Captain Mayo! Wait!"

He waited without turning to look at her. Her voice was not steady, but he could not determine from the tone what her emotions were.

"Come back here!"

She was obliged to repeat the command with sharper authority before he obeyed. He lowered his eyes and stood before her, a voiceless suppliant.

"Why did you do that?" she asked. It was not the contemptuous demand which he had been fearing. Her voice was so low that it was almost a whisper.

"I don't know," he confessed.

The violin sang on; the moon shone in at the door; two strokes, like golden globules of sound, from the ship's bell signaled nine o'clock. Only the rhythm of the engines, as soothing as a cat's purring, and the slow roll of the yacht and the murmuring of the parted waves revealed that the _Olenia_ was on her way through the night.

"I don't know," he repeated. "It doesn't excuse me to say that I could

not help it.?

And he understood women so little that he did not realize that he was making the ages-old plea which has softened feminine rancor ever since the Sabine women were borne away in their captors' arms and forgave their captors.

She stared at him, making once more a maiden's swift appraisal of this young man who had offered himself so humbly as a sacrifice. His brown hands were crossed in front of him and clutched convulsively his white cap. The cap and the linen above the collar of his uniform coat brought out to the full the hue of his manly tan. The red flush of his shocked contrition touched his cheeks, and, all in all, whatever the daughter of Julius Marston, Wall Street priest of high finance, may have thought of his effrontery, the melting look she gave him from under lowered eyelids indicated her appreciation of his outward excellencies.

?I suppose you are thoroughly and properly ashamed of what you have done!?

?I am ashamed--so ashamed that I shall never dare to raise my eyes to you again. I will do what I promised. I will jump overboard.?

?Captain Mayo, look at me!?

When he obeyed, with the demeanor of a whipped hound, his perturbation would not allow him to show as much appreciation of her as she had displayed in the secret study of him, which she now promptly concealed. He surveyed her wistfully, with fear. And a maiden, after she has understood that she has obtained mastery over brawn and soul, does not care to be looked at as if she were Medusa.

She stole a side-glance at her face in one of the mirrors, and then tucked into place a vagrant lock of hair with a shapely finger, thereby suggesting, had there been a cynical observer present, that Miss Alma Marston never allowed any situation, no matter how crucial, to take her attention wholly from herself.

There was no mistaking it--had that cynical observer been there, he would have noted that she pouted slightly when Mayo declared his unutterable shame.

?You will never get over that shame, will you??

And Captain Mayo, feverishly anxious to show that he understood the enormity of his offense, and desiring to offer pledge for the future, declared that his shame would never lessen.

Her dark eyes sparkled; whether there was mischief mingled with resentment, or whether the resentment quite supplanted all other emotions, might have been a difficult problem for the cynic. But when she tilted her chin and stared the offender full in the eyes, propping her plump little hands in the side-pockets of her white reefer, Captain Mayo, like a man hit by a cudgel, was struck with the sudden

and bewildering knowledge that he did not know much about women, for she asked, with a quizzical drawl, "Just what is there about me, dear captain, to inspire that everlasting regret which seems to be troubling you so much?"

Even then he did not grasp the full import of her provocative question. "It isn't you. I'm the one who is wholly to blame," he stammered. "I have dared to--But no matter. I know my place. I'll show you I know it."

"You _dared_ to--What have you dared to do--besides what you just did?"

"I cannot tell you, Miss Marston. I don't propose to insult you again."

"I command you to tell me, Captain Mayo."

He could not comprehend her mood in the least and his demeanor showed it. Her command had a funny little ripple in it--as of laughter suppressed. There were queer quirks at the corners of her full, red lips.

"Now straighten up like your real self! I don't like to see you standing that way. You know I like to have all the folks on the yachts look at our captain when we go into a harbor! You didn't know it? Well, I do. Now what have you dared to do?"

He did straighten then. "I have dared to fall in love with you, Miss Marston. So have a lot of other fools, I suppose. But I am the worst of all. I am only a sailor. How I lost control of myself I don't know!"

"Not even now?" Still that unexplainable softness in her voice, that strange expression on her face. Being a sailor, he looked on this calm as being ominous presage of a storm.

"I am willing to have you report me to your father, Miss Marston. I will take my punishment. I will never offend you again."

"You can control yourself after this, can you?"

"Yes, Miss Marston, absolutely."

She hesitated; she smiled. She lowered her eyelids again and surveyed him with the satisfied tolerance a pretty woman can so easily extend when unconquerable ardor has prompted to rashness.

"Oh, you funny, prim Yankee!" she murmured. "You don't understand even now just why you did it!"

His face revealed that he did not in the least understand.

"Come here," she invited.

He went three steps across the narrow cabin and stood in an attitude of respectful obedience before her.

?What now, sir?? It was query even more provocative--a smile went with it.

?I apologize. I have learned my lesson.?

?You need to learn a lot--you are very ignorant,? she replied, with considerable tartness.

?Yes,? he agreed, humbly.

What happened then was so wholly outside his reckoning that the preceding events of the evening retired tamely into the background. It had been conceivable that rush of passion might drive him to break all the rules of conduct his New England conscience had set over him; but what Alma Marston did overwhelmed him with such stupefaction that he stood there as rigid and motionless as a belaying-pin in a rack. She put up her arms, pressed her two hands on his shoulders, stood on tiptoe, and kissed him on his lips.

?There, foolish old Yankee,? she said, softly, her mouth close to his; ?since you are so ashamed I give you back your kiss--and all is made right between us, because we are just where we started a little while ago.?

His amazement had so benumbed him that even after that surrender he stood there, close to her, his countenance blank, his arms dangling at his side.

?What on earth is the matter with you?? she asked, petulantly.

?I don't know! I--I--I don't seem to understand.?

?I'm going to be honest with you. You are so honest you will understand me, then,? she told him. It seemed to him that he must be mistaken, but he certainly felt her arms were slipping up his shoulders and had met behind his neck. ?I saw it in your eyes long ago. A woman always knows. I wanted you to do what you did to-night. I knew I would be obliged to tempt you. I came up here while the moon and the music would help me. I did it all on purpose--I stood close to you--for I knew you were just my slow old Yankee who would never come out of his shell till I poked. There! I have confessed!?

His mad joy did not allow him to see anything of the coquette in that confession. It all seemed to be consecrated by the love he felt for her--a love which was so honest that he perceived no boldness in the attitude of this girl who had come so far to meet him. He took her into his arms again, and she returned his kisses.

?Tell me again, Boyd, that you love me,? she coaxed.

?And yet I have no right to love you. You are--?

?Hush! Hush! There goes your Yankee caution talking! I want love, for I am a girl. Love hasn't anything to do with what you are or what I am.

Not now! We will love each other--and wait! You are my big boy! Aren't you??

He was glad to comply with her plea to put sensible talk from them just then. There was nothing sensible he could say. He was holding Julius Marston's daughter in his arms, and she was telling him that she loved him. The world was suddenly upside down and he was surrendering himself to the mad present.

In the yacht's saloon below a woman began to sing:

?Love comes like a summer sigh,
Softly o'er us stealing.
Love comes and we wonder why
To its shrine we're kneeling.
Love comes as the days go by--?

?That's it,? the girl murmured, eagerly. ?We don't know anything at all about why we love. Folks who marry for money make believe love--I have watched them--I know. I love you. You're my big boy. That's all. That's enough.?

He accepted this comforting doctrine unquestioningly. Her serene acceptance of the situation, without one wrinkle in her placid brow to indicate that any future problems annoyed her, did not arouse his wonderment or cause him to question the depths of her emotions; it only added one more element to the unreality of the entire affair.

Moon and music, silver sea and glorious night, and a maid who had been, in his secret thoughts, his dream of the unattainable!

?Will you wait for me--wait till I can make something of myself?? he demanded.

?You are yourself--right now--that's enough!?

?But the future. I must--?

?Love me--love me now--that's all we need to ask. The future will take care of itself when the time comes! Haven't you read about the great loves? How they just forgot the whole petty world? What has love to do with business and money and bargains? Love in its place--business in its place! And our love will be our secret until--?

He pardoned her indefiniteness, for when she paused and hesitated she pressed her lips to his, and that assurance was enough for him.

?Yes--oh yes--Miss Alma!? called a man's voice in the singsong of eager summons.

?It's Arthur,? she said, with snap of impatience in her voice. ?Why won't people let me alone??

He released her, and she stood at arm's-length, her hands against

his breast. 'I have thought--It seemed to me,' he stammered, 'that he--Forgive me, but I have loved you so! I couldn't bear to think--think that he--?'

'You thought I cared for him!' she chided. 'That's only the man my father has picked out for me! Why, I wouldn't even allow my father to select a yachting-cap for me, much less a husband. I'll tell him so when the time comes!'

Mayo's brows wrinkled in spite of himself. The morrow seemed to play small part in the calculations of this maid.

'Money--that's all there is to Arthur Beveridge. My father has enough money for all of us. And if he is stingy with us--oh, it's easy enough to earn money, isn't it? All men can earn money.'

Captain Mayo, sailor, was not sure of his course in financial waters and did not reply.

'Miss Alma! I say! Oh, where are you?'

'Even that silly, little, dried-up man,' she jeered, with a duck of her head in the direction of the drawling voice, 'goes down to Wall Street and makes thousands and thousands of dollars whenever he feels like it. And you could put him in your reefer pocket. They will all be afraid of you when you go down to Wall Street to make lots of money for us two. You shall see! Kiss me! Kiss me once! Kiss me quick! Here he comes!'

He obeyed, released her, and when Beveridge shoved his wizened face in at the door they were bending over the chart.

'Oh, I say, we have missed you. They are asking for you.'

She did not turn to look at him. 'I have something else on my mind, Arthur, besides lolling below listening to Wally Dalton fiddle love-tunes. And this passage, here, Captain Mayo! What is it?' Her finger strayed idly across a few hundred miles of mapped Atlantic Ocean.

'It's Honeymoon Channel,' replied the navigator, demurely. His new ecstasy made him bold enough to jest.

'Oh, so we are learning to be a captain, Miss Alma?' inquired Beveridge with a wry smile.

'It would be better if more yacht-owners knew how to manage their own craft,' she informed him, with spirit.

'Yes, it might keep the understrappers in line,' agreed the man at the door.. 'I apply for the position of first mate after you qualify, Captain Alma.'

'And this, you say, is, Captain Mayo?' she queried, without troubling herself to reply. Her tone was crisply matter of fact.

Beveridge blinked at her and showed the disconcerted uneasiness of a man who has intruded in business hours.

Captain Mayo, watching the white finger rapturously, noted that it was sweeping from the Arctic Circle to the Tropic Zone. "That's Love Harbor, reached through the thoroughfare of Hope," he answered, respectfully.

"Oh, I say!" exclaimed Beveridge; "the sailors who laid out that course must have been romantic."

"Sailors have souls to correspond with their horizon, Arthur. Would you prefer such names as Cash Cove and Money-grub Channel?"

Mr. Beveridge cocked an eyebrow and stared at her eloquent back; also, he cast a glance of no great favor on the stalwart young captain of the Olenia. It certainly did not occur to Mr. Beveridge that two young folks in love were making sport of him. That Julius Marston's daughter would descend to a yacht captain would have appeared as incredible an enormity as an affair with the butler. But there was something about this intimate companionship of the chart-room which Mr. Beveridge did not relish. Instinct rather than any sane reason told him that he was not wanted.

"I'm sorry to break in on your studies, Miss Marston," he said, a bit stiffly. "But I have been sent by your father to call you to the cabin."

Mr. Beveridge's air, his tone of protest, conveyed rather pointed hint that her responsibilities as a hostess were fully as important as her studies as a navigator.

"I must go," she whispered.

Relief was mingled with Captain Mayo's regret. He had feared that this impetuous young woman might rebel against the summons, even though the word came from her father. And her persistent stay in his chart-room, even on the pretext of a fervid interest in the mysteries of navigation, might produce complications. This wonderful new joy in his life was too precious to be marred by complications.

She trailed her fingers along his hand when she turned from the chart-table, and then pinched him in farewell salute.

"Good night, Captain Mayo. I'll take another lesson to-morrow."

"I am at your service," he told her.

Their voices betrayed nothing, but Beveridge's keen eyes--the eyes which had studied faces in the greatest game of all when fortunes were at stake--noted the look they exchanged. It was long-drawn, as expressive as a lingering kiss.

Mr. Beveridge, sanctioned in his courtship by Julius Marston, was not especially worried by any inferences from that soft glance. He could not blame even a coal-heaver who might stare tenderly at Miss Alma Marston, for she was especially pleasing to the eye, and he enjoyed looking at

her himself. He was enough of a philosopher to be willing to have other folks enjoy themselves and thereby give their approbation to his choice. He excused Captain Mayo. As to Miss Marston, he viewed her frivolity as he did that of the other girls whom he knew; they all had too much time on their hands.

"Give the poor devils a chance, Alma. Don't tip 'em upside down," he advised, testily, when she followed him down the ladder. He stood at the foot and offered his hand, but she leaped down the last two steps and did not accept his assistance. "Now, you have twisted that skipper of ours until he doesn't know north from south."

"I do not care much for your emphasis on the 'now,'" she declared, indignantly. "You seem to intimate that I am going about the world trying to beguile every man I see."

"That seems to be the popular indoor and outdoor sport for girls in these days," he returned with good humor. "Just a moment ago you were raising the very devil with that fellow up there with your eyes. Of course, practice makes perfect. But you're a good, kind girl in your heart. Don't make 'em miserable."

Mr. Beveridge's commiseration would have been wasted on Captain Boyd Mayo that evening. The captain snapped off the light in the chart-room as soon as they had departed, and there in the gloom he took his happiness to his heart, even as he had taken her delicious self to his breast. He put up his hands and pressed his face into the palms. He inhaled the delicate, subtle fragrance--a mere suggestion of perfume--the sweet ghost of her personality, which she had left behind. Her touch still thrilled him, and the warmth of her last kiss was on his lips.

Then he went out and climbed the ladder to the bridge. A peep over the shoulder of the man at the wheel into the mellow glow under the hood of the binnacle, showed him that the Olenia was on her course.

"It's a beautiful night, Mr. McGaw," he said to the mate, a stumpy little man with bowed legs, who was pacing to and fro, measuring strides with the regularity of a pendulum.

"It is that, sir!"

Mr. McGaw, before he answered, plainly had difficulty with something which bulged in his cheek. He appeared, also, to be considerably surprised by the captain's air of vivacious gaiety. His superior had been moping around the ship for many days with melancholy spelled in every line of his face.

"Yes, it's the most beautiful and perfect night I ever saw, Mr. McGaw." There was triumph in the captain's buoyant tones.

"Must be allowed to be what they call a starry night for a ramble," admitted the mate, trying to find speech to fit the occasion.

?I will take the rest of this watch and the middle watch, Mr. McGaw,?
offered the captain. ?I want to stay up to-night. I can't go to sleep.?

The offer meant that Captain Mayo proposed to stay on duty until four o'clock in the morning.

Mate McGaw fiddled a gnarled finger under his nose and tried to find some words of protest. But Captain Mayo added a crisp command.

?Go below, Mr. McGaw, and take it easy. You can make it up to me some time when there is no moon!? He laughed.

When all the cabin lights were out and he realized that she must be asleep, he walked the bridge, exulting because her safety was in his hands, but supremely exultant because she loved him and had told him so.

Obedience had been in the line of his training.

She had commanded him to live and love in the present, allowing the future to take care of itself, and it afforded him a sense of sweet companionship to obey her slightest wish when he was apart from her. Therefore, he put aside all thoughts of Julius Marston and his millions--Julius Marston, his master, owner of the yacht which swept on under the moon--that frigid, silent man with the narrow strip of frosty beard pointing his chin.

Mayo walked the bridge and lived and loved.

II ~ THEN CAPTAIN MAYO SEES SHOALS

There's naught upon the stern, there's naught upon the lee,
Blow high, blow low, and so sailed we.
But there's a lofty ship to windward,
And she's sailing fast and free,
Sailing down along the coast of the high Barbaree.
--Ancient Shanty.

The skipper of the _Olenia_ found himself dabbling in guesses and wonderment more than is good for a man who is expected to obey without asking the reason why.

That cruise seemed to be a series of spasmodic alternations between leisurely loafing and hustling haste.

There were days when he was ordered to amble along at half speed offshore. Then for hours together Julius Marston and his two especial and close companions, men of affairs, plainly, men of his kind, bunched themselves close together in their hammock chairs under the poop awning and talked interminably. Alma Marston and her young friends, chaperoned by an amiable aunt--so Captain Mayo understood her status in the party--remained considerably away from the earnest group of three.

Arthur Beveridge attached himself to the young folks.

From the bridge the captain caught glimpses of all this shipboard routine. The yacht's saunterings offshore seemed a part of the summer vacation.

But the occasional hurrying into harbors, the conferences below with men who came and went with more or less attempt at secrecy, did not fit with the vacation side of the cruise.

These conferences were often followed by orders to the captain to thread inner reaches of the coast and to visit unfrequented harbors.

Captain Mayo had been prepared for these trips, although he had not been informed of the reason. It was his first season on the yacht *_Olenia_*. The shipping broker who had hired him had been searching in his inquiries as to Mayo's knowledge of the byways of the coast. The young man who had captained fishermen and coasters ever since he was seventeen years old had found it easy to convince the shipping broker, and the shipping broker had sent him on board the yacht without the formality of an interview with the owner.

Mayo was informed curtly that there was no need of an interview. He was told that Julius Marston never bothered with details.

When Julius Marston had come on board with his party he merely nodded grim acknowledgment of the salute of his yacht's master, who stood at the gangway, cap in hand.

The owner had never shown any interest in the management of the yacht; he had remained abaft the main gangway; he had never called the captain into conference regarding any movements of the *_Olenia_*.

Captain Mayo, pacing the bridge in the forenoon watch, trying to grasp the full measure of his fortune after troubled dreams of his master's daughter, recollected that he had never heard the sound of Julius Marston's voice. So far as personal contact was concerned, the yacht's skipper was evidently as much a matter of indifference to the owner as the yacht's funnel.

Orders were always brought forward by a pale young man who was taciturn even to rudeness, and by that trait seemed to commend himself to Marston as a safe secretary.

At first, Alma Marston had brought her friends to the bridge. But after the novelty was gone they seemed to prefer the comfort of chairs astern or the saloon couches.

For a time the attentive Beveridge had followed her when she came forward; and then Beveridge discovered that she quite disregarded him in her quest for information from the tall young man in uniform. She came alone.

And after that what had happened happened.

She came alone that forenoon. He saw her coming. He had stolen a glance
aft every time he turned in his walk at the end of the bridge. He leaned
low and reached down his hand to assist her up the ladder.

?I have been nigh crazy all morning. But I had to wait a decent time and
listen to their gossip after breakfast,? she told him, her face close
to his as she came up the ladder. ?And, besides, my father is snappy
to-day. He scolded me last night for neglecting my guests. Just as if
I were called on to sit all day and listen to Nan Burgess appraise her
lovers or to sing a song every time Wally Dalton has his relapse of
lovesickness. He has come away to forget her, you know.? She chuckled,
uttering her funny little gurgle of a laugh which stirred in him,
always, a desire to smother it with kisses.

They went to the end of the bridge, apart from the man at the wheel.

?I hurried to go to sleep last night so that I could dream of you, my
own big boy.?

?I walked the bridge until after daylight. I wanted to stay awake. I
could not bear to let sleep take away my thoughts.?

?What is there like love to make this world full of happiness? How
bright the sun is! How the waves sparkle! Those folks sitting back there
are looking at the same things we are--or they can look, though they
don't seem to have sense enough. And about all they notice is that it's
daylight instead of night. My father and those men are talking about
money--just money--that's all. And Wally has a headache from drinking
too much Scotch. And Nan Burgess doesn't love anybody who loves her, But
for us--oh, this glorious world!?

She put out her arms toward the sun and stared boldly at that blazing
orb, as though she were not satisfied with what her eyes could behold,
but desired to grasp and feel some of the glory of outdoors. If Captain
Mayo had been as well versed in psychology as he was in navigation
he might have drawn a few disquieting deductions from this frank and
unconscious expression of the mood of the materialist. She emphasized
that mood by word.

?I'll show you my little clasp-book some day, big boy. It's where I
write my verses. I don't show them to anybody. You see, I'm telling you
my secrets! We must tell each other our secrets, you and I! I have put
my philosophy of living into four lines. Listen!

?The future? Why perplex the soul? The past? Forget its woe and strife!
Let's thread each day, a perfect whole, Upon our rosary of Life.?

?It's beautiful,? he told her.

?Isn't it good philosophy??

?Yes,? he admitted, not daring to doubt the high priestess of the new
cult to which he had been commandeered.

?It saves all this foolish worry. Most of the folks I know are always talking about the bad things which have happened to them or are peering forward and hoping that good things will happen, and they never once look down and admire a golden moment which Fate has dropped into their hands. You see, I'm poetical this morning. Why shouldn't I be? We love each other.?

?I don't know how to talk,? he stammered. ?I'm only a sailor. I never said a word about love to any girl in my life.?

?Are you sure you have never loved anybody? Remember, we must tell each other our secrets.?

?Never,? he declared with convincing firmness.

She surveyed him, showing the satisfaction a gold-seeker would exhibit in appraising a nugget of virgin ore. ?But you are so big and fine! And you must have met so many pretty girls!?

He was not restive under this quizzing. ?I have told you the truth, Miss Marston.?

?For shame, big boy! 'Miss Marston,' indeed! I am Alma--Alma to you. Say it! Say it nicely!?

He flushed. He stole a shamefaced glance at the-wheelsman and made a quick and apprehensive survey of the sacred regions aft.

?Are you afraid, after all I have said to you??

?No, but it seems--I can hardly believe--?

?Say it.?

?Alma,? he gulped. ?Alma, I love you.?

?You need some lessons, big boy. You are so awkward I think you are telling me the truth about the other girls.?

He did not dare to ask her whether she had loved any one else. With all the passionate jealousy of his soul he wanted to ask her. She, who was so sure that she could instruct him, must have loved somebody. He tried to comfort himself by the thought that her knowledge arose from the efforts either men had made to win her.

?We have our To-day,? she murmured. ?Golden hours till the moon comes up--and then perhaps a few silver ones! I don't care what Arthur guesses. My father is too busy talking money with those men to guess. I'm going to be with you all I can. I can arrange it. I'm studying navigation.?

She snuggled against the rail, luxuriating in the sunshine.

?Who are you?? she asked, bluntly.

That question, coming after the pledging of their affection, astonished him like the loom of a ledge in mid-channel.

?It's enough for me that you are just as you are, boy! But you're not a prince in disguise, are you??

?I'm only a Yankee sailor,? he told her. ?But if you won't think that I'm trying to trade on what my folks have been before me, I'll say that my grandfather was Gamaliel Mayo of Mayoport.?

?That sounds good, but I never heard of him. With all my philosophy, I'm a poor student of history, sweetheart.? Her tone and the name she gave him took the sting out of her confession.

?I don't believe he played a great part in history. But he built sixteen ships in his day, and our house flag circled the world many times. Sixteen big ships, and the last one was the _Harvest Home_, the China clipper that paid for herself three times before an Indian Ocean monsoon swallowed her.?

?Well, if he made all that money, are you going to sea for the fun of it??

?There are no more Yankee wooden ships on the sea. My poor father thought he was wise when the wooden ships were crowded off. He put his money into railroads--and you know what has happened to most of the folks who have put their money into new railroads.?

?I'm afraid I don't know much about business.?

?The hawks caught the doves. It was a game that was played all over New England. The folks whose money built the roads were squeezed out. Long before my mother died our money was gone, but my father and I did not allow her to know it. We mortgaged and gave her what she had always been used to. And when my father died there was nothing!?

Her eyes glistened. ?That's chivalry,? she cried. ?That's the spirit of the knights of old when women were concerned. I adore you for what you did!?

?It was the way my father and I looked at it,? he said, mildly. ?My father was not a very practical man, but I always agreed with him. And I am happy now, earning my own living. Why should I think my grandfather ought to have worked all his life so that I would not need to work??

?I suppose it's different with a big, strong man and a woman. She needs so much that a man must give her.?

Captain Mayo became promptly silent, crestfallen, and embarrassed. He stared aft, he looked at the splendid yacht whose finances he managed and whose extravagance he knew. He saw the girl at his side, and blinked at the gems which flashed in the sunlight as her fingers tucked up the

locks of hair where the breeze had wantoned.

"I think my father works because he loves it," she said. "I wish he would rest and enjoy other things more. If mother had lived to influence him perhaps he would see something else in life instead of merely piling up money. But he doesn't listen to me. He gives me money and tells me to go and play. I miss my mother, boy! I haven't anybody to talk with--who understands!?"

There were tears in her eyes, and he was grateful for them. He felt that she had depths in her nature. But keen realization of his position, compared with hers, distressed him. She stood there, luxury incarnate, mistress of all that money could give her.

"Anybody can make money," she declared. "My father and those men are sitting there and building plans to bring them thousands and thousands of dollars. All they need to do is put their heads together and plan. Every now and then I hear a few words. They're going to own all the steamboats--or something of that kind. Anybody can make money, I say, but there are so few who know how to enjoy it."

"I have been doing a lot of thinking since last night--Alma." He hesitated when he came to her name, and then blurted it out.

"Do you think it is real lover-like to treat my name as if it were a hurdle that you must leap over?" she asked, with her aggravating little chuckle. "Oh, you have so much to learn!"

"I'm afraid so. I have a great many things ahead of me to learn and do. I have been thinking. I have been afraid of the men who sit and scheme and put all their minds on making money. They did bitter things to us, and we didn't understand until it was all over. But I must go among them and watch them and learn how to make money."

"Don't be like the others, now, and talk money--money," she said, pettishly. "Money and their love-affairs--that's the talk I have heard from men ever since I was allowed to come into the drawing-room out of the nursery!"

"But I must talk money a little, dear. I have my way to make in the world."

"Thrifty, practical, and Yankee!" she jested. "I suppose you can't help it!"

"It isn't for myself--it's for you!" he returned, wistfully, and with a voice and demeanor he offered himself as Love's sacrifice before her--the old story of utter devotion--the ancient sacrifice.

"I have all I want," she insisted.

"But I must be able to give you what you want!"

"I warn you that I hate money-grubbers! They haven't a spark of romance

in them. Boyd, you'd be like all the rest in a little while. You mustn't do it.?

?But I must have position--means before I dare to go to your father--if I ever shall be able to go to him!?

?Go to him for what??

?To ask him--to say--to--well, when we feel that I'm in a position where we can be married--?

?Of course we shall be married some day, boy, but all that will take care of itself when the time comes. But now you are-- How old are you, Boyd??

?Twenty-six.?

?And I am nineteen. And what has marriage to do with the love we are enjoying right now??

?When folks are in love they want to get married.?

?Granted! But when lovers are wise they will treat romance at first as the epicure treats his glass of good wine. They will pour it slowly and hold the glass up against the light and admire its color!? In her gay mood she pinched together thumb and forefinger and lifted an imaginary glass to the sun. ?Then they will sniff the bouquet. Ah-h-h, how fragrant! And after a time they will take a little sip--just a weeny little sip and hold it on the tongue for ever so long. For, when it is swallowed, what good? Oh, boy, here are you--talking first of all about marriage! Talking of the good wine of life and love as if it were a fluid simply to satisfy thirst. We are going to love, first of all! Come, I will teach you.?

He did not know what to say to her. There was a species of abandon in her gaiety. Her exotic language embarrassed one who had been used to mariners' laconic directness of speech. She looked at him, teasing him with her eyes. He was a bit relieved when the pale-faced secretary came dragging himself up the ladder and broke in on the tête-à-tête.

?Mr. Marston's orders are, Captain Mayo, that you turn here and go west. Do you know the usual course of the Bee line steamers??

?Yes, sir.?

?He requests you to turn in toward shore and follow that course.?

?Very well, sir.? Captain Mayo walked to the wheel. ?Nor' nor'west, Billy, until I can give you the exact course.?

?Nor' nor'west!? repeated the wheelsman, throwing her hard over, and the Olenia came about with a rail-dipping swerve and retraced her way along her own wake of white suds.

Miss Marston preceded the captain down the ladder and went into the chart-room. "A kiss--quick!" she whispered.

He held her close to him for a long moment.

"You are a most obedient captain," she said.

When he released her and went at his task, she leaned upon his shoulder and watched him as he straddled his parallels across the chart.

"We'll run to Razee Reef," he told her, eager to make her a partner in all his little concerns. "The Bee boats fetch the whistler there so as to lay off their next leg. I didn't know that Mr. Marston was interested in the Bee line."

"I heard him talking about that line," she said, indifferently. "Sometimes I listen when I have nothing else to do. He used a naughty word about somebody connected with that company--and it's so seldom that he allows himself to swear I listened to see what it was all about. I don't know even now. I don't understand such things. But he said if he couldn't buy 'em he'd bust 'em. Those were his words. Not very elegant language. But it's all I remember."

Before he left the chart-room Mayo took a squint at the barometer. "I'm sorry he has ordered me in toward the coast," he said. "The glass is too far below thirty to suit me. I think it means fog."

"But it's so clear and beautiful," she protested.

"It's always especially beautiful at sea before something bad happens," he explained, smiling. "And there has been a big fog-bank off to southward for two days. It's a good deal like life, dear. All lovely, and then the fog shuts in!"

"But I would be happy with you in the fog," she assured him.

He glowed at her words and answered with his eyes.

She would have followed him back upon the bridge, but the steward intercepted her. He had waited outside the chart-room.

"Mr. Marston's compliments, Miss Marston! He requests you to join him at cards."

She pouted as she gave back Mayo's look of annoyance, and then obeyed the mandate.

Mr. Marston was stroking his narrow strip of chin beard with thumb and forefinger when she arrived on the quarter-deck. The men of business were below, and he motioned to a hammock chair beside him.

"Alma, for the rest of this cruise I want you to stay back here with our guests where you belong," he commanded with the directness of attack employed by Julius Marston in his dealings with those of his ménage.

?What do you mean, father??

?That--exactly. I was explicit, was I not??

?But you do not intimate that--that I have--?

?Well?? Mr. Marston believed in allowing others to expose their sentiments before he uncovered his own.

?You don't suggest that there is anything wrong in my being on the bridge where I enjoy myself so much. I am trying to learn something about navigation.?

?I am paying that fellow up there to attend to all that.?

?And it gets tiresome back here.?

?You selected your own company for the cruise--and there is Mr. Beveridge ready to amuse you at any time.?

?Mr. Beveridge amuses me--distinctly amuses me,? she retorted. ?But there is such a thing as becoming wearied even of such a joke as Mr. Beveridge.?

?You will please employ a more respectful tone when you refer to that gentleman,? said her father, with severity. But he promptly fell back into his usual mood when she came into his affairs. He was patronizingly tolerant. ?Your friend, Miss Burgess, has been joking about your sudden devotion to navigation, Alma.?

?Nan Burgess cannot keep her tongue still, even about herself.?

?I know, but I do not intend to have you give occasion even for jokes. Of course, I understand. I know your whims. You are interested, personally, in that gold-braided chap about as much as you would be interested in that brass thing where the compass is--whatever they call it.?

?But he's a gentleman!? she cried, her interest making her unwary. ?His grandfather was--?

?Alma!? snapped Julius Marston. His eyes opened wide. He looked her up and down. ?I have heard before that an ocean trip makes women silly, I am inclined to believe it. I don't care a curse who that fellow's grandfather was. _You_ are my daughter--and you keep off that bridge!?

The men of business were coming up the companion-way, and she rose and hurried to her stateroom.

?I don't dare to meet Nan Burgess just now,? she told herself. ?Friendships can be broken by saying certain things--and I feel perfectly capable of saying just those things to her at this moment.?

In the late afternoon the Olenia, the shore-line looming to starboard, shaped her course to meet and pass a big steamer which came rolling down the sea with a banner of black smoke flaunting behind her.

The fog which Captain Mayo had predicted was coming. Wisps of it trailed over the waves--skirmishers sent ahead of the main body which marched in mass more slowly behind.

A whistling buoy, with its grim grunt, told all mariners to 'ware Razee Reef, which was lifting its jagged, black bulk against the sky-line. With that fog coming, Captain Mayo needed to take exact bearings from Razee, for he had decided to run for harbor that night. That coastline, to whose inside course Marston's orders had sent the yacht, was too dangerous to be negotiated in a night which was fog-wrapped. Therefore, the captain took the whistler nearly dead on, leaving to the larger steamer plenty of room in the open sea.

With considerable amazement Mayo noticed that the other fellow was edging toward the whistler at a sharper angle than any one needed. That course, if persisted in, would pinch the yacht in dangerous waters. Mayo gave the on-coming steamer one whistle, indicating his intention to pass to starboard. After a delay he was answered by two hoarse hoots--a most flagrant breach of the rules of the road.

"That must be a mistake," Captain Mayo informed Mate McGaw.

"That's a polite name for it, sir," averred Mr. McGaw, after he had shifted the lump in his cheek.

"Of course he doesn't mean it, Mr. McGaw."

"Then why isn't he giving us elbow-room on the outside of that buoy, sir?"

"I can't swing and cross his bows now. If he should hit us we'd be the ones held for the accident."

Again Mayo gave the obstinate steamer a single whistle-blast.

"If he cross-signals me again I'll report him," he informed the mate.

"Pay close attention, Mr. McGaw, and you, too, Billy. We may have to go before the inspectors."

But the big chap ahead of them did not deign to reply. He kept on straight at the whistler.

"Compliments of Mr. Marston!" called the secretary from the bridge ladder. "What steamer is that?"

"Conorno of the Bee line, sir," stated Captain Mayo over his shoulder. Then he ripped out a good, hearty, deep-water oath. According to appearances, incredible as the situation seemed, the Conorno proposed to drive the yacht inside the whistler.

Mayo ran to the wheel and yanked the bell-pull furiously. There were four quick clangs in the engine-room, and in a moment the _Olenia_ began to quiver in all her fabric. Going full speed ahead, Mayo had called for full speed astern. Then he sounded three whistles, signaling as the rules of the road provide. The yacht's twin screws churned a yeasty riot under her counter, and while she was laboring thus in her own wallow, trembling like some living thing in the extremity of terror, the big steamer swept past. Froth from the creamy surges at her bows flicked spray contemptuously upon Julius Marston and his guests on the _Olenia_'s quarter-deck. Men grinned down upon them from the high windows of the steamer's pilot-house.

A jeering voice boomed through a megaphone: "Keep out of the way of the Bee line! Take the hint!"

An officer pointed his finger at Marston's house flag, snapping from the yacht's main truck. The blue fish-tail with its letter "M" had revealed the yacht's identity to searching glasses.

"Better make it black! Skull and cross-bones!" volunteered the megaphone operator.

On she went down the sea and the _Olenia_ tossed in the turbulent wake of the kicking screws.

Then, for the first time, Captain Mayo heard the sound of Julius Marston's voice. The magnate stood up, shook his fist at his staring captain, and yelled, "What in damnation do you think you are doing?"

It was amazing, insulting, and, under the circumstances as Mayo knew them, an unjust query. The master of the _Olenia_ did not reply. He was not prepared to deliver any long-distance explanation. Furthermore, the yacht demanded all his attention just then. He gave his orders and she forged ahead to round the whistler.

"Nor'west by west, half west, Billy. And cut it fine!"

The fog had fairly leaped upon them from the sea. The land-breeze had been holding back the wall of vapor, damming it in a dun bank to southward. The breeze had let go. The fog had seized its opportunity.

"Saturday Cove for us to-night, Mr. McGaw," said the master. "Keep your eye over Billy's shoulder."

Then the secretary appeared again on the ladder. This time he did not bring any "compliments."

"Mr. Marston wants you to report aft at once," he announced, brusquely.

Mayo hesitated a moment. They were driving into blankness which had shut down with that smothering density which mariners call "a dungeon fog."

Saturday Cove's entrance was a distant and a small target. In spite of steersman and mate, his was the sole responsibility.

?Will you please explain to Mr. Marston that I cannot leave the bridge??

?You have straight orders from him, captain! You'd better stop the boat and report.?

The skipper of the _Olenia_ was having his first taste of the unreasoning whim of the autocrat who was entitled to break into shipboard discipline, even in a critical moment. Mayo felt exasperation surging in him, but he was willing to explain.

The whistler and Razee Reef had been blotted out by the fog.

?If this vessel is stopped five minutes in this tide-drift we shall lose our bearings, sir. I cannot leave this bridge for the present.?

?I'm thinking you'll leave it for good!? blurted the secretary. ?You're the first hired man who ever told Julius Marston to go bite his own thumb.?

?I may be a hired man,? retorted Mayo. ?But I am also a licensed shipmaster. I must ask you to step down off the bridge.?

?Does that go for all the rest of the--passengers?? asked the secretary, angry in his turn. He dwelt on his last word. ?It does--in a time like this!?

?Very well, I'll give them that word aft.?

Captain Mayo caught a side glance from Mate McGaw after a time.

?I have often wondered,? remarked the mate to nobody in particular, ?how it is that so many damn fools get rich on shore.?

Captain Mayo did not express any opinion on the subject. He clutched the bridge rail and stared into the fog, and seemed to be having a lot of trouble in choking back some kind of emotion.

III ~ THE TAVERN OF THE SEAS

Now, Mister Macliver, you knows him quite well,
He comes upon deck and he cuts a great swell;
It's damn your eyes there and it's damn your eyes here,
And straight to the gangway he takes a broad sheer.
--La Pique ?Come-all-ye.?

Into Saturday Cove, all during that late afternoon, they came surging--spars and tackle limned against the on-sweeping pall of the gray fog--those wayfarers of the open main.

First to roll in past the ledgy portals of the haven were the venerable sea-wagons--the coasters known as the ?Apple-treers.? Their weatherwise

skippers, old sea-dogs who could smell weather as bloodhounds sniff trails, had their noses in the air in good season that day, and knew that they must depend on a thinning wind to cuff them into port. One after the other, barnacled anchors splashed from catheads, dragging rusty chains from hawse-holes, and old, patched sails came sprawling down with chuckle of sheaves and lisp of running rigging.

A 'long-coast shanty explains the nickname, 'Apple-trees':

O, what's the use of compass or a quadrant or a log?
Keep her loafin' on her mudhook in a norther or a fog.
But as soon's the chance is better, then well ratch her off once more,
Keepin' clost enough for bearings from the apple-trees ashore.

Therefore, the topsail schooners, the fore-and-afters, the Bluenose blunt-prows, came in early before the fog smooched out the loom of the trees and before it became necessary to guess at what the old card compasses had to reveal on the subject of courses.

And so, along with the rest of the coastwise ragtag, which was seeking harbor and holding-ground, came the ancient schooner _Polly_. Fog-masked by those illusory mists, she was a shadow ship like the others; but, more than the others, she seemed to be a ghost ship, for her lines and her rig informed any well-posted mariner that she must be a centenarian; with her grotesqueness accentuated by the fog pall, she seemed unreal--a picture from the past.

She had an out-thrust of snub bow and an upcock of square stern, and sag of waist--all of which accurately revealed ripe antiquity, just as a bell-crowned beaver and a swallow-tail coat with brass buttons would identify an old man in the ruck of newer fashions. She had seams like the wrinkles in the parchment skin of extreme old age. She carried a wooden figurehead under her bowsprit, the face and bust of a woman on whom an ancient woodcarver had bestowed his notion of a beatific smile; the result was an idiotic simper. The glorious gilding had been worn off, the wood was gray and cracked. The _Polly's_ galley was entirely hidden under a deckload of shingles and laths in bunches; the after-house was broad and loomed high above the rail in contrast to the mere cubbies which were provided for the other fore-and-afters in the flotilla which came ratching in toward Saturday Cove.

The _Polly_, being old enough to be celebrated, had been the subject of a long-coast lyric of seventeen verses, any one of which was capable of producing most horrible profanity from Captain Epps Candage, her master, whenever he heard the ditty echoing over the waves, sung by a satirist aboard another craft.

In that drifting wind there was leisure; a man on board a lime-schooner at a fairly safe distance from the _Polly_ found inclination and lifted his voice:

'Ow-w-w, here comes the _Polly_ with a lopped-down sail,
And Rubber-boot Epps, is a-settin' on her rail.
How-w-w long will she take to get to Boston town?

Can't just tell 'cause she's headin' up and down.?

?You think that kind o' ky-yi is funny, do you, you walnut-nosed, blue-gilled, goggle-eyed son of a dough-faced americaneezus?? bellowed Captain Candage, from his post at the _Polly's_ wheel.

?Father!? remonstrated a girl who stood in the companionway, her elbows propped on the hatch combings. ?Such language! You stop it!?

?It ain't half what I can do when I'm fair started,? returned the captain.

?You never say such things on shore.?

?Well, I ain't on shore now, be I? I'm on the high seas, and I'm talking to fit the occasion. Who's running this schooner, you or me??

She met his testiness with a spirit of her own, ?I'm on board here, where I don't want to be, because of your silly notions, father. I have the right to ask you to use decent language, and not shame us both.?

Against the archaically homely background the beauty of the young girl appeared in most striking contrast. Her curls peeped out from under the white Dutch cap she wore. Her eyes sparkled with indignant protest, her face was piquant and was just then flushed, and her nose had the least bit of a natural uptilt, giving her the air of a young woman who had a will of her own to spice her amiability.

Captain Candage blinked at her over the spokes of the wheel, and in his father's heart acknowledged her charm, realizing more acutely that his motherless girl had become too much of a problem for his limited knowledge in the management of women.

He had not seen her grow up gradually, as other fathers had viewed their daughters, being able to meet daily problems in molding and mastery.

She seemed to reach development, mental and physical, in disconcerting phases while he was away on his voyages. Each time he met her he was obliged to get acquainted all over again, it appeared to him.

Captain Candage had owned up frankly to himself that he was not able to exercise any authority over his daughter when she was ashore.

She was not wilful; she was not obstinate; she gave him affection. But she had become a young woman while his slow thoughts were classing her still as a child. She was always ahead of all his calculations. In his absences she jumped from stage to stage of character--almost of identity! He had never forgotten how he had brought back to her from New York, after one voyage, half a gunny sackful of tin toys, and discovered that in his absence, by advice and sanction of her aunt, who had become her foster-mother, she had let her dresses down to ankle-length and had become a young lady whom he called ?Miss Candage? twice before he had managed to get his emotions straightened out. While he was wondering about the enormity of tin toys in the gunny sack at his feet, as he sat

in the aunt's parlor; his daughter asked him to come as guest of honor with the Sunday-school class's picnic which she was arranging as teacher. That gave him his opportunity to lie about the toys and allege that he had brought them for her scholars.

Captain Candage, on the deck of his ship, found that he was able to muster a little courage and bluster for a few minutes, but he did not dare to look at her for long while he was asserting himself.

He looked at her then as she stood in the gloomy companionway, a radiant and rosy picture of healthy maidenhood. But the expression on her face was not comfortingly filial.

?Father, I must say it again. I can't help saying it. I am so unhappy. You are misjudging me so cruelly.?

?I done it because I thought it was right to do it. I haven't been tending and watching the way a father ought to tend and watch. I never seemed to be able to ketch up with you. Maybe I ain't right. Maybe I be! At any rate, I'm going to stand on this tack, in your case, for a while longer.?

?You have taken me away from my real home for this? This is no place for a girl! You are not the same as you are when you are on shore. I didn't know you could be so rough--and--wicked!?

?Hold on there, daughter! Snub cable right there! I'm an honest, God-fearing, hard-working man--paying a hundred cents on the dollar, and you know it.?

?But what did you just shout--right out where everybody could hear you??

?That--that was only passing the compliments of the day as compared with what I can do when I get started proper. Do you think I'm going to let any snub-snooted wart-hog of a lime-duster sing--?

?Father!?

?What's a girl know about the things a father has to put up with when he goes to sea and earns money for her??

?I am willing to work for myself. You took me right out of my good position in the millinery-store. You have made me leave all my young friends. Oh, I am so homesick! Her self-reliance departed suddenly. She choked. She tucked her head into the hook of her arm and sobbed.

?Don't do that!? he pleaded, softening suddenly. ?Please don't, Polly!?

She looked up and smiled--a pleading, wan little smile. ?I didn't mean to give way to it, popsy dear. I don't intend to do anything to make you angry or sorry. I have tried to be a good girl. I am a good girl. But it breaks my heart when you don't trust me.?

?They were courting you,? he stammered. ?Them shore dudes was hanging

around you. I ain't doubting you, Polly. But you 'ain't got no mother. I was afraid. I know I've been a fool about it. But I was afraid!? Tears sprinkled his bronzed cheeks. ?I haven't been much of a father because I've had to go sailing and earn money. But I thought I'd take you away till-till I could sort of plan on something.?

She gazed at him, softening visibly.

?Oh, Polly,? he said, his voice breaking, ?you don't know how pretty you are-you don't know how afraid I am!?

?But you can trust me, father,? she promised, after a pause, with simple dignity. ?I know I am only a country girl, not wise, perhaps, but I know what is right and what is wrong. Can't you understand how terribly you have hurt my pride and my self-respect by forcing me to come and be penned up here as if I were a shameless girl who could not take care of herself??

?I reckon I have done wrong, Polly. But I don't know much-not about women folk. I was trying to do right-because you're all I have in this world.?

?I hope you will think it all over,? she advised, earnestly. ?You will understand after a time, father, I'm sure. Then you will let me go back and you will trust me-as your own daughter should be trusted. That's the right way to make girls good-let them know that they can be trusted.?

?You are probably right,? he admitted. ?I will think it all over. As soon as we get in and anchored I'll sit down and give it a good overhauling in my mind. Maybe-?

She took advantage of his pause. ?We are going into a harbor, are we, father??

?Yes. Right ahead of us.?

?I wish you would put me ashore and send me back. I shall lose my position in the store if I stay away too long.?

His obstinacy showed again, promptly. ?I don't want you in that millinery-shop. I'm told that dude drummers pester girls in stores.?

?They do not trouble me, father. Haven't you any confidence in your own daughter??

?Yes, I have,? he said, firmly, and then added, ?but I keep thinking of the dudes and then I get afraid.?

She gave him quick a glance, plainly tempted to make an impatient retort, and then turned and went down into the cabin.

?Don't be mad with me, Polly,? he called after her. ?I guess, maybe, I'm all wrong. I'm going to think it over; I ain't promising nothing sure, but it won't be none surprising if I set you ashore here and send you

back home. Don't cry, little girl.? There were tears in his voice as well as in his eyes.

The lime-schooner vocalist felt an impulse to voice another verse:

?Ow-w-w, here comes the _Polly_ in the middle of the road,
Towed by a mule and paving-blocks her load.
Devil is a-waiting and the devil may as well,
'Cause he'll never get them paving-blocks to finish paving hell.?

Captain Candage left his wheel and strode to the rail. All the softness was gone from his face and his voice.

?You horn-jawed, muck-faced jezebo of a sea-sculpin, you dare to yap out any more of that sculch and I'll come aboard you after we anchor and jump down your gullet and gallop the eternal innards out of ye! Don't you know that I've got ladies aboard here??

?It don't sound like it,? returned the songster.

?Well, you hear what _I_ sound like! Half-hitch them jaw taakuls of yours!?

Captain Candage's meditations were not disturbed after that.

With the assistance of his one helper aboard ship, ?Oakum Otie,? a gray and whiskered individual who combined in one person the various offices of first mate, second mate, A-1 seaman, and hand before the mast-as well as the skipper's boon companion-the _Polly_ was manoeuvred to her anchorage in Saturday Cove and was snuggled for the night. Smoke began to curl in blue wreaths from her galley funnel, and there were occasional glimpses of the cook, a sallow-complexioned, one-eyed youth whose chief and everlasting decoration provided him with the nickname of ?Smut-nosed Dolph.?

Then came some of the ocean aristocrats to join the humbler guests in that tavern of the seas.

Avant couriers of a metropolitan yacht club, on its annual cruise, arrived, jockeying in with billowing mountains of snowy canvas spread to catch the last whispers of the breeze. Later arrivals, after the breeze failed, were towed in by the smart motor craft of the fleet. One by one, as the anchors splashed, brass cannons barked salute and were answered by the commodore's gun.

Captain Candage sat on the edge of the _Polly's_ house and snapped an involuntary and wrathful wink every time a cannon banged. In that hill-bound harbor, where the fog had massed, every noise was magnified as by a sounding-board. There were cheery hails, yachtsmen bawled over the mist-gemmed brass rails interchange of the day's experiences, and frisking yacht tenders, barking staccato exhausts, began to carry men to and fro on errands of sociability. In the silences Captain Candage could hear the popping of champagne corks.

?Them fellers certainly live high and sleep in the garret,? observed Oakum Otie. He was seated cross-legged on the top of the house and was hammering down the lumps in a freshly twisted eye-splice with the end of a marlinespike.

?It has always been a wonder to me,? growled Captain Candage, ?how dudes who don't seem to have no more wit than them fellows haw-hawing over there, and swigging liquor by the cart-load, ever make money the way they do so as to afford all this.?

On that point Captain Candage might have found Mate McGaw of the _Olenia_ willing to engage in profitable discussion and amicable understanding!

?They don't make it-they don't know enough to make it,? stated Otie, with the conviction of a man who knew exactly what he was talking about. ?It has all been left to 'em by their fathers.?

The bearded and brown men of the apple-tree crews leaned the patched elbows of their old coats on the rails and gloomily surveyed the conviviality on board the plaything crafts. Remarks which they exchanged with one another were framed to indicate a sort of lofty scorn for these frolickers of the sea. The coasting skippers, most of whom wore hard hats, as if they did not want to be confounded with those foppish yacht captains, patrolled their quarter-decks and spat disdainfully over their rails.

Everlastingly there was the clank of pumps on board the Apple-treers, and the pumps were tackling the everlasting leaks. Water reddened by contact with bricks, water made turbid by percolation through paving-blocks, splashed continuously from hiccuping scuppers.

Captain Ranse Lougee of the topsail schooner _Belvedere_, laden with fish scraps for a Boston glue-factory, dropped over the counter into his dory and came rowing to the _Polly_, standing up and facing forward and swaying with the fisherman's stroke.

He straddled easily over the schooner's scant freeboard and came aft, and was greeted cordially by Captain Candage.

?Thought I'd show them frosted-cakers that there's a little sociability amongst the gents in the coasting trade, too,? he informed his host. ?Furthermore, I want to borry the ex-act time o' day. _And_, furthermore, I'm glad to get away from that cussed aromy on board the _Belvedere_ and sort of air out my nose once in a while. What's the good word, Cap??

Captain Candage replied to the commonplaces of the other skipper in abstracted fashion. He had viewed Lougee's approach with interest, and now he was plainly pondering in regard to something wholly outside this chatter.

?Captain Lougee,? he broke in, suddenly, in low tones, ?I want you should come forward with me out of hearing of anybody below. I've got a

little taakul I want you to help me overhaul.?

The two walked forward over the deckload and sat on the fore-gaff, which sprawled carelessly where it had fallen when the halyards were let run.

?My daughter is below, there,? explained Captain Candage.

?Vacation trip, eh??

?I don't think it can be called that, Captain Lougee,? stated the host, dryly. ?She is having about as good a time as a canary-bird would have in a corn-popper over a hot fire.?

?What did she come for, then??

?I made her come. I shanghaied her.?

?That's no way to treat wimmen folks,? declared Captain Lougee. ?I've raised five daughters and I know what I'm talking about.?

?I know you have raised five girls, and they're smart as tophet and right as a trivet--and that's why I have grabbed right in on the subject as I have. I was glad to see you coming aboard, Captain Lougee. I want some advice from a man who knows.?

?Then I'm the man to ask, Captain Candage.?

?Last time I was home--where she has been living with her Aunt Zilpah--I ketched her!? confessed Candage. His voice was hoarse. His fingers, bent and calloused with rope-pulling, trembled as he fingered the seam of his trousers.

?You don't tell!? Lougee clucked, solicitously.

?Yes, I ketched her buggy-riding!?

?Alone??

?No, there was a gang of 'em in a beach-wagon. They was going to a party. And I ketched her dancing with a fellow at that party.?

?Well, go ahead now that you've got started! Shake out the mainsail!?

?That's about all there is to it--except that a fellow has been beauing her home from Sunday-school concerts with a lantern. Yes, I reckon that is about all to date and present writing,? confessed Candage.

?What else do you suspect??

?Nothing. Of course, there's no telling what it will grow to be--with dudes a-pestering her the way they do.?

?There ain't any telling about anything in this world, is there?? demanded Captain Lougee, very sharply.

?I reckon not--not for sure!?

?Do you mean to say that because your girl--like any girl should--has been having a little innocent fun with young folks, you have dragged her on board this old hooker, shaming her and making her ridiculous??

?I have been trying to do my duty as a father,? stated Captain Candage, stoutly, and avoiding the flaming gaze of his guest.

Captain Lougee straightened his leg so as to come at his trousers pocket, produced a plug of tobacco, and gnawed a chew off a corner, after careful inspection to find a likely spot for a bite.

?I need to have something in my mouth about this time--something soothing to the tongue and, as you might say, sort of confining, so that too much language won't bu'st out all at once,? he averred, speaking with effort as he tried to lodge the huge hunk of tobacco into a comfortable position. ?I have raised five nice girls, and I have always treated 'em as if they had common sense along with woman's nat'ral goodness and consid'able more self-reliance than a Leghorn pullet. And I used 'em like they had the ordinary rights and privileges of human beings. And they are growed up and a credit to the family. And I haven't got to look back over my record and reflect that I was either a Chinyman or a Turkeyman. No, sir! I have been a father--and my girls can come and sit on my knee to-day and get my advice, and think it's worth something.?

He rose and walked toward his dory.

?But hold on,? called Captain Candage. ?You haven't told me what you think.?

?Haven't I? I thought I had, making it mild and pleasant. But if you need a little something more plain and direct, I'll remark--still making it mild and pleasant--that you're a damned old fool! And now I'll go back and be sociable with them fish scraps. I believe they will smell better after this!? He leaped into his dory and rowed away.

Captain Candage offered no rejoinder to that terse and meaty summing up. Naturally, he was as ready with his tongue as Captain Ranse Lougee or any other man alongshore. But in this case the master of the _Polly_ was not sure of his ground. He knew that Captain Lougee had qualified as father of five. In the judgment of a mariner experience counts. And he did not resent the manner of Captain Lougee because that skipper's brutal bluntness was well known by his friends. Captain Candage had asked and he had received. He rested his elbows on his knees and stared after the departing caller and pondered.

?Maybe he is right. He probably _is_ right. But it wouldn't be shipboard discipline if I told her that I have been wrong. I reckon I'll go aft and be pleasant and genteel, hoping that nothing will happen to rile my feelings. Now that my feelings are calm and peaceful, and having taken course and bearings from a father of five, I'll probably say to her,

'You'd better trot along home, sissy, seeing that I have told you how to mind your eye after this.'

IV ~ OVER THE 'POLLY'S' RAIL

O Stormy was a good old man!
To my way you storm along!
Physog tough as an old tin pan,
Ay, ay, ay, Mister Storm-along!
--Storm-along Shanty.

Without paying much attention to the disturber, Captain Candage had been a bit nettled during his meditation. A speed boat from one of the yachts kept circling the _Polly_, carrying a creaming smother of water under its upcocked bow. It was a noisy gnat of a boat and it kicked a contemptuous wake against the rust-streaked old wagon.

When it swept under the counter, after Captain Candage was back on his quarter-deck, he gave it a stare over the rail, and his expression was distinctly unamiable.

'They probably wasted more money on that doostra-bulus than this schooner would sell for in the market today,' he informed Otie.

'They don't care how money goes so long as they didn't have to sweat earning it. Slinging it like they'd sling beans!'

Back on its circling course swished the darting tender. This time the purring motor whined into silence and the boat came drifting alongside.

'On board _Polly!_' hailed one of the yachtsmen, a man with owner's insignia on his cap.

The master of the old schooner stuck his lowering visage farther over the rail, but he did not reply.

'Isn't this _Polly_ the real one?'

'No, it's only a chromo painting of it.'

'Thank you! You're a gentleman!' snapped the yachtsman.

'Oh, hold on, Paul,' urged one of the men in the tender. 'There's a right way to handle these old boys.' He stood up. 'We're much interested in this packet, captain.'

'That's why you have been making a holy show of her, playing ring around a rosy, hey?'

'But tell me, isn't this the old shallop that was a privateer in the war of eighteen twelve?'

?Nobody aboard here has ever said she wasn't.?

?Well, sir, may we not come on board and look her over??

?No sir, you can't.?

?Now, look here, captain--?

?I'm looking!? declared the master of the _Polly_ in ominous tones.

?We don't mean to annoy you, captain.?

?Folks who don't know any better do a lot of things without meaning to.?

Captain Candage regularly entertained a sea-toiler's resentment for men who used the ocean as a mere playground. But more especially, during those later days, his general temper was touchy in regard to dapper young men, for he had faced a problem of the home which had tried his soul. He felt an unreasoning choler rising in him in respect to these chaps, who seemed to have no troubles of their own.

?I am a writer,? explained the other. ?If I may be allowed on board I'll take a few pictures and--?

?And make fun of me and my bo't by putting a piece in the paper to tickle city dudes. Fend off!? he commanded, noticing that the tender was drifting toward the schooner's side and that one of the crew had set a boat-hook against the main chain-plate.

?Don't bother with the old crab,? advised the owner, sourly.

But the other persisted, courteously, even humbly. ?I am afraid you do not understand me, captain. I would as soon make jest of my mother as of this noble old relic.?

?Go ahead! Call it names!?

?I am taking off my hat to it,? he declared, whipping his cap from his head. ?My father's grandfather was in the war of eighteen twelve. I want to honor this old patriot here with the best tribute my pen can pay. If you will allow me to come on board I shall feel as though I were stepping upon a sacred spot, and I can assure you that my friends, here, have just as much respect for this craft as I have.?

But this honest appeal did not soften Captain Candage. He did not understand exactly from what source this general rancor of his flowed. At the same time he was conscious of the chief reason why he did not want to allow these visitors to rummage aboard the schooner. They would meet his daughter, and he was afraid, and he was bitterly ashamed of himself because he was afraid. Dimly he was aware that this everlasting fear on her account constituted an insult to her. The finer impulse to protect her privacy was not actuating him; he knew that, too. He was merely foolishly afraid to trust her in the company of young men, and

the combination of his emotions produced the simplest product of mental upheaval--unreasonable wrath.

‘Fend off, I say,’ he commanded.

‘Again I beg you, captain, with all respect, please may we come on board?’

‘You get away from here and tend to your own business, if you’ve got any, or I’ll heave a bunch of shingles at you!’ roared the skipper.

‘Father!’ The voice expressed indignant reproof. ‘Father, I am ashamed of you!’

The girl came to the rail, and the yachtsmen stared at her as if she were Aphrodite risen from the sea instead of a mighty pretty girl emerging from a dark companion-way. She had appeared so suddenly! She was so manifestly incongruous in her surroundings.

‘Mother o’ mermaids!’ muttered the yacht-owner in the ear of the man nearest. ‘Is the old rat still privateering?’

The men in the tender stood up and removed their caps.

‘You have insulted these gentlemen, father!’

Captain Candage knew it, and that fact did not soften his anger in the least. At the same time this appearance of his own daughter to read him a lesson in manners in public was presumption too preposterous to be endured; her daring gave him something tangible for his resentment to attack.

He turned on her. ‘You go below where you belong.’

‘I belong up here just now.’

‘Down below with you!’

‘I’ll not go until you apologize to these gentlemen, father!’

‘You ain’t ashore now, miss, to tell me when to wipe my feet and not muss the tidies! You’re on the high seas, and I’m cap’n of this vessel. Below, I say!’

‘These gentlemen know the _Polly_, and they will find out the name of the man who commands her, and I don’t propose to have it said that the Candages are heathens,’ she declared, firmly. ‘If you do not apologize, father, I shall apologize for you.’ She tried to crowd past him to the rail, but he clapped his brown hand over her mouth and pushed her back. His natural impulse as commander of his craft dominated his feelings as a father.

‘I’ll teach ye shipboard discipline, Polly Candage,’ he growled, ‘even if I have to take ye across my knee.’

?Hold on there, if you please, captain,? called the spokesman of the yachtsmen.

Captain Candage was hustling his daughter toward the companionway. But there was authority in the tone, and he paused and jutting a challenging chin over his shoulder.

?What have any of you critters got to say about my private business??

The formality of the man in the tender was a bit exaggerated in his reply. ?Only this, sir. We are going away at once before we bring any more trouble upon this young lady, to whom we tender our most respectful compliments. We do not know any other way of helping her. Our protests, being the protests of gentlemen, might not be able to penetrate; it takes a drill to get through the hide of a rhinoceros!?

The skipper of the _Polly_ did not trouble himself about the finer shadings in that little speech, but of one fact he felt sure: he had been called a rhinoceros. He released his daughter, yanked the marlinespike away from Otie, who had been holding himself in the background as a reserve force, and stamped to the rail. He poised his weapon, fanning it to and fro to take sure aim. But the engineer had thrown in his clutch and the speed boat foamed off before the captain got the range, and he was too thrifty to heave a perfectly good marlinespike after a target he could not hit, angry as he was.

The girl faced her father. There was no doubting her mood. She was a rebel. Indignation set up its flaming standards on her cheeks, and the signal-flames of combat sparkled in her eyes.

?How did you dare to do such a thing to me--those gentlemen looking on? Father, have you lost your mind??

Otie expressed the opinion tender his breath that the captain, on the contrary, had ?lost his number.?

Otie's superior officer was stamping around the quarterdeck, kicking at loose objects, and avoiding his daughter's resentful gaze. There was a note of insincerity in his bluster, as if he wanted to hide embarrassment in a cloud of his own vaporings, as a squid colors water when it fears capture.

?After this you call me Cap'n Candage,? he commanded. ?After this I'm Cap'n Candage on the high seas, and I propose to run my own quarter-deck. And when I let a crowd of dudes traipse on board here to peek and spy and grin and flirt with you, you'll have clamshells for finger-nails. Now, my lady, I don't want any back talk!?

?But I am going to talk to you, father!?

?Remember that I'm a Candage, and back talk--?

?So am I a Candage--and I have just been ashamed of it!?

?I'm going to have discipline on my own quarterdeck.?

?Back talk, quarter-deck discipline, calling you captain! Fol-de-rol and fiddlesticks! I'm your own daughter and you're my father. And you have brought us both to shame! There! I don't want to stay on this old hulk, and I'm not going to stay. I am going home to Aunt Zilpah.?

?I had made up my mind to let you go. My temper was mild and sweet till those jeehoofered, gold-trimmed sons of a striped--?

?Father!?

?I had made up my mind to let you go. But I ain't going to give in to a mutiny right before the face and eyes of my own crew.?

Smut-nosed Dolph had arrived with the supper-dishes balanced in his arms while he crawled over the deckload. He was listening with the utmost interest.

?Your Aunt Zilpah has aided and abetted you in your flirting,? raged the captain. ?My own sister, taking advantage of my being off to sea trying to earn money--?

?Do you mean to insult everybody in this world, father? I shall go home, I say. I'm miserable here.?

?I'll see to it that you ain't off gamboling and galley-westing with dudes!?

In spite of her spirit the girl was not able to bandy retort longer with this hard-shelled mariner, whose weapon among his kind for years had been a rude tongue. Shocked grief put an end to her poor little rebellion. Tears came.

?You are giving these two men a budget to carry home and spread about the village! Oh, father, you are wicked--wicked!? She put her hands to her face, sobbed, and then ran away down into the gloomy cabin.

There was a long silence on the quarter-deck. Otie recovered his marlinespike and began to pound the eye-bolt.

?Without presuming, preaching, or poking into things that ain't none of my business, I want to say that I don't blame you one mite, cap'n,? he volunteered. ?No matter what she says, she wasn't to be trusted among them dudes on shore, and I speak from observation and, being an old bach, I can speak impartial. The dudes on the water is just as bad. Them fellows were flirting with her all the time they was 'longside. Real men that means decent ain't called on to keep whisking their caps off and on all the time a woman is in sight--and I see one of 'em wink at her.?

Captain Candage was in a mood to accept this comfort from Oakum Otie, and to put out of his contrite conscience the memory of what Captain Ranse Lougee had said.

‘Don't you worry! I've got her now where I can keep my eye on her, and I'm cap'n of my own vessel--don't nobody ever forget that!’ He shook his fist at the gaping cook. ‘What ye standing there for, like a hen-coop with the door open and letting my vittels cool off? Hiper your boots! Down below with you and dish that supper onto the table!’

The skipper lingered on deck, his hand at his ear.

The fog was settling over the inner harbor. In the dim vastness seaward a steamer was hooting. Each prolonged blast, at half-minute intervals, sounded nearer. The sound was deep, full-toned, a mighty diapason.

‘What big fellow can it be that's coming in here?’ the captain grunted.

‘Most likely only another tin skimmer of a yacht,’ suggested the mate, tossing the eye-splice and the marline-spike into the open hatch of the lazaret. ‘You know what they like to do, them play-critters! They stick on a whistle that's big enough for Seguin fog-horn.’ He squinted under the edge of his palm and waited. ‘There she looms. What did I tell ye? Nothing but a yacht.’

‘But she's a bouncer,’ remarked the skipper. ‘What do you make her?’

‘O--L,’ spelled Otie--‘O--L--_Olenia_’. Must be a local pilot aboard. None of them New York spiffer captains could find Saturday Cove through the feather-tide that's outside just now.’

‘Well, whether they can or whether they can't isn't of any interest to me,’ stated the skipper, with fine indifference. ‘I'd hate to be in a tight place and have to depend on one of them gilded dudes! I smell supper. Come on!’

He was a little uncertain as to what demeanor he ought to assume below, but he clumped down the companion-way with considerable show of confidence, and Otie followed.

The captain cast a sharp glance at his daughter. He had been afraid that he would find her crying, and he did not know how to handle such cases with any certainty.

But she had dried her eyes and she gave him no very amiable look--rather, she hinted defiance. He felt more at ease. In his opinion, any person who had spirit enough left for fight was in a mood to keep on enjoying life.

‘Perhaps I went a mite too far, Polly,’ he admitted. He was mild, but he preserved a little touch of surliness in order that she might not conclude that her victory was won. ‘But seeing that I brought you off to sea to get you away from flirting--’

‘Don't you dare to say that about me!’ She beat her round little fist on the table. ‘Don't you dare!’

?I don't mean that you ever done it! The dudes done it! I want to do right by you, Polly. I've been to sea so long that I don't know much about ways and manners, I reckon. I can't get a good line on things as I ought to. I'm an old fool, I reckon.? His voice trembled. ?But it made me mad to have you stram up there on deck and call me names before 'em.?

She did not reply.

?I have always worked hard for you--sailing the seas and going without things myself, so that you could have 'em--doing the best I could ever after your poor mother passed on.?

?I am grateful to you, father. But you don't understand a girl--oh, you don't understand! But let's not talk about it any more--not now.?

?I ain't saying to-night--I ain't making promises! But maybe--we'll see how things shape up--maybe I'll send you back home. Maybe it 'll be to-morrow. We'll see how the stage runs to the train, and so forth!?

?I am going to leave it all to you, father. I'm sure you mean to do right.? She served the food as mistress at the board.

?It seems homelike with you here,? said Captain Can-dage, meekly and wistfully.

?I will stay with you, father, if it will make you happier.?

?I sha'n't listen to anything of the sort. It ain't no place aboard here for a girl.?

Through the open port they heard the frequent clanging of the steam-yacht's engine-room bell and the riot of her swishing screws as she eased herself into an anchorage. She was very near them--so near that they could hear the chatter of the voices of gay folk.

?What boat is that, father??

?Another frosted-caker! I can't remember the name.?

?It's the _Oilyena_ or something like that. I forget fancy names pretty quick,? Otie informed her.

?Well, it ain't much use to load your mind down with that kind of sculch,? stated Captain Candage, poising a potato on his fork-tines and peeling it, his elbows on the table. ?That yacht and the kind of folks that's aboard that yacht ain't of any account to folks like us.?

The memory of some remarks which are uttered with peculiar fervor remains with the utterer. Some time later--long after--Captain Candage remembered that remark and informed himself that, outside of weather predictions, he was a mighty poor prophet.

V ~ ON THE BRIDGE OF YACHT ?_OLENIA_?

O the times are hard and the wages low,
Leave her, bullies, leave her!
I guess it's time for us to go,
It's time for us to leave her.
--Across the Western Ocean.

Captain Mayo was not finding responsibility his chief worry while the _Olenia_ was making port.

It was a real mariner's job to drive her through the fog, stab the harbor entrance, and hunt out elbow-room for her in a crowded anchorage. But all that was in the line of the day's work. While he watched the compass, estimated tide drift, allowed for reduced speed, and listened for the echoes which would tell him his distance from the rocky shore, he was engaged in the more absorbing occupation of canvassing his personal affairs.

As the hired master of a private yacht he might have overlooked that affront from the owner, even though it was delivered to a captain on the bridge.

But love has a pride of its own. He had been abused like a lackey in the hearing of Alma Marston. It was evident that the owner had not finished the job. Mayo knew that he had merely postponed his evil moment by sending back a reply which would undoubtedly seem like insubordination in the judgment of a man who did not understand ship discipline and etiquette of the sea.

It was evident that Marston intended to call him ?upon the carpet? on the quarter-deck as soon as the yacht was anchored, and proposed to continue that insulting arraignment.

In his new pride, in the love which now made all other matters of life so insignificant, Mayo was afraid of himself; he knew his limitations in the matter of submission; even then he felt a hankering to walk aft and jounce Julius Marston up and down in his hammock chair. He did not believe he could stand calmly in the presence of Alma Marston and listen to any unjust berating, even from her father.

He tried to put his flaming resentment out of his thoughts, but he could not. In the end, he told himself that perhaps it was just as well! Alma Marston must have pride of her own. She could not continue to love a man who remained in the position of her father's hireling; she would surely be ashamed of a lover who was willing to hump his back and take a lashing in public. His desire to be with her, even at the cost of his pride, was making him less a man and he knew it. He decided to face Marston, man fashion, and then go away. He felt that she would understand in spite of her grief.

Then, turning from a look at the compass, he saw that the yacht's owner was on the bridge. Half of an un-lighted cigar, which was soggy with the

dampness of the fog, plugged Marston's-mouth.

He scowled when the captain saluted.

"You needn't bother to talk now," the millionaire broke in when Mayo began an explanation of his delay in obeying the call to the quarter-deck. "When I have anything to say to a man I want his undivided attention. Is this fog going to hold on?"

"Yes, sir, until the wind hauls more to the norward."

"Then anchor?"

"I am heading into Saturday Cove now, sir."

"Anchor here?"

"I'm looking for considerably more than a capful of wind when it comes, sir. It isn't prudent to anchor offshore."

Marston grunted and turned away. He stood at the end of the bridge, chewing on the cigar, until the *Olenia* was in the harbor with mudhook set. Mayo twitched the jingle bell, signaling release to the engineer.

"I am at your service, sir," he reported, walking to the owner.

Marston rolled the plugging cigar to a corner of his mouth and inquired, "Now, young man, tell me what you mean by saluting a Bee line steamer with my whistle?"

"I did not salute the *Conomo*, sir."

"You gave her three whistles?"

"Yes, but--"

"You're on a gentleman's yacht now, young man, and not on a fishing-steamer. Yachting etiquette doesn't allow a steam-whistle to be sounded in salute. Mr. Beveridge has just looked it up for me, and I know, and you need not assume any of your important knowledge." Marston seemed to be displaying much more irritation than a small matter warranted. But what he added afforded more light on the subject. "The manager of the Bee line was on board that steamer. You heard him hoot that siren at me!"

"I heard him give me cross-signals in defiance of the rules of the road, sir."

"Didn't you know that he whistled at me as an insult--as a sneer?"

"I heard only ordinary signals, sir."

"Everything is ordinary to a sailor's observation! You allowed him to crowd you off your course. You made a spectacle of my yacht, splashing

it around like a frightened duck.?

?I was avoiding collision, sir.?

?You should have made your bigness with my yacht! You sneaked and dodged like a fishing-boat skipper. Was it on a fishing-boat you were trained to those tricks??

?I have commanded a fishing-steamer, sir.?

?On top of it all you gave him three whistles--regular fishing-boat manners, eh??

Captain Mayo straightened and his face and eyes expressed the spirit of a Yankee skipper who knew that he was right.

?I say,? insisted Marston, ?that you saluted him.?

?And I say, sir, that he cross-signaled, an offense that has lost masters their licenses. When I was pinched I gave him three whistles to say that my engines were going full speed astern. If Mr. Beveridge had looked farther in that book he might have found that rule, too!?

?When I looked up at the bridge, here, you were waving your hand to him--three whistles and a hand-wave! You can't deny that you were saluting!?

?I was shaking my fist at him, sir.?

Within himself Captain Mayo was frankly wondering because the owner of the _Olenia_ was displaying all this heat. He remembered the taunt from the pilot-house of the _Conomo_ and understood vaguely that there were depths in the affair which he had not fathomed. But he was in no mood to atone vicariously for the offenders aboard the _Conomo_.

?If I could have found a New York captain who knew the short cuts along this coast I could have had some decency and dignity on board my yacht. I'm even forgetting my own sense of what is proper--out here wasting words and time in this fashion. You're all of the same breed, you down-easters!?

?I am quite sure you can find a New York captain--? began Mayo.

?I don't want your opinion in regard to my business, young man. When I need suggestions from you I'll ask for them.? He flung his soggy cigar over the rail and went down the ladder, and the fog closed immediately behind him.

Captain Mayo paced the bridge. He was alone there. A deck-hand had hooded the brass of the binnacle and search-light, listening while the owner had called the master to account. Mayo knew that the full report of that affair would be carried to the forecastle. His position aboard the yacht had become intolerable. He wondered how much Marston would say aft. His cheeks were hot and rancor rasped in his thoughts. In the

hearing of the girl he adored his shortcomings would be the subject for a few moments of contemptuous discourse, even as the failings of cooks form a topic for idle chatter at the dinner-table.

Out of the blank silence of the wrapping fog came many sounds. Noises carried far and the voice of an unseen singer, who timed himself to the clank of an Apple-treer pump, brought to Mayo the words of an old shanty:

?Come all you young fellows that follow the sea,
Now pray pay attention and lis-ten to me.
O blow the man down, bullies, blow the man down!
Way-ay, blow the man down.
O blow the man down in Liverpool town!
Give me some time to blow the man down.
'Twas aboard a Black-Bailer I first served my time,
And in that Black-Bailer I wasted my prime.
'Tis larboard and starboard on deck you will sprawl,
For blowers and strikers command the Black Ball.
So, it's blow the man down, bullies--?

Alma Marston's voice interrupted his somber appreciation of the significance of that ditty. ?Are you up there, Boyd?? she asked, in cautious tones.

He hurried to the head of the ladder and saw her at its foot, half hidden in the mists even at that short distance. He reached down his hand and she came up, grasping it.

She was studying his expression with both eagerness and apprehension. ?I couldn't stay away from you any longer,? she declared. ?The fog is good to us! Father could not see me as I came forward. I must tell you, Boyd. He has ordered me to stay aft.?

He did not speak.

?Has he dared to say to you what he has been saying below about you??

?I don't think it needed any especial daring on your father's part; I am only his servant,? he said, with bitterness.

?And he--he insulted you like that??

?I suppose your father did not look on what he said as insult. I repeat, I am a paid servant.?

?But what you did was right! I know it must have been right, for you know everything about what is right to do on the sea.?

?I understand my duties.?

?And he blamed you for something??

?It was a bit worse than that from my viewpoint.? He smiled down at

her, for her eyes were searching his face as if appealing for a bit of consolation.

‘Boyd, don't mind him,’ she entreated. ‘Somebody who has been fighting him in business has been very naughty. I don't know just what it's all about. But he has so many matters to worry him. And he snaps at me just the same, every now and then.’

‘Yes, some men are cowards enough to abuse those who must look to them for the comforts of this world,’ he declared.

‘We must make allowances.’

‘I'll not stay in a position where a man who hires me thinks he can talk to me as if I were a foremast hand. Alma, you would despise me if I allowed myself to be kicked around like a dog.’

‘I would love you all the more for being willing to sacrifice something for my sake. I want you here--here with all your love--here with me as long as these summer days last.’ She patted his cheek. ‘Why don't you tell me that you want to stay with me, Boyd? That you will die if we cannot be together? We can see each other here. I can bring Nan Burgess on the bridge with me. Father will not mind then. Let each day take care of itself!’

‘I want to be what you want me to be--to do what you want me to do. But I wish you would tell me to go out into the world and make something of myself. Alma, tell me to go! And wait for me!’

She laid her face against his shoulder and reached for his fingers, endeavoring to pull one of his arms about her. But both of his hands were clutching the rail of the bridge. He resisted.

‘Are you going to be like all the rest? Just money and trouble and worry?’ She stretched up on tiptoe and brushed a kiss across his fog-wet cheek. ‘Are you asleep, my big boy? Yesterday you were awake.’

‘I think I am really awake to-day, and that I was dreaming yesterday. Alma, I cannot sneak behind your father's back to make love to you. I can't do it. I'm going to give up this position. I can't endure it.’

‘I say ‘No!’ I need you.’

‘But--?’

‘I'll not give you up.’

There was something dramatic in her declaration; her demeanor expressed the placid calm of absolute proprietorship. She worked his unwilling fingers free from the rail.

‘I love you because you can forget yourself. Now don't be like all the others.’

He realized that a queer little sting of impatience was pricking him.
The girl did not seem to understand what his manhood was prompting.

?You mustn't be selfish, Boyd!?

She put into words the vague thought which had been troubling him in regard to her attitude; and now that he understood what his thought had been he was incensed by what seemed his own disloyalty. And yet, the girl was asking him to make over his nature!

?I'm afraid it's all wrong. These things never seem to come out right,?
he mourned.

?You are trying to turn the world upside down all at once--and all alone. Don't think so much, you solemn Yankee. Just love!?

He put his arms about her. ?I'm sailing in new waters. I don't seem to know the true course or the right bearings!?

?Let's stay anchored until the fog lifts! Isn't that what sailors usually do??

He confessed it, kissing her when she lifted her tantalizing face from his shoulder.

?Now you'll let the future alone, won't you?? she asked.

?Yes.? But even while he promised he was obliged to face that future.

Julius Marston, at the foot of the ladder, called to his daughter. ?Are you up there?? he demanded, sharply.

?Yes, father.?

?Come down here.?

She gave her lover a hasty caress and obeyed.

Captain Mayo was obliged to listen. Marston, in his anger, showed no consideration for possible eavesdroppers.

?I have told you to stay aft where you belong.?

?Really, father, I don't understand why--?

?Those are my orders! I understand. _You_ don't need to understand. This world is full of cheap fellows who misinterpret actions.?

Captain Mayo grasped the rails of the bridge ladder and did down to the deck without touching his feet to the treads. He appeared before the father and daughter with startling suddenness.

?Mr. Marston, I am leaving my position on board here as soon as you can get another man to take my place.?

?You are, eh??

?Yes, sir.?

?You signed papers for the season. It is not convenient for me to make a change.? Marston spoke with the crispness of a man who had settled the matter.

Captain Mayo was conscious that the girl was trying to attract his gaze, but he kept his eyes resolutely from her face.

?I insist on being relieved.?

?I have no patience with childishness in a man! I found it necessary to reprimand you. You'll probably know your place after this.? He turned away.

?I have decided that I do not belong on this yacht,? stated Mayo, with an emphasis he knew the girl would understand. ?You must get another master!?

?I cannot pick captains out of this fog, and I allow no man to tell me my own business. I shall keep you to your written agreement. Hold yourself in readiness to carry telegrams ashore for me. I take it there is an office here??

?There is, sir,? returned Mayo, stiffly.

The girl, departing, bestowed on him a pretty grimace of triumph, plainly rejoicing because his impetuous resignation had been overruled so autocratically. But Mayo gave a somber return to the raillery of her eyes. He had spoken out to Marston as a man, and had been treated with the contemptuous indifference which would be accorded to a bond-servant. He was wounded by the light manner in which she viewed that affront, even though her own father offered it.

He stood there alone for a time, meditating various rash acts. But under all the tumult of his feelings was the realization that the responsibility for that yacht's discipline and safety rested on his shoulders and he went about his duties. He called two of the crew and ordered the gangway steps down and the port dinghy cleared and lowered. Then he went to the chart-room and sat on a locker and tried to figure out whether he was wonderfully happy or supremely miserable.

Marston promptly closeted himself with his three wise men of business after he went aft. ?We'll frame up those telegrams now and get them off,? he told them. ?I thought I'd better wait until I had worked the bile out of my system. Never try to do sane and safe business when you're angry, gentlemen! I'm afraid those telegrams would not have been exactly coherent if I had written them right after that Bee liner smashed past us.?

?I have been ready to believe that Tucker would come in with us on the

right lay," said one of the associates.

"So did I," agreed Marston. "I have thought all his loud talk has been bluff to beat up a bigger price. But, after what he did to-day! Oh no! He is out to fight and he grabbed his chance to show us! I do not believe a lot of this regular fight talk. But when a man comes up and smashes me between the eyes I begin to suspect his intentions."

"There's no need of dickering with him any longer, Mr. Marston. He made his work as dirty as he could to-day--he has left nothing open to doubt."

"I'm sorry," said another of the group. "Tucker has let himself get ugly."

"So have I," replied Marston, dryly. "And I'm growing senile, too, I'm afraid. I went forward and wasted as much anathema on that skipper of mine as I would use up in putting through a half-million deal with an opposition traffic line. Next thing I know I'll be arguing with, the smoke-stack. But I must confess, gentlemen, that Tucker rather took my breath away to-day. Either he has become absolutely crazy or else he doesn't understand the strength of the combination."

"He hasn't waked up yet. He doesn't know what's against him."

"That may be our fault, in a measure," stated one of the men. "We haven't been able to let men like Tucker in on the full details."

"In business it's the good guesser who wins," declared Marston. "Our merger isn't a thing to be advertised. And if we do any more explaining to Tucker the whole plan _will_ be advertised, you can depend on it. The infernal fool has been holding us up three months, demanding more knowledge--and he can't be trusted. There's only one thing to do, gentlemen! That!" He drove his fist into his palm with significant thud.

"Is the Bee line absolutely essential in our plans?"

"Every line along this coast is essential in making that merger stock an air-tight proposition."

"It's a new line and is not paying dividends."

"Well, for that matter, it's got nothing in that respect on some of the other lines we're salting down in the merger," suggested a member of the party, speaking for the first time.

"I'm afraid you said it then, Thompson! American bottoms seem to be turned into barnacle-gardens," declared the man who had questioned the matter of Tucker's value.

"Gentlemen, just a moment!" Julius Marston leaned forward in his chair. His voice was low. His eyes narrowed. He dominated them by his earnestness. "You have followed me in a number of enterprises, and we have had good luck. But let me tell you that we have ahead of us the

biggest thing yet, and we cannot afford to leave one loose end! Not one, gentlemen! That's why a fool like Tucker doesn't deserve any consideration when he gets in our way. Listen to me! The biggest thing that has ever happened in this world is going to happen. How do I know? I am not sure that I do know. But as I have just told you, the man who guesses right is the winner.? His thin nose was wrinkled, and the strip of beard on his chin bristled. Sometimes men called Marston ?the fox of Wall Street.? He suggested the reason for his nickname as he sat there and squinted at his associates. ?And there's an instinct that helps some men to guess right. Something is going to happen in this world before long that will make millionaires over and over out of men who have invested a few thousands in American bottoms.?

?What will happen?? bluntly inquired one of the men, after a silence.

?I am neither clairvoyant nor crystal-gazer,? said Marston, grimly. ?But I have led you into some good things when my instinct has whispered. I say it's going to happen--and I say no more.?

?To make American bottoms worth while the whole of Europe will have to be busy doing something else with their ships.?

?All right! Then they'll be doing it,? returned Marston.

?It would have to be a war--a big war.?

?Very well! Maybe that's the answer.?

?But there never can be another big war. As a financier you know it.?

?I have made some money by adhering to the hard and fast rules of finance. But I have made the most of my money by turning my back on those rules and listening to my instinct,? was Marston's rejoinder. ?I don't want to over-influence you, gentlemen. I don't care to discuss any further what you may consider to be dreams. I am not predicting a great war in Europe. Common sense argues the other way. But I am going into this ship-merger proposition with every ounce of brains and energy and capital I possess. The man who gets in my way is trying to keep these two hands of mine off millions!? He shook his clenched fists above his head. ?And I'll walk over him, by the gods! whether it's Tucker or anybody else. We have had some good talks on the subject, first and last. I'm starting now to fight and smash opposition. What do you propose to do in the matter, gentlemen??

They were silent for a time, looking at one another, querying without words. Then out of their knowledge of Julius Marston's uncanny abilities, remembering their past successes, came resolve.

?We're in with you to the last dollar,? they assured him, one after the other.

?Very well! You're wise!?

He unlocked a drawer of his desk and secured a code-book. He pressed a

buzzer and the secretary came hurrying from his stateroom.

?We'll open action, gentlemen, with a little long-distance skirmish over the wire.?

He began to dictate his telegrams.

VI ~ AND WE SAILED

O Johnny's gone to Baltimore
To dance upon that sanded floor.
O Johnny's gone for evermore;
I'll never see my John no more!
O Johnny's gone!
What shall I do?
A-way you. H-e-e l-o-o-o!
O Johnny's gone!
What shall I do?
Johnny's gone to Hilo.
--Old Hauling Song.

The taciturn secretary fumbled his way forward and delivered to Captain Mayo a little packet securely bound with tape.

?Orders from Mr. Marston that you take these ashore, yourself. They are important telegrams and he wants them hurried.?

The master called his men to the dinghy, and they rowed him away through the fog. It was a touchy job, picking his way through that murk. He stood up, leaning forward holding to his taut tiller-ropes, and more by ears than his eyes directed his course. A few of the anchored craft, knowing that they were in the harbor roadway, clanged their bells lazily once in a while. Yacht tenders were making their rounds, carrying parties who were paying and returning calls, and these boats were avoiding each other by loud hails. Small objects loomed largely and little sounds were accentuated.

The far voice of an unseen joker announced that he could find his way through the fog all right, but was afraid he had not strength enough to push his boat through it.

But Mayo knew his waters in that harbor, and found his way to the wharf. His real difficulties confronted him at the village telegraph office. The visiting yachtsmen had flooded the place with messages, and the flustered young woman was in a condition nearly resembling hysteria. She was defiantly declaring that she would not accept any more telegrams. Instead of setting at work upon those already filed she was spending her time explaining her limitations to later arrivals.

Captain Mayo stood at one side and looked on for a few moments. A gentle nudge on his elbow called his attention to an elderly man with stringy

whiskers, who thus solicited his notice. The man held a folded paper gingerly by one corner, exhibiting profound respect for his minute burden.

"You ain't one of these yachting dudes--you're a skipper, ain't you?" asked the man.

"Yes, sir."

"Well, then, I can talk to you, as one officer to another--and glad to meet one of my own breed. I'm first mate of the schooner _Polly_. Mr. Speed is my name."

Captain Mayo nodded.

"And I need help and advice. This is the first tele-graft I ever had in my hands. I'd rather be aholt of an iced halyard in a no'easter! I've been sent ashore to telegraft it, and now she says she won't stick it onto the wire, however it is they do the blasted trick."

Captain Mayo had already noticed that the messengers from the yachts were killing time by teasing the flustered young woman; it was good-humored badinage, but it was effectively blocking progress at that end of the line.

He felt a "native's" instinctive impulse to go to the relief of the young woman who was being baited by the merrymakers; the responsibility of his own errand prompted him to help her clear decks. But he waited, hoping that the yachtsmen would go about their business.

"From the _Polly_, Mr. Speed?" he inquired, amiably. "Is the Polly in the harbor? I didn't notice her in the fog."

"Reckon you know her, by the way you speak of her," replied the gratified Mr. Speed.

"I ought to, sir. She was built at Mayoport by my great-grandfather before the Mayo yards began to turn out ships."

"Well, I swanny! Be you a Mayo?"

The captain bowed and smiled at the enthusiasm displayed by Mr. Speed.

"By ginger! that sort of puts you right into _our_ fambly, so to speak!"

The mate surveyed him with interest and with increasing confidence. "I'm in a mess, Cap'n Mayo, and I need advice and comfort, I reckon. I was headed on a straight tack toward my regular duty, and all of a sudden I found myself jibed and in stays, and I'm there now and drifting. Seeing that your folks built the _Polly_, I consider that you're in the fambly, and that Proverdunce put you right here to-night in this telegraft office. Do you know Cap'n Epps Candage?"

Mayo shook his head.

?Or his girl, Polly, named for the _Polly?_?

?No, I must confess.?

?Well, it may be just as well for ye that ye don't,? said Oakum Otie, twisting his straggly beard into a spill and blinking nervously. ?There I was, headed straight and keeping true course, and then she looked at me and there was a tremble in her voice and tears in her eyes--and the next thing I knowed I was here in this telegraft place with this!? He held up the folded paper and his hand shook.

Captain Mayo did not understand, and therefore he made no remarks.

?There was a song old Ephrum Wack used to sing,? went on Mr. Speed, getting more confidential and making sure that the other men in the room were too much occupied to listen. ?Chorus went:

?I ain't afeard of the raging sea,
Nor critters that's in it, whatever they be.
But a witch of a woman is what skeers me!

?There I've been, standing by Cap'n Epps in the whole dingdo, and she got me one side and looked at me and says a few things with a quiver in her voice and her eyes all wet and shiny and?--he paused and looked down at the paper with bewilderment that was rather pitiful--?and I walked right over all common sense and shipboard rules and discipline and everything and came here, fetchin' this to be stuck on to the wire, or whatever they do with telegrafts. But,? he added, a waver in his tones, ?she is so lord-awful pretty, I couldn't help it!?

Still did Captain Mayo refrain from comment or question.

?The question now is, had I ought to,? demanded Mr. Speed. ?I'm taking you into the fambly on my own responsibility. You're a captain, you're a native, and I need good advice. Had I ought to??

?I'm afraid you'll have to excuse me, sir. The matter seems to be private, and, furthermore, I don't know what you're talking about.?

?She says it's to the milliner so that the milliner will hold the job open. But I'm suspicioning that it's roundabout to the beau that's in love with her. That's the style of women. Cap'n Epps shanghaied her to get her away from that fellow. Now she has got it worked around so that she is going back. But there's a beau in it instead of a milliner. She wouldn't be so anxious to get word to a milliner. That's my idee, and I reckon it's yours, too.?

?I really have no ideas on the subject,? returned Captain Mayo. ?But if you have promised a young lady to send a telegram for her I would certainly keep that promise if I were in your place.?

The next moment he regretted his rather impetuous advice, for Mr. Speed slapped the paper against a hard palm and blurted out: ?That's all I wanted! Course and bearings from an a-number-one adviser. New, how'll I

go to work to send this thing??

?I have been figuring on that matter for the last few minutes, myself,?
acknowledged the captain. ?It's about time to have a little action in
this place.?

He was obliged to elbow his way through the group of men who surrounded
the telegraph operator. Oakum Otie followed on his heels, resolved to
study at close range the mystery of telegraphing, realizing what he
needed for his own instruction.

?These telegrams are important and they must go at once, madam,? Mayo
informed the flustered young woman.

?I can't send them. I am bothered so much I can't do anything,? she
stammered.

?Oh, forget your business, skipper,? advised one of the party.

?It is not my business, sir.? He laid the packet of messages before the
operator on her little counter and tapped his finger on them. ?They must
go,? he repeated.

?In their turn,? warned the yachtsman, showing that he resented this
intrusion. ?And after the party is over!?

?I intended to confine my conversation to this young lady,? said Mayo.
He turned and faced them. ?But I have been here long enough to see that
you gentlemen are interfering with the business of this office. Perhaps
your messages are not important. Mine are.?

The yachtsman was not sober nor was he judicious. ?Go back to your job,
young fellow,? he advised. ?You are horning in among gentlemen.?

?So am I,? squawked Mr. Speed, with weather eye out for clouds of any
sort.

Captain Mayo gave his supporter a glance of mingled astonishment and
relish. ?We'd better not have any words about the matter, gentlemen,"
he suggested, mildly.

?Certainly not,? stated the spokesman. ?If you'll pass on there'll be no
words--or anything else.?

?Then we'll dispense with words!? The quick anger of youth flared in
Mayo. The air of the man rather than his words had offended deeply.
?You'd like to have this room to yourself so that you can attend to your
business, I presume?? he asked the operator.

?Yes, I would.?

Oakum Otie laid his folded paper upon the packet of Captain Mayo.

?You will leave the room gentlemen,? advised the captain.

Mr. Speed thrust out his bony elbows and cracked his hard fists together. "I have never liked dudes," he stated. "I have been brought up that way. All my training with Cap'n Epps has been that way."

"How do you fit into this thing?" demanded one of the yachtsmen.

"About like this," averred Mr. Speed. He grabbed the young man by both shoulders and ran him out into the night before anybody could interfere. Then Mr. Speed reappeared promptly and inquired, "Which one goes next?"

"I think they will all go," said the captain.

"Come on," urged one of the party. "We can't afford to get into a brawl with natives."

"You bet you can't," retorted Oakum Otie. "I hain't hove bunches of shingles all my life for nothing!"

Mayo said nothing more. But after the yachtsmen had looked him over they went out, making the affair a subject for ridicule.

"Hope I done right and showed to you that I was thankful for good advice," suggested Mr. Speed, seeking commendation.

"Just a bit hasty, sir."

"Maybe, but there's nothing like handing folks a sample just to show up the quality of the whole piece."

"I thank you--both of you," said the grateful operator.

"You'd better lock your door," advised Mayo. "Men are thoughtless when they have nothing to do except play."

"I am so grateful! And I'm going to break an office rule," volunteered the girl. "I shall send off your telegrams first."

"And I hope you can tuck that little one in second--it won't take up much room!" pleaded Oakum Otie. "It's to help an awful pretty girl--looks are a good deal like yours!"

"I'll attend to it," promised the young woman, blushing.

Outside in the village street Mr. Speed wiped his rough palm against the leg of his trousers and offered his hand to the captain. "I'll have to say good-bye to you here, sir. I've got a little errunting to do--fig o' terbacker and a box of stor'b'ries. I confess to a terrible tooth for stor'b'ries. When the hanker ketches me and I can't get to stor'b'ries my stor'b'ry mark shows up behind my ear. I hope I have done right in sending off that tele-graft for her--but it's too bad that a landlubber beau is going to get such a pretty girl." Then Oakum Otie sighed and melted away into the foggy gloom.

When Captain Mayo was half-way down the harbor, on his way back to the yacht, he was confronted by a spectacle which startled him. The fog was suddenly painted with a ruddy flare which spread high and flamed steadily. His first fears suggested that a vessel was on fire. The _Olenia_ lay in that direction. He commanded his men to pull hard.

When he burst out of the mists into the zone of the illumination his misgivings were allayed, but his curiosity was roused.

A dozen yacht tenders flocked in a flotilla near the stern of a rusty old schooner. All the tenders were burning Coston lights, and from several boats yachtsmen were sending off rockets which striped the pall of fog with bizarre colorings.

The stern of the schooner was well lighted up by the torches, and Mayo saw her name, though he did not need that name to assure him of her identity; she was the venerable _Polly_.

The light which flamed about her, showing up her rig and lines, was weirdly unreal and more than ever did she seem like a ghost ship. The thick curtain of the mist caught up the flare of the torches and reflected it upon her from the skies, and she was limned in fantastic fashion from truck to water-line. Shadows of men in the tenders were thrown against the fog-screen in grotesque outline, and a spirit crew appeared to be toiling in the top-hamper of the old schooner.

Captain Mayo ordered his men to hold water and the tender drifted close to the flotilla. He spied a yacht skipper whom he had known when both were in the coasting trade.

"What's the idea, Duncan?"

His acquaintance grinned. "Serenade for old Epps Candage's girl--handed to her over his head." He pointed upward.

Projecting over the schooner's rail was the convulsed countenance of Captain Candage. Choler seemed to be consuming him. The freakish light painted everything with patterns in arabesque; the captain's face looked like the countenance of a gargoyle.

Mayo, observing with the natural prejudice of a "native," detected mockery in the affair. He had just been present at one exhibition of the convivial humor of larking yachtsmen.

"What's the special excuse for it?" he asked, sourly.

"According to the story, Epps has brought her with him on this trip to break up a courting match."

"Well, does that have anything to do with this performance?"

"Oh, it's only a little spree," confessed the other. "It was planned out on our yacht. Old Epps made himself a mucker to-day by sassing some of the gents of the fleet, and the boys are handing him a little something."

That's all! It's only fun!?

?According to my notion it's the kind of fun that hurts when a girl is concerned, Duncan.?

?Just as serious as ever, eh? Well, my notion is that a little good-natured fun never hurts a pretty girl--and they say this one is some looker! Oh, hold on a minute, Boyd!? The master of the _Olenia_ had turned away and was about to give an order to his oarsmen. ?You ought to stop long enough to hear that new song one of the gents on the _Sunbeam_ has composed for the occasion. It's a corker. I heard 'em rehearsing it on our yacht.?

In spite of his impatient resentment on behalf of the daughter of Epps Candage, Captain Mayo remained. Just then the accredited minstrel of the yachtsmen stood up, balancing himself in a tender. He was clearly revealed by the lights, and was magnified by the aureole of tinted fog which surrounded him. He sang, in waltz time, in a fine tenor:

?Our Polly O,
O'er the sea you go;
Fairer than sunbeam, lovely as moon-gleam,
All of us love thee so!
While the breezes blow
To waft thee, Polly O,
We will be true to thee,
Crossing the blue to thee,
Polly--Polly!
Dear little Polly,
Polly--O-O-O!?

He finished the verse and then raised both arms with the gesture of a choral conductor.

?All together, now, boys!?

They sang with soul and vigor and excellent effect.

Ferocity nearly inarticulate, fury almost apoplectic, were expressed by the face above the weather-worn rail.

?They say that music soothes the savage breast, but it don't look like it in this case,? observed Captain Duncan with a chuckle.

?Clear off away from here, you drunken dudes! I'll have the law on ye! I'll have ye arrested for--for breaking the peace.?

That threat, considering the surroundings, provoked great hilarity.

?Give way all! Here comes a cop!? warned a jeering voice.

?He's walking on the water,? explained another.

?The man must be a fool,? declared Captain Mayo. ?If he'd go below and

shut up, they'd get tired and leave in a few minutes.?

However, Captain Candage seemed to believe that retreat would be greatly to his discredit. He continued to hang over the rail, discharging as complete a line of deep-water oaths as ever passed the quivering lips of a mariner. Therefore the playful yachtsmen were highly entertained and stayed to bait him still further. Every little while they sang the Polly song with fresh gusto, while the enraged skipper fairly danced to it in his mad rage and flung his arms about like a crazy orchestra leader.

Mr. Speed came rowing in his dory, putting out all his strength, splashing his oars. ?My Gawd! Cap'n Mayo,? he gasped, ?I heard 'em hollering 'Oh, Polly!' and I was 'feard she was afire. What's the trouble??

?You'd better get on board, sir, and induce Captain Candage to go below and keep still. He is fast making a complete idiot of himself.?

?I hain't got no influence over him. I ask and implore you to step on board and soothe him down, sir. You can do it. He'll listen to a Mayo.?

?I'd better not try. It's no job for a stranger, Mr. Speed.?

?He'll be heaving that whole deckload of shingles at 'em next!?

?Get his daughter to coax him.?

?He won't listen to her when he's that fussed up!?

?I'm sorry! Give way men!?

His rowers dropped their oars into the water and pulled away with evident reluctance.

?Better stay and see it out,? advised Captain Duncan.

?I don't care much for your show,? stated Mayo, curtly.

The cabin curtains were drawn on the _Olenia_, and he felt especially shut away from human companionship. He went forward and paced up and down the deck, turning over his troubled affairs in his mind, but making poor shift in his efforts to set anything in its right place.

There were no indications that the serenading yachtsmen were becoming tired of their method of killing time during a fog-bound evening. They had secured banjos and mandolins, and were singing the Polly song with better effect and greater relish. And continually the hoarse voice of the _Polly's_ master roared forth malediction, twisted into new forms of profanity.

But Captain Mayo, pacing under the damp gleam of the riding-light, paid but little heed to the hullabaloo. He was too thoroughly absorbed in his own troubles to feel special interest in what his neighbors were doing. He did not even note that a fog-sodden breeze had begun to puff

spasmodically from the east and that the mists were shredding overhead.

However, all of a sudden, a sound forced itself on his attention; he heard the chuckling of sheaves and knew that a sail was being hoisted. The low-lying stratum of fog was still thick, and he could not perceive the identity of the craft which proposed to take advantage of the sluggish breeze. The 'ruckle-ruckle' of the blocks sounded at quick intervals and indicated haste; there was a suggestion of vicious determination on the part of the men who were tugging at the halyards. Then Captain Mayo heard the steady clanking of capstan pawls. He knew the methods of the Apple-treers, their cautiousness, and their leisurely habits, and he could scarcely believe that a coasting skipper was intending to leave the harbor that night. But the capstan pawls began to click in staccato, showing that the anchor had been broken out.

Protesting shouts from all about in the gloom greeted that signal.

There was no mistaking the hoarse voice of Captain Candage when it was raised in reply; his tones had become familiar after that evening of malediction.

'Dingdam ye, I know of a way of getting shet of the bunch of ye!'

'Don't try to shift your anchorage!'

'Anchorage be hossified! I'm going to sea!' bellowed the master of the _Polly_.

'Down with that hook of yours! You'll rake this whole yacht fleet with your old dumpcart!'

'You have driv' me to it! Now you can take your chances!'

The next moment Mayo heard the ripping of tackle and a crash.

'There go two tenders and our boat-boom! Confound it, man, drop your hook!'

But from that moment Captain Candage, as far as his mouth was concerned, preserved ominous silence. The splintery speech of havoc was more eloquent.

Mayo could not see, but he understood in detail what damage was wrought upon the delicate fabric of yachts by that unwieldy old tub of a schooner. Here, another boat-boom carried away, as she sluggishly thrust her bulk out through the fleet; there an enameled hull raked by her rusty chain-plate bolts. Now a tender smashed on the outjutting davits, next a wreck of spidery head-rigging, a jib-boom splintered and a foretopmast dragged down. If Captain Mayo had been in any doubt as to the details of the disasters he would have received full information from the illuminating profanity of the victims.

He knew well enough that Captain Candage was not performing with wilful intent to do all that damage. In what little wind there was the schooner

was not under control. She was drifting until she got enough headway to be steered. In the mean time she was doing what came in her way to do. The _Polly_ had been anchored near the _Olenia_. As soon as her anchor left bottom the schooner drifted up the harbor. Mayo knew, in a few minutes, that Candage was bringing her about. An especial outbreak of smashing signaled that manouver.

Mayo sniffed at the breeze, judged distance and direction, and then he rushed forward and pounded his fist on the forecastle hatch.

?Rout out all hands!? he shouted. ?Rouse up bumpers and tarpaulin!?

With the wind as it was, he realized that the schooner would point up in the _Olenia_'s direction when Candage headed out to sea.

At last Mayo caught a glimpse of her through the fog. His calculation had been correct. Headed his way she was. She was moving so slowly that she was practically unmanageable; her apple-bows hardly stirred a ripple, but with breeze helping the tide-set she was coming irresistibly, paying off gradually and promising to sideswipe the big yacht.

Mayo had a mariner's pride in his craft, and a master's devotion to duty. He did not content himself with merely ordering about the men who came tumbling on deck.

He grabbed a huge bumper away from one of the sailors who seemed uncertain just what to do; he ran forward and thrust it over the rail, leaning far out to see that it was placed properly to take the impact. He was giving more attention to the safety of the _Olenia_ than he was to what the on-coming _Polly_ might do to him.

Under all bowsprits on schooners, to guy the headstays, thrusts downward a short spar, at right angles to the bowsprit; it is called the martingale or dolphin-striker. The amateur riggers who had tinkered with the Polly's gear in makeshift fashion had not troubled to smooth off spikes with which they had repaired the martingale's lower end. Captain Mayo ducked low to dodge a guy, and the spikes hooked themselves neatly into the back of his reefer coat. Mr. Marston had bought excellent and strong cloth for his captain's uniform. The fabric held, the spikes were well set, the _Polly_ did not pause, and, therefore, the master of the _Olenia_ was yanked off his own deck and went along.

All the evening Mayo's collar had been buttoned closely about his neck to keep out the fog-damp, and when he was picked up by the spikes the collar gripped tightly about his throat and against his larynx. His cry for help was only a strangled squawk. His men were scattered along the side of the yacht, trying to protect her, the night was over all, and no one noted the mode of the skipper's departure.

The old schooner scrunched her way past the _Olenia_, roweling the yacht's glossy paint and smearing her with tar and slime. It was as if the rancorous spirit of the unclean had found sudden opportunity to defile the clean.

Then the _Polly_ passed on into the night with clear pathway to the open sea.

VII ~ INTO THE MESS FROM EASTWARD

Farewell to friends, farewell to foes,
Farewell to dear relations.
We're bound across the ocean blue--
Bound for the foreign nations.
Then obey your bo's'n's call,
Walk away with that cat-fall!
And we'll think on those girls when we can no longer stay.
And we'll think on those girls when we're far, far away.
--Unmooring.

For the first few moments, after being snatched up in that fashion, Mayo hung from the dolphin-striker without motion, like a man paralyzed. He was astounded by the suddenness of this abduction. He was afraid to struggle. Momentarily he expected that the fabric would let go and that he would be rolled under the forefoot of the schooner. Then he began to grow faint from lack of breath; he was nearly garroted by his collar. Carefully he raised his hands and set them about a stay above his head and lifted himself so that he might ease his throat from the throttling grip of the collar. He dangled there over the water for some time, feeling that he had not strength enough, after his choking, to lift himself into the chains or to swing to the foot-rope.

He glanced up and saw the figurehead; it seemed to be simpering at him with an irritating smile. There was something of bland triumph in that grin. In the upset of his feelings there was personal and provoking aggravation in the expression of the figurehead. He swore at it as if it were something human. His anger helped him, gave him strength. He began to swing himself, and at last was able to throw a foot over a stay.

He rested for a time and then gave himself another hoist and was able to get astride the bowsprit. He judged that they must be outside the headland of Saturday Cove, because the breeze was stronger and the sea gurgled and showed white threads of foam against the blunt bows. His struggles had consumed more time than he had realized in the dazed condition produced by his choking collar.

He heard the popping of a motor-boat's engine far astern, and was cheered by the prompt conviction that pursuit was on. Therefore, he made haste to get in touch with the _Polly's_ master. He scrambled inboard along the bowsprit and fumbled his way aft over the piles of lumber, obliged to move slowly for fear of pitfalls. Once or twice he shouted, but he received no answer. He perceived three dim figures on the quarter-deck when he arrived there--three men. Captain Candage was stamping to and fro.

‘Who in the devil’s name are _you?’ bawled the old skipper. ‘Get off’m here! This ain’t a passenger-bo’t.’

‘I’ll get off mighty sudden and be glad to,’ retorted Mayo.

‘Well, I’ll be hackmetacked!’ exploded Mr. Speed shoving his face over the wheel. ‘It’s--?’

‘Shut up!’ roared the master. ‘How comes it you’re aboard here as a stowaway?’

‘Don’t talk foolishness,’ snapped Captain Mayo ‘Your old martingale spikes hooked me up. Heave to and let me off!’

‘Heave to it is!’ echoed Oakum Otie, beginning to whirl the tiller.

Captain Candage turned on his mate with the violence of a thunderclap. ‘Gad swigger your pelt, who’s giving off orders aboard here? Hold on your course!’

‘But this is--?’

‘Shut up!’ It was a blast of vocal effort. ‘Hold your course!’

‘And _I_ say, heave to and let that motor-boat take me off,’ insisted Mayo.

Captain Candage leaned close enough to note the yacht skipper’s uniform coat. ‘Who do you think you’re ordering around, you gilt-striped, monkey-doodle dandy?’

‘That motor-boat is coming after me.’

‘Think you’re of all that importance, hey? No, sir! It’s a pack of ‘em chasing me to make me go back into port and be sued and libeled and attached by cheap lawyers.’

‘You ought to be seized and libeled! You had no business ratching out of that harbor in the dark.’

‘Ought to have taken a rising vote of dudes, hey, to find out whether I had the right to h’ist my mudhook or not?’

‘I’m not here to argue. You can do that in court. I tell you to come into the wind and wait for that boat.’

‘You’d better, Cap Candage,’ bleated Oakum Otie. ‘This is--?’

‘Shut up! I’m running my own schooner, Mr. Speed.’

‘But he is one of the--?’

‘I don’t care if he is one of the Apostles. I know my own business. Shut up! Hold her on her course!’

He took two turns along the quarter-deck, squinting up into the night.

‘Look here, Candage, you and I are going to have a lot of trouble with each other if you don't show some common sense. I must get back to my yacht.’

‘Jump overboard and swim back. I ain't preventing. I didn't ask you on board. You can leave when you get ready. But this schooner is bound for New York, they're in a hurry for this lumber, and I ain't stopping at way stations!’ He took another look at the weather, licked his thumb, and held it against the breeze. ‘Sou'west by sou', and let her run! And shut up!’ he commanded his mate.

Mayo grabbed one of the yawl davits and sprang to the rail.

‘We're some bigger than a needle, but so long as the haystack stays thick enough I guess we needn't worry!’ remarked Captain Candage, cocking his ear to listen to the motor-boat's exhaust.

‘Hoi-oi!’ shouted Mayo into the night astern. He knew that men hear indistinctly over the noise of a gasoline-engine, but he had resolved to keep shouting.

‘This way, men! This way with that boat!’

‘Vast heaving on that howl!’ commanded Candage.

But Mayo persisted with all his might. His attention was confined wholly to his efforts, and he was not prepared for the sudden attack from behind. The master of the Polly seized Mayo's legs and yanked him backward to the deck. The young man fell heavily, and his head thumped the planks with violence which flung him into insensibility.

When he opened his eyes he looked up and saw a hanging-lamp that creaked on its gimbals as it swayed to the roll of the schooner. He was in the Polly's cabin. Next he was conscious that he was unable to move. He was seated on the floor, his back against a stanchion, his hands lashed behind him by bonds which confined him to the upright support. But the most uncomfortable feature of his predicament was a marlinespike which was stuck into his mouth like a bit provided for a fractious horse, and was secured by lashings behind his head. He was effectually gagged. Furthermore, the back of his head ached in most acute fashion. He rolled his eyes about and discovered that he had a companion in misery. A very pretty young woman was seated on a camp-chair across the cabin. Her face expressed much sympathy.

He gurgled a wordless appeal for help, and then perceived that she was lashed into her chair.

‘I wish I could take that awful thing out of your mouth, sir.’

He gave her a look which assured her that he shared in her desire.

?My father has tied me into this chair. I tried to make him stop his dreadful talk when the boats came and burned the lights. He put me down here and made a prisoner of me. It is terrible, all that has been happening. I can't understand! I hope you will not think too hard of my father, sir. Honestly, he seems to be out of his right mind.?

He wanted to return some comforting reply to this wistful appeal, but he could only roll his head against the stanchion and make inarticulate sounds.

?He seemed to be very bitter when he brought you below. I could not make him listen to reason. I have been thinking--and perhaps you're the gentleman who led the singing which made him so angry??

Mayo shook his head violently in protest at this suspicion.

?I didn't mind,? she assured him. ?I knew it was only in fun.? She pondered for a few minutes. ?Perhaps they wouldn't have teased one of their city girl friends in that way--but I suppose men must have a good time when they are away from home. Only--it has made it hard for me!? There were tears in her eyes.

Mayo's face grew purple as he tried to speak past the restraining spike and make her understand his sentiments on the subject of that serenade.

?Don't try to talk, sir. I'm so sorry. It is shameful!?

There was silence in the cabin after that for a long time. He looked up at the swinging lamp, his gaze wandered about the homely cabin. But his eyes kept returning to her face. He could not use his tongue, and he tried to tell her by his glances, apologetic little starings, that he was sorry for her in her grief. She met those glances with manifest embarrassment.

After an absence which was prolonged to suit his own sour will in the matter, Captain Candage came stamping stormily down the companionway. He stood between his captives and glowered, first at one and then at the other.

?Both of ye blaming me, I reckon, for what couldn't be helped.?

?Father, listen to me now, if you have any sense left in you,? cried the girl, with passion. ?Take that horrible thing out of that gentleman's mouth.?

?It has come to a pretty pass in this world when an honest man can't carry on his own private business without having to tie up meddlers so as to have a little peace.? He walked close to Mayo and shook a monitory finger under the young man's nose. ?Now, what did ye come on board here for, messing into my affairs??

The indignant captain put forth his best efforts to make suitable retort, but could only emit a series of ?guggles.?

?And now on top of it all I am told by my mate, who never gets around to do anything that ought to be done till it's two days too late, that you are one of the Mayos! Why wasn't I informed? I might have made arrangements to show you some favors. I might have hove to and taken a chance, considering who you was. And now it's too late. Everybody seems to be ready to impose on me!?

Again Mayo tried to speak.

?Why don't you shut up that gobbling and talk sense?? shouted the irate skipper, with maddening disregard of the captive's predicament.

?Father, are you completely crazy? You haven't taken that spike out of his mouth.?

?Expect a man to remember everything when he is all wrapped in his own business and everybody trying to meddle with it?? grumbled Candage. He fumbled in his pocket and produced a knife. He slashed away the rope yarn which lashed the marlinespike. ?If you can talk sense I'll help you do it! I reckon you can holler all you want to now. Them dudes can't find their own mouths in a fog, much less this schooner. Now talk up!?

Mayo worked his aching jaws and found his voice. ?You know how I happened to get aboard, Captain Candage. I am skipper of the _Olenia_. Put back with me if you want to save trouble.?

?Not by a tin hoopus, sir! I ain't going about and tackle them reefs in this fog. I've got open sea ahead, and I shall keep going!?

Mayo was a sailor who knew that coast, and he admitted to himself that Candage's stubbornness was justified.

?I ain't responsible for your getting aboard here. I'll land you as soon as I can--and that covers the law, sir.?

During a prolonged silence the two men stared at each other.

?At any rate, Captain Candage, I trust you will not consider that you have a right to keep me tied up here any longer.?

?Now that there's a better understanding about who is boss aboard here, I don't know as I'm afraid to have you at large,? admitted the skipper. ?I only warn you to remember your manners and don't forget that I'm captain.?

He flourished his clasp-knife and bent and cut the lashings. Then he strode across the cabin and performed like service for his daughter.

?I reckon I can afford to have _you_ loose, too, now that you can't tell me my business in front of a lot of skylarkers throwing kisses right and left!?

?Father! Oh, oh!? She put her hands to her face.

Captain Candage seemed to be having some trouble in keeping up his rôle of a bucko shipmaster; he shifted his eyes from Mayo's scowl and surveyed his daughter with uncertainty while he scratched his ear.

"When a man ain't boss on his own schooner he might as well stop going to sea," he muttered. "Some folks knows it's the truth, being in a position to know, and others has to be showed!" He went stamping up the companionway into the night.

Captain Mayo waited, for some minutes. The girl did not lift her head.

"About that--What he said about--You understand! I know better!" he faltered.

"Thank you, sir," she said, gratefully, still hiding her face from him.

"Men sometimes do very foolish things."

"I didn't know my father could be like this."

"I was thinking about the men who came and annoyed him. I can understand how he felt, because I am 'a 'native' myself."

"I thought you were from outside."

"My name is Boyd Mayo. I'm from Mayoport."

She looked up at him with frank interest.

"My folks built this schooner," he stated, with modest pride.

"I'm Polly Candage--I'm named for it."

"It's too bad!" he blurted. "I don't mean to say but what the name is all right," he explained, awkwardly, "but I don't think that either of us is particularly proud of this old hooker right at the present moment." He went across the cabin and sat down on a transom and, tested the bump on the back of his head with cautious palm.

She did not reply, and he set his elbows on his knees and proceeded to nurse his private grouch in silence, quite excluding his companion from his thoughts. Now that he had been snatched so summarily from his hateful position on board the _Olenia_, his desire to leave her was not so keen. After Mayo's declaration to the owner, Marston might readily conclude that his skipper had deserted. His reputation and his license as a shipmaster were in jeopardy, and he had already had a bitter taste of Marston's intolerance of shortcomings. If Marston cared to bother about breaking such a humble citizen, malice had a handy weapon. But most of all was Mayo concerned with the view Alma Marston would take of the situation. She would either believe that he had fallen overboard in the skirmish with the attacking Polly or had deserted without warning--and in the case of a lover both suppositions were agonizing. His distress was so apparent that the girl, from her seat on the opposite transom, extended sympathy in the glances she dared to give

him.

"How did you tear your coat so badly in the back?" she ventured at last.

"Spikes your excellent father left sticking out of his martingale," he said, a sort of boyish resentment in his tones.

"Then it is only right that I should offer to mend it for you."

She hurried to a locker, as if glad of an excuse to occupy herself. She produced her little sewing-basket and then came to him and held out her hand.

"Take it off, please."

"You needn't trouble," he expostulated, still gruff.

"I insist. Please let me do a little something to make up for the _Polly's_ naughtiness."

"It will be all right until I can get ashore--and perhaps I'll never have need to wear the coat again, anyway."

"Won't you allow me to be doing something that will take my mind off my troubles, sir?" Then she snapped her finger into her palm and there was a spirit of matronly command in her voice, in spite of her youth. "I insist, I say! Take off your coat."

He obeyed, a little grin crinkling at the corners of his mouth--a flicker of light in his general gloom. After he had placed the coat in her hands he sat down on the transom and watched her busy fingers. She worked deftly. She closed in the rents and then darned the raveled places with bits of the thread pulled from the coat itself.

"You are making it look almost as good as new."

"A country girl must know how to patch and darn. The folks in the country haven't as many things to throw away as the city folks have."

"But that--what you are doing--that's real art."

"My aunt does dressmaking and I have helped her. And lately I have been working in a millinery-shop. Any girl ought to know how to use her needle."

He remembered what Mr. Speed had said about the reason for her presence on the _Polly_. He cast a disparaging glance around the bare cabin and decided in his mind that Mr. Speed had reported truthfully and with full knowledge of the facts. Surely no girl would choose that sort of thing for a summer vacation.

She bent her head lower over her work and he was conscious of warmer sympathy for her; their troubled affairs of the heart were in similar plight. He felt an impulse to say something to console her and knew that

he would welcome understanding and consolation from her; promptly he was afraid of his own tongue, and set curb upon all speech.

“A man never knows how far he may go in making fool talk when he gets started,” he reflected. “Feeling the way I do to-night, I'd better keep the conversation kedge well hooked.”

Now that her hands were busy, she did not find the silence embarrassing. Mayo returned to his ugly meditations.

After a time he was obliged to shift himself on the transom. The schooner was heeling in a manner which showed the thrust of wind. He glanced up and saw that the rain was smearing broad splashes on the dingy glass of the windows. The companion hatch was open, and when he cocked his ear, with mariner's interest in weather, he heard the wind gasping in the open space with a queer “guffle” in its tone.

Instinctively he began to look about the cabin for a barometer.

Already that day the “Olenia's” glass had warned him by its downward tendency. He wondered whether further reading would indicate something more ominous than fog.

Across the cabin he noted some sort of an instrument swinging from a hook on a carline. He investigated. It was a makeshift barometer, the advertising gift of a yeast company. The contents of its tube were roiled to the height of the mark which was lettered “Tornado.”

“You can't tell nothing from that!” Captain Candage had come down into the cabin and stood behind his involuntary guest. “It has registered 'Tornado' ever since the glass got cracked. And even at that, it's about as reliable as any of the rest of them tinkerdiddle things.”

“Haven't you a regular barometer--an aneroid?” inquired Captain Mayo.

“I can smell all the weather I need to without bothering with one of them contrivances,” declared the master of the schooner, in lordly manner. He began to pull dirty oilskins out of a locker.

Mayo hurried up the companionway and put out his head. There were both weight and menace in the wind which hooted past his ears. The fog was gone, but the night was black, without glimmer of stars. The white crests of the waves which galloped alongside flaked the darkness with ominous signalings.

“If you can smell weather, Captain Candage, your nose ought to tell you that this promises to be something pretty nasty.”

“Oh, it might be called nasty by lubbers on a gingerbread yacht, but I have sailed the seas in my day and season, and I don't run for an inshore puddle every time the wind whickers a little.” He was fumbling with a button under his crisp roll of chin beard and gave the other man a stare of superiority.

?You don't class me with yacht-lubbers, do you??

?Well, you was just on a yacht, wasn't you??

?Look here, Captain Candage, you may just as well understand, now and here, that I'm one of your kind of sailors. Excuse me for personal talk, but I want to inform you that from fifteen to twenty I was a Grand-Banksman. Last season I was captain of the beam trawler _Laura and Marion_. And I have steamboated in the Sound and have been a first mate in the hard-pine trade in Southern waters. I have had a chance to find out more or less about weather.?

?Un-huh!? remarked the skipper, feigning indifference. ?What about it??

?I tell you that you have no business running out into this mess that is making from east'ard.?

?If you have been so much and so mighty in your time, then you understand that a captain takes orders from nobody when he's on board his own vessel.?

?I understand perfectly well, sir. I'm not giving orders. But my own life is worth something to me and I have a right to tell you that you are taking foolhardy chances. And you know it, too!?

Captain Candage's gaze shifted. He was a coaster and he was naturally cautious, as Apple-treers are obliged to be. He knew perfectly well that he was in the presence of a man who knew! He had not the assurance to dispute that man, though his general grudge against all the world at that moment prompted him.

?I got out because they drove me out,? he growled.

?A man can't afford to be childish when he is in command of a vessel, sir. You are too old a skipper to deny that.?

?I was so mad I didn't stop to smell weather,? admitted the master, bracing himself to meet a fresh list of the heeling _Polly_. He evidently felt that he ought to defend his own sagacity and absolve himself from mariner's culpability.

?Very well! Let it go at that! But what are you going to do??

?I can't beat back to Saturday Cove against this wind--not now! She would rack her blamed old butts out.?

?Then run her for Lumbo Reach. You can quarter a following sea. She ought to ride fairly easy.?

?That's a narrow stab in a night as black as this one is.?

?I'll make a cross-bearing for you. Where's your chart?? Mayo exhibited a sailor's alert anxiety to be helpful.

?I 'ain't ever needed a chart--not for this coast.?

?Then I'll have to guess at it, sir.? He closed his eyes in order to concentrate. ?You gave a course of sou'west by sou'. Let's see--it was nine-fifteen when I just looked and we must have logged--?

?It ain't no use to stab for such a hole in the wall as Lumbo Reach,? declared Candage in discouraged tones.

?But you've got your compass and I can--?

?There ain't no depending on my compass within two points and a half.?

?Confound it, I can make allowance, sir, if you'll tell me your deviation!?

?But it's a card compass and spins so bad in a seaway there ain't no telling, anyway. In my coasting I haven't had to be particular.?

?Not as long as you had an apple-tree in sight,? jeered Mayo, beginning to lose his temper.

?I don't dare to run in the direction of anything that is solid--we'll hit it sure, 'n' hell-fire will toast corn bread. We've got to stay to sea!?

Captain Mayo set his teeth and clenched his fists and took a few turns up and down the cabin. He looked up into the night through the open hatch of the companion-way. The pale glimmer of the swinging lamp tossed a mild flare against the blackness and lighted two faces which were limned against that pall. Both Oakum Otie and Smut-nosed Dolph were at the wheel. Their united strength was needed because the schooner was yawing madly every now and then when the mightier surges of the frothing sea hoisted her counter, chasing behind her like wild horses. Those faces, when Mayo looked on them, were very solemn. The two were crouching like men who were anxious to hide from a savage beast. They grunted as they struggled with the wheel, trying to hold her up when the _Polly_ tobogganed with rushes that were almost breath-checking.

Mayo hastened to the girl. ?I must have my coat, Miss Candage. I thank you. It will do now.?

She held it open for his arms, as a maid might aid her knight with his armor. ?Are we in danger?? she asked, tremulously.

?I hope not--only it is uncomfortable--and needless,? he said, with some irritation.

?Must I stay down here--alone??

?I would! It's only a summer blow, Miss Candage. I'm sure we'll be all right.?

Captain Candage had gone on deck, rattling away in his stiff oilskins.

Mayo followed, but the master came down a few steps into the companionway and intercepted the volunteer, showing a final smolder of his surliness.

"I want to notify you that I can run my own boat, sir!"

"Yes, run it with a yeast barometer, a straw bottom, a pinwheel compass, and your general cussedness of disposition," shouted Mayo into the whirl of the wind, his anxiety whetting his much-tried temper.

"If you're feeling that way, I don't want you up here."

"I'm feeling worse than you'll ever understand, you stubborn old fool!"

"I let one man call me a fool to-day and I didn't make back talk--but I know where to draw the line," warned Candage.

"Look here, I propose to start in with you right now, sir, on a basis you'll understand! I say you're a fool and need a guardian--and from now on I'm going to make my bigness aboard here! Get out of my way!"

Captain Mayo then emphasized his opinion of Captain Candage by elbowing the master to one side and leaping out on deck.

"That may be mutiny," stated Mr. Speed through set teeth, checking the startled exclamation from his helper at the wheel. "But, by the Judas I-scarrot, it's a Mayo that's doing it! Remember that, Dolph!"

VIII ~ LIKE BUGS UNDER A THIMBLE

Up comes the skipper from down below,
And he looks aloft and he looks alow.
And he looks alow and he looks aloft,
And it's, "Coil up your ropes, there, fore and aft."
 With a big Bow-wow!
 Tow-row-row!
Fal de rai de, ri do day!
 --Boston Shanty.

Captain Mayo strode straight to the men at the wheel. "Give me those spokes!" he commanded. "I'll take her! Get in your washing, boys!"

"Ay, ay, sir!" assented Mr. Speed, giving the resisting Dolph a violent shove.

When Captain Candage began to curse, Captain Mayo showed that he had a voice and vocabulary of his own. He fairly roared down the master of the _Polly_.

"Now shut up!" he ordered the dumfounded skipper, who faced him, mouth

agape. "This is no time for any more foolishness. It's a case of work together to save our lives. Down with 'em, boys!"

"That's right," declared the mate. "She don't need much of anything on her except a double-reefed mitten with the thumb brailed up."

The wind had not attained the velocity of a gale, but it did have an ugly growl which suggested further violence. Mayo braced himself, ready to bring the schooner about in order to give the crew an opportunity to shorten sail.

Captain Candage, deposed as autocrat for the moment, seemed to be uncertain as to his duties.

Mayo, understanding mariner nature, felt some contrition and was prompted by saner second thought.

"You'd better take the wheel, Captain Candage. You know her tricks better than I do in a seaway. I'll help the boys take in sail."

The master obeyed with alacrity. He seemed to be cowed. Anger no longer blinded him to their predicament.

"Just say what you want done, and I'll try to do it," he told Mayo, in a voice which had become suddenly mild and rather beseeching. Then he called to his daughter, who had come to the foot of the companion steps, "Better blow out that cabin light, Polly girl! She's li'ble to dance bad, and we don't want to run the chance of fire."

Mayo got a glimpse at her face as he hurried upon the house on his way to the main halyards. Her face was pale, but there was the firm spirit of her Yankee ancestry of the sea in her poise and in her very silence in that crisis. She obeyed without complaint or question and the cabin was dark; even the glimmer of the light had held something of cheer. Now the gloom was somber and depressing.

The schooner came round with a sort of scared hurry when the master threw the wheel hard over and trod on the spokes with all his weight. As soon as the bellying mainsail began to flap, the three men let it go on the run. They kept up the jumbo sail, as the main jib is called; they reefed the foresail down to its smallest compass.

Mayo, young, nimble, and eager, singly knotted more reef points than both his helpers together, and his crisp commands were obeyed unquestioningly.

"He sartinly is chain lightning in pants," confided Dolph to Otie.

"He knows his card," said Otie to Dolph.

Captain Mayo led the way aft, crawling over the shingles and laths.

"I hope it's your judgment, sir, that we'd better keep her into the wind as she is and try to ride this thing out," he suggested to the master.

"It is my judgment, sir," returned Captain Candage, with official gravity.

Hove to, the old Polly rode in fairly comfortable style. She was deep with her load of lumber, but the lumber made her buoyant and she lifted easily. Her breadth of beam helped to steady her in the sweeping seas--but Captain Mayo clung to a mainstay and faced the wind and the driving rain and knew that the open Atlantic was no place for the Polly on a night like that.

Spume from the crested breakers at her wallowing bow salted the rain on his dripping face. It was an unseasonable tempest, scarcely to be looked for at that time of year. But he had had frequent experience with the vagaries of easterlies, and he knew that a summer easterly, when it comes, holds menacing possibilities.

"They knowed how to build schooners when your old sirs built this one at Mayoport," declared Captain Candage, trying to put a conciliatory tone into his voice when he bellowed against the blast. "She'll live where one of these fancy yachts of twice her size would be smothered."

Mayo did not answer. He leaped upon the house and helped Dolph and Otie furl the mainsail that lay sprawled in the lazy-jaeks. They took their time; the more imminent danger seemed to be over.

"I never knowed a summer blow to amount to much," observed Mr. Speed, trying to perk up, though he was hanging on by both hands to avoid being blown off the slippery house.

"It depends on whether there's an extra special squall knotted into it somewhere to windward," said Mayo, in a lull of the wind. "Then it can amount to a devil of a lot, Mr. Speed!"

The schooner washed her nose in a curving billow that came inboard and swept aft. With her small area of exposed sail and with the wind buffeting her, she had halted and paid off, lacking steerageway. She got several wallops of the same sort before she had gathered herself enough to head into the wind.

Again she paid off, as if trying to avoid a volleying gust, and another wave crested itself ahead of the blunt bows and then seemed to explode, dropping tons of water on deck. Laths, lumber, and bunches of shingles were ripped loose and went into the sea. The Polly appeared to be showing sagacity of her own in that crisis; she was jettisoning cargo for her own salvation.

"Good Cephas! this is going to lose us our decklo'd," wailed the master. "We'd better let her run!" "Don't you do it, sir! You'll never get her about!" Mayo had given over his work on the sail and was listening. Above the scream of the passing gusts which assailed him he was hearing a dull and solemn roar to windward. He suspected what that sound indicated. He had heard it before in his experience. He tried to peer into the driving storm, dragging the rain from his eyes with his

fingers. Then nature held a torch for him. A vivid shaft of lightning crinkled overhead and spread a broad flare of illumination across the sea. His suspicions, which had been stirred by that sullen roar, were now verified. He saw a low wall of white water, rolling and frothing. It was a summer ?spitter? trampling the waves.

A spitter is a freak in a regular tempest--a midsummer madness of weather upheaval. It is a thunderbolt of wind, a concentration of gale, a whirling dervish of disaster--wind compactly bunched into one almighty blast--wind enough to last a regular gale for a whole day if the stock were spent thriftily.

?Don't ease her an inch!/? screamed Mayo.

But just then another surging sea climbed aboard and picked up more of the laths and more of the shingles, and frolicked away into the night with the plunder. Captain Candage's sense of thrift got a more vital jab than did his sense of fear. His eyes were on his wheel, and he had not seen the wall of white spume.

?That decklo'd has got to be lashed,/? he muttered. He decided to run with the wind till that work could be performed. He threw his helm hard over. Mayo had been riding the main boom astraddle, hitching himself toward the captain, to make him hear. When the volunteer saw the master of the _Polly_ trying to turn tail to the foe in that fashion, he leaped to the wheel, but he was too late. The schooner had paid off too much. The yelling spitter caught them as they were poised broadside on the top of a wave, before the sluggish craft had made her full turn.

What happened then might have served as confirmation of mariners' superstition that a veritable demon reigns in the heart of the tempest. The attack on the old _Polly_ showed devilish intelligence in team-work. A crashing curler took advantage of the loosened deckload and smashed the schooner a longside buffet which sent all the lumber in a sliding drive against the lee rail and rigging. The mainsail had been only partly secured; the spitter blew into the flapping canvas with all its force and the sail snapped free and bellied out.

The next instant the _Polly_ was tripped!

She went over with all the helpless, dead-weight violence of a man who has caught his toe on a drooping clothes line in the dark.

The four men who were on deck were sailors and they did not need orders when they felt that soul-sickening swing of her as she toppled. Instinctively, with one accord, they dived for the cabin companionway.

Undoubtedly, as a sailor, the first thought of each was that the schooner was going on to her beam-ends. Therefore, to remain on deck meant that they would either slide into the water or that a smashing wave would carry them off.

They went tumbling down together in the darkness, and all four of them, with impulse of preservation as instant and true as that of the

trap-door spider, set their hands to the closing of the hatch and the folding leaves of the door.

Captain Mayo, his clutch still on a knob, found himself pulled under water without understanding at first just what had happened. He let go his grip and came up to the surface, spouting. He heard the girl shriek in extremity of terror, so near him that her breath swept his face. He put out his arm and caught her while he was floundering for a footing. When he found something on which to stand and had steadied himself, he could not comprehend just what had happened; the floor he was standing on had queer irregularities.

'We've gone over!' squalled Mr. Speed in the black darkness. 'We've gone clear over. We're upside down. We're standing on the ceiling!'

Then Mayo trod about a bit and convinced himself that the irregularities under his feet were the beams and carlines.

The _Polly_ had been tripped in good earnest! Mr. Speed was right--she was squarely upside down!

Even in that moment of stress Mayo could figure out how it had happened. The spitter must have ripped all her rotten canvas off her spars as she rolled and there had been no brace to hold her on her beam-ends when she went over.

Captain Candage was spouting, splashing near at hand, and was bellowing his fears. Then he began to call for his daughter in piteous fashion.

'Are you drowned, Polly darling?' he shouted.

'I have her safe, sir,' Mayo assured him in husky tones, trying to clear the water from his throat. 'Stand on a beam. You can get half of your body above water.'

'It's all off with us,' gasped the master. 'We're spoke for.'

Such utter and impenetrable blackness Mayo had never experienced before. Their voices boomed dully, as if they were in a huge hogshead which had been headed over.

'Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep,' quavered the cook. 'If anybody knows a better prayer I wish he'd say it.'

'Plumb over--upside down! Worse off than flies in a puddle of Porty Reek molasses,' mourned Mr. Speed.

The master joined the mate in lamentation. 'I have brought my baby to this! I have brought my Polly here! God forgive me. Can't you speak to me, Polly?'

Mayo found the girl very quiet in the hook of his arm, and he put his free hand against her cheek. She did not move under his touch.

?She has fainted, sir.?

?No, she's dead! She's dead!? Candage began to weep and started to splash his way across the cabin, directed by Mayo's voice.

?She is all right--she is breathing,? the young man assured the father. ?Here! This way, captain! Take her. Hold her up. I want to see whether anything can be done for us.?

?Nothing can be done!?! whimpered Candage. ?We're goners.?

?We're goners,? averred Oakum Otie.

?We're goners,? echoed Dolph.

Mayo gave the girl into the groping arms of her father and stood for a few moments reflecting on their desperate plight. He was not hopeful. In his heart he agreed with the convictions which his mates were expressing in childish falsetto. But being a young sailor who found his head above water, he resolved to keep on battling in that emergency; the adage of the coastwise mariner is: ?Don't die till Davy Jones sets his final pinch on your weasen!?

First of all, he gave full consideration to what had happened. The _Polly_ had been whipped over so quickly that she had been transformed into a sort of diving-bell.{*} That is to say, a considerable amount of air had been captured and was now retained in her. It was compressed by the water which was forced up from below through the windows and the shattered skylight. The pressure on Mayo's temples afforded him information on this point. The _Polly_ was floating, and he felt comforting confidence that she would continue to float for some time. But this prospect did not insure safety or promise life to the unfortunates who had been trapped in her bowels. The air must either escape gradually or become vitiated as they breathed it.

* The strange adventure of the _Polly_ is not an improbability of fiction. A Bath, Maine, schooner, lumber-laden, was tripped in exactly this fashion off Hatteras. Captain Boyd Mayo's exploit has been paralleled in real life in all details. My good friend Captain Elliott C. Gardner, former skipper of the world's only seven-master, the _Thomas W. Lawson_, furnished those details to me, and after writing this part of the tale I submitted the narrative to him for confirmation. It has received his indorsement.--H. D.

There was only one thing to do, he decided: take advantage of any period of truce which their ancient enemy, the sea, had allowed in that desperate battle.

A sailor is prey to hazards and victim of the unexpected in the ever-changing moods of the ocean; he must needs be master of expedients and ready grappler of emergencies.

?Where are your tools--a saw--a chisel?? demanded Mayo. He was obliged to repeat that query several times. His companions appeared to be wholly absorbed in their personal woes.

At last Mr. Speed checked his groans long enough to state that the tools were in ?the lazaret.?

The lazaret of a coaster is a storeroom under the quarter-deck--repository of general odds and ends and spare equipment.

?Any way to get at it except through the deck-hatch??

?There's a door through, back of the companion ladder,? said Mr. Speed, with listless indifference.

Mayo crowded his way past the ladder after he had waded and stumbled here and there and had located it. He set his shoulders against the slope of the steps and pushed at the door with his feet. After he had forced it open he waded into the storeroom. It was blind business, hunting for anything in that place. He knew the general habits of the hit-or-miss coasting crews, and was sure that the tools had been thrown in among the rest of the clutter by the person who used them last. If they had been loose on the floor they would now be loose on the ceiling. He pushed his feet about, hoping to tread on something that felt like a saw or chisel.

?Ahoy, you men out there!? he called. ?Don't you have any idea in what part of this lazaret the tools were??

?Oh, they was probably just throwed in,? said Mr. Speed. ?I wish you wouldn't bother me so much! I'm trying to compose my mind to pray.?

There were so much ruck and stuff under his feet that Mayo gave up searching after a time. He had held his breath and ducked his head under water so that he might investigate with his bare hands, but he found nothing which would help him, and his brain was dizzy after his efforts and his mouth was choked by the dirty water.

But when he groped his way back into the main cabin his hands came in contact with the inside of the lazaret door. In leather loops on the door he found saw, ax, chisel, and hammer. He was unable to keep back a few hearty and soul-satisfying oaths.

?Why didn't you tell me where the tools were? They're here on the door.?

?I had forgot about picking 'em tip. And my mind ain't on tools, anyway.?

?Your mind will be on 'em as soon as I can get forward there,? growled the incensed captain.

Mayo was not sure of what he needed or what he would be obliged to do, therefore he took all the tools, holding them above water. When he waded past Captain Can-dage he heard the old skipper trying to comfort the

girl, his voice low and broken by sobs. She had recovered consciousness and Mayo was a bit sorry; in her swoon she had not realized their plight; he feared hysterics and other feminine demonstrations, and he knew that he needed all his nerve.

"We're going to die--we're going to die!" the girl kept moaning.

"Yes, my poor baby, and I have brought you to it," blubbered her father.

"Please keep up your courage for a little while, Miss Candage," Mayo pleaded, wistfully.

"But there's no hope!"

"There's hope just as long as we have a little air and a little grit," he insisted. "Now, please!"

"I am afraid!" she whispered.

"So am I," he confessed. "But we're all going to work the best we know how. Can't you encourage us like a brave, good girl?" He went stumbling on. "Now tell me, mate," he commanded, briskly, "how thick is the bulkhead between the cabin, here, and the hold?"

"I can't bother to think," returned Mr. Speed.

"It's only sheathing between the beams, sir," stated Captain Candage.

"Mate, you and the cook lend a hand to help me."

Oakum Otie broke off the prayer to which he had returned promptly. "What's the use?" he demanded, with anger which his fright made juvenile. "I tell you I'm trying to compose my soul, and I want this rampage-round stopped."

"I say what's the use, too!" whined Dolph. "You can't row a biskit across a puddle of molasses with a couple of toothpicks," he added, with cook's metaphor for the absolutely hopeless.

Mayo shouted at them with a violence that made hideous din in that narrow space. "You two men wade across here to me or I'll come after you with an ax in one hand and a hammer in the other! Damn you, I mean business!"

They were silent, then there sounded the splash of water and they came, muttering. They had recognized the ring of desperate resolve in his command.

Mayo, when he heard their stertorous breathing close at hand, groped for them and shoved tools into their clutch. He retained the hammer and chisel for himself.

"That's about all I need you for just now--for tool-racks," he growled. "Make sure you don't drop those."

The upturned schooner rolled sluggishly, and every now and then the water swashed across her cabin with extra impetus, making footing insecure.

"If I tumble down I'll have to drop 'em," whimpered Oolph.

"Then don't come up. Drowning will be an easier death for you," declared the captain, menacingly. He was sounding the bulkhead with his hammer.

The tapping quickly showed him where the upright beams were located on the other side of the sheathing. In his own mind he was not as sanguine as his activity might have indicated. It was blind experiment--he could not estimate the obstacles which were ahead of him. But he did understand, well enough, that if they were to escape they must do so through the bottom of the vessel amidship; there, wallowing though she was, there might be some freeboard. He had seen vessels floating bottom up. Usually a section of the keel and a portion of the garboard streaks were in sight above the sea. But there could be no escape through the bottom of the craft above them where they stood in the cabin. He knew that the counter and buttock must be well under water.

"Have you a full cargo belowdecks?" he asked.

"No," stated Captain Candage, hinting by his tone that he wondered what difference that would make to them in the straits in which they were placed.

Mayo felt a bit of fresh courage. He had been afraid that the "Polly's" hold would be found to be stuffed full of lumber. His rising spirits prompted a little sarcasm.

"How did it ever happen that you didn't plug the trap you set for us?"

"Couldn't get but two-thirds cargo below because the lumber was sawed so long. Made it up by extra deck-load."

"Yes, piled it all on deck so as to make her top-heavy--so as to be sure of catching us," suggested Mayo, beginning to work his hammer and chisel on the sheathing.

"Tain't no such thing!" expostulated Captain Candage, missing the irony. "Them shingles and laths is packet freight, and I couldn't put 'em below because I've got to deliver 'em this side of New York. And you don't expect me to overhaul a whole deck-load so as to--?"

"Not now," broke in Mayo. "The Atlantic Ocean has attended to the case of that deckload."

"My Gawd, yes!" mourned the master. "I was forgetting that we are upside down--and that shows what a state of mind I'm in!"

Mayo had picked his spot for operations. He drove his chisel through the sheathing as close to the cabin floor as he could. Remembering that

the schooner was upside down and that the floor was over his head, the aperture he was starting work on would bring him nearest the bilge. When he had chiseled a hole big enough for a start, he secured the saw from the mate and sawed a square opening. He lifted himself up and worked his way through the hole and found himself on lumber and out of water. It was what he had been hoping to find, after the assurance from the master: the partial cargo of lumber in the hold had settled to the deck when the schooner tipped over. Investigating with groping hands, he assured himself that there were fully three feet of space between the cargo and the bottom of the vessel.

"Come here with your daughter, Captain Candage!" he called, cheerily. "It's dry in here."

He kneeled and held his hands out through the opening, directing them with his voice, reaching into the pitchy darkness until her hands found his, and then he brought her up to him and in upon the lumber.

"It's a little better, even if it's nothing to brag about," he told her. "Sit over there at one side so that the men can crawl in past you. I'll need them to help me."

"And what do you think now--shall we die?" she asked, in tremulous whisper.

"No, I don't think so," he told her, stoutly.

They were alone in the hold for a few moments while the others were helping one another through the opening.

"But in this trap--in the dark--crowded in here!" Her tone did not express doubt; it was pathetic endeavor to understand their plight. "My father and his men are frightened--they have given up. And you told me that you are frightened!"

"Yes, I am!"

"But they are not doing anything to help you."

"Perhaps that is because they are not scared as much as I am. It often happens that the more frightened a man is in a tight place the more he jumps around and the harder he tries to get out."

"I don't care what you say--I know what you are!" she rejoined. "You are a brave man, Captain Mayo. I thank you!"

"Not yet! Not until--"

"Yes, now! You have set me a good example. When folks are scared they should not sit down and whimper!"

He reached and found a plump little fist which she had doubled into a real knob of decision.

"Good work, little girl! Your kind of grit is helping me." He released her hand and crawled forward.

"This ain't helping us any," complained Captain Candage. "I know what's going to happen to us. As soon as it gets daylight a cussed coast-guard cutter will come snorting along and blow us up without bothering to find out what is under this turkle-shell."

"Say, look here, Candage," called Captain Mayo, angrily, "that's enough of that talk! There's a-plenty happening to us as it is, without your infernal driveling about what _may_ happen."

"Isn't it about time for a real man to help Captain Mayo instead of hindering him?" asked the girl. Evidently her new composure startled her father.

"Ain't you scared any more, Polly? You ain't losing your mind, are you?"

"No, I have it back again, I hope."

"Your daughter is setting you a good example, Captain Candage. Now let's get down to business, sir! What's your sheathing on the ribs?"

"Inch and a half spruce, if I remember right."

"I take it she is ribbed about every twelve inches?"

"Near's I remember."

"All right! Swarm forward here, the three of you, and have those tools handy as I need 'em."

He had brought the hammer and chisel in his reefer pockets, and set at work on the sheathing over his head, having picked by touch and sense of locality a section which he considered to be nearly amidship. It was blind effort, but he managed to knock away a few square feet of the spruce boarding after a time.

"Hand me that saw, whoever has it."

A hand came fumbling to his in the dark and gave him the tool. He began on one of the oak ribs, uncovered when the boarding had been removed. It was difficult and tedious work, for he could use only the tip of the saw, because the ribs were so close together. But he toiled on steadily, and at last the sound of his diligence appeared to animate the others. When he rested for a moment Captain Candage offered to help with the sawing.

"I think I'll be obliged to do it alone, sir. You can't tell in the dark where I have left off. However, I'm glad to see that you're coming back to your senses," he added, a bit caustically.

The master of the _Polly_ received that rebuke with a meekness that indicated a decided change of heart. "I reckon me and Otie and Dolph

have been acting out what you might call pretty pussylaminous, as I heard a schoolmarm say once,? confessed the skipper, struggling with the big word. ?But we three ain't as young as we was once, and I'll leave it to you, sir, if this wasn't something that nobody had ever reckoned on.?

?There's considerable novelty in it,? said Mayo, in dry tones, running his fingers over the rib to find the saw-scarf. The ache had gone out of his arms, and he was ready to begin again.

?I'm sorry we yanked you into all this trouble,? Can-dage went on. ?And on the other hand, I ain't so sorry! Because if you hadn't been along with us we'd never have got out of this scrape.?

?We haven't got out of it yet, Captain Candage.?

?Well, we are making an almighty good start, and I want to say here in the hearing of all interested friends that you're the smartest cuss I ever saw afloat.?

?I hope you will forgive father,? pleaded Polly of the _Polly_. He felt her breath on his cheek. She was so near that her voice nearly jumped him. ?I don't mean to get in your way, Captain Mayo, but somehow I feel safer if I'm close to you.?

?And I guess all of us do,? admitted Captain Candage.

Mayo stopped sawing for a moment. ?What say, men? Let's be Yankee sailors from this time on! We'll be the right sort, eh? We'll put this brave little girl where she belongs--on God's solid ground!?

?Amen!? boomed Mr. Speed. ?I have woke up. I must have been out of my mind. I showed you my nature when I first met you, Captain Mayo, and I reckon you found it was helpful and enterprising. I'll be the same from now on, even if you order me to play goat and try to butt the bottom out of her with my head.?

?Me, too!? said Smut-nosed Dolph.

IX ~ A MAN'S JOB

O Nancy Dawson, hi--o!
Cheer'ly man! She's got a notion, hi--o!
Cheer'ly man! For our old bo'sun, hi--o!
Cheer'ly man! O hauley hi--o!
Cheer'ly man!
--Hauling Song.

Boyd Mayo soon found that his ancestors had put no scrub timber into the _Polly_. The old oak rib was tough as well as bulky. The task of sawing with merely the tip of the blade in play required both muscle and patience, and the position he was obliged to assume added to his difficulties. He rested after he had sawed the rib in four places, and decided to give Oakum Otie something to do; the mate had been begging

for an opportunity to grab in. He was ordered to knock away as much as he could of the sawed section with hammer and chisel. Mayo figured that when this section of rib had been removed it would leave room for a hole through the bottom planks at least two feet square--and there were no swelling girths in their party.

The mate had strength, and he was eager to display that helpful spirit of which he had boasted. He went at the beam with all his might.

Mayo's attention had been centered on his task; now, with a moment's leisure in which to note other matters, he was conscious of something which provoked his apprehension; the air under the hull of the schooner was becoming vitiated. His temples throbbed and his ears rang.

"Ain't it getting pretty stuffy in here?" asked the master, putting words to Mayo's thoughts.

"I have been feeling like a bug under a thimble for some little time," stated Otie, whacking his chisel sturdily.

"Her bottom can't be awash with all this lumber in her. If we can only get a little speck of a hole through the outside planking right now, we'd better do it," suggested Candage.

"That's just what I have been doing," declared Mr. Speed. "I'm right after the job, gents, when I get started on a thing. Helpful and enterprising, that's my motto!"

The next moment, before Mayo, his thoughts busy with his new danger of suffocation, could voice warning or had grasped the full import of the dialogue, the chisel's edge plugged through the planking. Instantly there was a hiss like escaping steam. Mayo yelled an oath and set his hands against the mate, pushing him violently away. The industrious Mr. Speed had been devoting his attention to the planking instead of to the sawed beam.

Wan light filtered through the crevice made by the chisel and Mayo planted his palm against the crack. The pressure held his hand as if it were clamped against the planks, and the hissing ceased.

The schooner, as she lay, upside down in the sea, was practically a diving-bell; with that hole in her shell their safety was in jeopardy. The girl seemed to understand the situation before the duller minds of her father and his mates had begun to work. She frenziedly sought for Mayo's disengaged hand and thrust some kind of fabric into it.

"It's from my petticoat," she gasped. "Can you calk with it?"

"Hand me the chisel," he entreated.

As soon as she had given the tool to him he worked his hand free from the crack and instantly drove the fabric into the crevice, crowding it fold by fold with the edge of the chisel.

"Hope I didn't do anything wrong, trying to be helpful," apologized Mr. Speed.

"I'll do the rest of this job without any such help," growled the captain.

"But what are you stopping the air for when it's rushing in to liven us up?" asked Dolph, plaintively.

"It was rushing out, fool! Rushing out so fast that this lumber would have flattened us against the bottom of this hull in a little while."

"I would have figured it just t'other way," stated Mr. Speed, humbly. "Outside air, being fresh, ought nat'rally to rush in to fill the holes we have breathed out of this air."

Mayo was in no mood to lecture on natural phenomena. He investigated the cut which had been made by the incautious mate and estimated, by what his fingers told him, that the schooner's bottom planks were three inches thick. He settled back on his haunches and gave a little thought to the matter, and understood that he had a ticklish job ahead of him. Those planks must be gouged around the complete square of the proposed opening, so that the section might be driven out in one piece by a blow from beneath. That section must give way wholly and instantly. They were doomed if they made a half-job of it. In that pitchy blackness he had only his fingers to guide him. That one little streak of light from the open world without was tantalizing promise. On the other side of those planks was God's limitless air. The poor creatures penned under that hull were gasping and choking for want of that air. Mayo set bravely to work, hammering at the chisel-head above him.

All were silent. They felt the initial languor of suffocation and knew the peril which was threatening them.

"If there is anything I can do--" ventured Otie.

"There isn't!"

Captain Mayo felt the lack of oxygen most cruelly, because he was working with all his might. Perspiration was streaming into his eyes, he was panting like a running dog, his blows were losing force.

He found that Otie had partly cleared out the rib before that too-willing helper had taken it into his head to knock a hole through the planking. The rib must come away entirely! The tough oak resisted; the chisel slipped; it was maddeningly slow work. But he finished the task at last and began to gouge a channel in the planking close to the other ribs. Torpor was wrapping its tentacles about him. He heard his companions gasping for breath. Then, all at once, he felt a little pat on his shoulder. He knew that tap for what it was, though she did not speak to him; it was the girl's reassuring touch. It comforted him to be told in that manner that she was keeping up her courage in the horrible situation. He beveled the planks as deeply as he dared, and made his cut around three sides of his square. He was forced to stop for a moment and

lay prostrate, his face on the lumber.

"Take that saw, one of you, and chunk off a few short lengths of plank," he whispered, hoarsely. The rasp of the hand-saw informed him that he had been obeyed.

He held his eyes wide open with effort as he lay there in the darkness. Then he struggled up and went at his task once more. Queerly colored flames were shooting before his straining eyes. He toiled in partial delirium, and it seemed to him that he was looking again at the phantasmagoria of the Coston lights on the fog when the yachtsmen were serenading the girl of the Polly. He found himself muttering, keeping time to his chisel-blows:

"Our Polly O,
O'er the sea you go--?"

In all the human emotions there is no more maddening and soul-flaying terror than the fear of being shut in, which wise men call claustrophobia. Mayo had been a man of the open--of wide horizons, drinking from the fount of all the air under the heavens. This hideous confinement was demoralizing his reason. He wanted to throw down his hammer and chisel and scream and kick and throw himself up against the penning planks. On the other side was air--the open! There was still one side of the square to do.

Again that comforting little hand touched his shoulder and he was spurred by the thought that the girl was still courageous and had faith in him. He groaned and kept on.

Lapse of time ceased to have significance. Every now and then the hammer slipped and bruised his hand cruelly. But he did not feel the hurt. Both tools wavered in his grasp. He struck a desperate--a despairing blow and the hammer and chisel dropped. He knew that he had finished the fourth side. He fell across Polly Candage's lap and she helped him to his knees.

"I'm done, men," he gasped. "All together with those joists! Strike together! Right above my head."

He heard the skipper count one--two--three. He heard the concerted blow. The planks did not give way.

"We don't seem to have no strength left," explained the mate, in hoarse tones.

They struck again, but irregularly.

"It's our lives--our lives, men!" cried Mayo. "Ram it to her!"

"Here's one for you, Captain Mayo," said Candage, and he thrust a length of plank into the groping hands.

"Make it together, this time--together!" commanded Mayo. "Hard--one,

two, three!?

They drove their battering-rams up against the prisoning roof. Fury and despair were behind their blow.

The glory of light flooded into their blinking eyes.

The section had given way!

Mayo went first and he snapped out with almost the violence of a cork popping from a bottle. He felt the rush of the imprisoned air past him as he emerged. Instantly he turned and thrust down his hands and pulled the girl up into the open and the others followed, the lumber pushing under their feet.

It seemed to Captain Mayo, after those few frenzied moments of escape, that he had awakened from a nightmare; he found himself clinging to the schooner's barnacled keel, his arm holding Polly Candage from sliding down over the slimy bottom into the sea.

"Good jeero! We've been in there all night," bawled Captain Candage. He lay sprawled on the bottom of the Polly, his hornbeam hands clutching the keel, his face upraised wonderingly to the skies that were flooded with the glory of the morning. Otie and Dolph were beside him, mouths open, gulping in draughts of the air as if they were fish freshly drawn from the ocean depths.

There was a long silence after the skipper's ejaculation.

Thoughts, rather than words, fitted that sacred moment of their salvation.

The five persons who lay there on the bottom of the schooner stared at the sun in its cloudless sky and gazed off across the sea whose blue was shrouded by the golden haze of a perfect summer's day. Only a lazy roll was left of the sudden turbulence of the night before. A listless breeze with a fresh tang of salt in it lapped the surface of the long, slow surges, and the facets of the ripples flashed back the sunlight cheerily.

Captain Candage pulled himself to the keel, sat upon it, and found speech in faltering manner.

"I ain't a member of no church, never having felt the need of j'ining, and not being handy where I could tend out. But I ain't ashamed to say here, before witnesses, that I have just been telling God, as best I know how, hoping He'll excuse me if I 'ain't used the sanctimonious way, that I'm going to be a different man after this--different and better, according to my best lights."

"I believe you have spoken for all of us, Captain Candage," said Mayo, earnestly. "I thank you!"

They all perceived that the _Polly_ had made offing at a lively pace

during her wild gallop under the impetus of the easterly.

Mayo balanced himself on the keel and took a long survey of the horizon. In one place a thread of blue, almost as delicate as the tracery of a vein on a girl's arm, suggested shore line. But without a glass he was not sure. He saw no sign of any other craft; the storm had driven all coasters to harbor--and there was not wind enough as yet to help them out to sea again. But he did not worry; he was sure that something, some yacht or sea-wagon, would come rolling up over the rim of the ocean before long. The faint breeze which fanned their faces was from the southwest, and that fact promised wind enough to invite shipping to spread canvas.

Only the oval of the schooner's broad bilge showed above water, and the old Polly was so flat and tubby that their floating islet afforded only scant freeboard.

Mayo shoved his arm down into the hole through which they had escaped. After the air had been forced out the lumber was within reach from the schooner's bottom. He fumbled about and found the ax. Some of the short bits of lumber which they had used as battering-rams were in the jaws of the hole. He busied himself with hewing these ends of planks into big wedges and he drove them into cracks between the planks near the keel.

'It may come to be a bit sloppy when this sou'wester gets its gait on,' he suggested to the skipper. 'We'll have something to hang on to.'

Captain Candage's first thankfulness had shown a radiant gloss. But he was a sailorman, he was cautious, he was naturally apprehensive regarding all matters of the sea, and that gloss was now dulled a bit by his second thought.

'We may have to hang on to something longer 'n we reckon on. We're too far off for the coasters and too far in for the big fellers. And unless something comes pretty clost to us we can't be seen no more 'n as if we was mussels on a tide reef. We'd ought to have something to stick up.'

'If we could only work out one of those long joists it would make a little show.' Captain Mayo shoved his arm down the hole again. 'But they are wedged across too solidly.'

'I think there's a piece of lumber floating over there,' cried the girl. She was clinging to one of the wedges, and the composure which she felt, or had assumed, stirred Mayo's admiration. The plump hand which she held against her forehead to shield her eyes did not tremble. From the little Dutch cap, under the edge of which stray locks peeped, down over her attire to her toes, she seemed to be still trim and trig, in spite of her experiences below in the darkness and the wet. With a sort of mild interest in her, he reflected that her up-country beau would be very properly proud of her if he could see her there on that schooner's keel.

'What a picture you would make, Miss Candage, just as you are!' he blurted. She took down her hand, and the look she gave him did not encourage compliments. 'Just as you are, and call it 'The Wreck,''

he added.

‘Do I look as badly as all that, Captain Mayo?’

‘You look--?’ he expostulated, and hesitated, for her gaze was distinctly not reassuring.

‘Don’t tell me, please, how I look. I’m thankful that I have no mirror. Isn’t that a piece of lumber?’ she inquired, crisply, putting a stop on further personalities. ‘Wait! It’s down in a hollow just now.’

The sea lifted it again immediately. Mayo saw that it was a long strip of scantling, undoubtedly from the deckload that the ‘Polly’ had jettisoned when she was tripped. It lay to windward, and that fact promised its recovery; but how was the tide? Mayo squinted at the sun, did a moment’s quick reckoning from the tide time of the day before, and smiled.

‘We’ll get that, Miss Candage. She’s coming this way.’

Watching it, seeing it lift and sink, waiting for it, helped to pass the time. Then at last it came alongside, and he crawled cautiously down the curve of the bilge and secured it. After he had braced it in the hole in the schooner’s bottom with the help of Mr. Speed, the girl gave him a crumpled wad of cloth when he turned from his task.

‘It’s the rest of my petticoat. You may as well have it,’ she explained, a pretty touch of pink confusion in her cheeks.

Mr. Speed boosted Mayo and the young man attached the cloth to the scantling and flung their banner to the breeze. Then there was not much to do except to wait, everlastingly squinting across the bright sea to the horizon’s edge.

X ~ HOSPITALITY, PER JULIUS MARSTON

Hoo--oo--rah; and up she rises!
Hoo--oo--rah! and up she rises!
Early in the morning.
What shall we do with a saucy sailor?
Put him in the long boat and make him bail ‘erv
Early in the morn--ing!
--Old ‘Stamp-and-go.’

Mayo saw the sail first. It was coming in from the sea, and was very far and minute. He pointed it out with an exclamation.

‘What do you make it, sir?’ asked Captain Candage. ‘Your eyes are younger ‘n mine are.’

‘I reckon it’s a fisherman bound in from Cashes Banks. He seems to be

lying well over, and that shows there's a good breeze outside. He ought to reach near enough to see us, judging from the way he's heading.?

That little sail, nicked against the sky, was something else to watch and speculate on and wait for, and they forgot, almost, that they were hungry and thirsty and sun-parched.

However, Captain Mayo kept his own gaze most steadfastly on the landward horizon. He did not reveal any of his thoughts, for he did not want to raise false hopes. Nevertheless, it was firmly in his mind that no matter what might be the sentiments of Julius Marston in regard to his recent skipper, the mate and engineer on board the _Olenia_ were loyal friends who would use all their influence with the owner to urge him to come seeking the man who had been lost.

The fact that a motor-boat had come popping out of Saturday Cove in pursuit of the schooner suggested that Mate McGaw had suspected what had happened, and was not dragging the cove-bottom for a drowned man.

Mayo had plenty of time for pondering on the matter, and he allowed hope to spice his guesses. He knew Mate McGaw's characteristics and decided that the yacht would get under way early, would nose into a few near-by harbors where a gale-ridden schooner might have dodged for safety, and then would chase down the sea, following the probable course of a craft which had been caught in that nor'easter. Mate McGaw was a sailorly man and understood how to fit one fact with another. He had a due portion of mariner's imagination, and was not the sort to desert a chum, even if he were obliged to use stiff speech to convert an owner. Therefore, Mayo peered toward the blue shore-line, coddling hope. He wondered whether Mate McGaw would have courage to slip a word of encouragement to Alma Marston if she asked questions.

Mayo was elated rather than astonished when he spied a smear of drab smoke and was able to determine that the craft which was puffing that smoke was heading out to sea, not crawling alongshore.

?That's a fisherman all right, and he's bound to come close enough to make us out,? stated Captain Candage, his steady gaze to southward.

?But here comes another fellow who is going to beat him to us,? announced Captain Mayo, gaily.

?And what do you make it?? asked the skipper, blinking at the distant smoke.

?A yacht, probably.?

?Huh? A yacht! If that's what it is they'll most likely smash right past. They'll think we're out here on a fishing picnic, most like. That's about all these yacht fellers know.?

The girl gave her father a frown of protest, but Mayo smiled at her.

?I think this one is different, sir. If I am not very much mistaken,

that is the yacht _Olenia_ and she is hunting me up. Mate McGaw is one of our best little guessers.?

A quarter of an hour later he was able to assure them that the on-coming craft was the _Olenia_.

?Good old Mate McGaw!? he cried, rapturously. In his joy he wished he could make them his confidants, tell them who was waiting for him on board that yacht, make them understand what wonderful good fortune was his.

After a time--the long time that even a fast yacht seems to consume in covering distance to effect the rescue of those who are anxious--the Olenia's whistle hooted hoarsely to assure them that they had been seen.

?The same to you, Mate McGaw!? choked Captain Mayo, swinging his cap in wide circles.

?Seeing that things have come round as they have, I'm mighty glad for you, Captain Mayo,? declared Candage. ?I ain't no kind of a hand to plaster a man all over with thanks--?

?I don't want thanks, sir. We worked together to save our lives.?

?Then I'm hoping that there won't be any hard feelings one way or the other. I have lost my schooner by my blasted foolishness. So I'll say good-by and--?

?Good-by?? demanded Mayo, showing his astonishment. ?Why are you saying good-by to me now??

?Because you are going aboard your yacht.?

?The rest of you are going there, too.?

?It ain't for poor critters like us to go mussing--?

?Look here, Captain Candage, I am the captain of that yacht, and I say that you are coming on board and stay until I can set you ashore at the handiest port.?

?I'd just as lieve wait for that fisherman, sir. I'll feel more at home aboard him.?

?You ought to think of your daughter's condition first, Captain Candage. She needs a few comforts right away, and you won't find them on board a fisherman.?

He turned to the girl who sat on the keel, silent, looking away to sea. She seemed to show a strange lack of interest in the yacht. Her pretty face exhibited no emotion, but somehow she was a wistfully pathetic figure as she sat there. Mayo's countenance showed much more concern than she expressed when she faced about at the sound of his voice and

looked at him. Color came into his cheeks; there was embarrassment in his eyes, a queer hesitancy in his tones.

‘There is a young lady--there are several young ladies--but there is Mr. Marston's daughter!’ he faltered. ‘She is on the yacht. I--I know she will do all she can for you. She will be good to you!’ His eyes fell under her frank and rather quizzical gaze.

‘She might not care to be bothered with such a ragamuffin.’

‘I can speak for her!’ he cried, eagerly. He was now even more disturbed by the glance she gave him. He had read that women have intuition in affairs of the heart.

‘I am quite certain you can, Captain Mayo,’ she assured him, demurely. ‘And I am grateful. But perhaps we'd be better off on board that other vessel--father and the rest of us.’

‘I insist,’ he said, but he did not dare to meet her searching eyes. ‘I insist!’ he repeated, resuming the decisive manner which he had shown before on board the *‘Polly’*.

The *‘Olenia’*, slowing down, had come close aboard, and her churning screws pulled her to a standstill. Her crew sent a tender rattling down from her port davits. As she rolled on the surge her brass rails caught the sunlight in long flashes which fairly blinded the hollow eyes of the castaways. The white canvas of bridge and awnings gleamed in snowy purity. She was so near that Dolph smelled the savory scents from her galley and began to ‘suffle’ moisture in the corners of his mouth.

They who waited on the barnacled hulk of the *Polly*, faint with hunger, bedraggled with brine, unkempt and wholly miserable after a night of toils and vigil, felt like beggars at a palace gate as they surveyed her immaculateness.

A sort of insolent opulence seemed to exude from her. Mayo, her captain though he was, felt that suggestion of insolence more keenly than his companions, for he had had bitter and recent experience with the moods of Julius Marston.

He did not find Marston a comforting object for his gaze; the transportation magnate was pacing the port alley with a stride that was plainly impatient. Close beside the gangway stood Alma Marston, spotless in white duck. Each time her father turned his back on her she put out her clasped hands toward her lover with a furtive gesture.

Polly Candage watched this demonstration with frank interest, and occasionally stole side-glances at the face of the man who stood beside her on the schooner's bottom; he was wholly absorbed in his scrutiny of the other girl.

Mate McGaw himself was at the tiller of the tender. His honest face was working with emotion, and he began to talk before the oarsmen had eased the boat against the overturned hulk.

?I haven't closed my eyes, Captain Mayo. Stayed up all night, trying to figure it out. Almost gave up all notion that you were aboard the schooner. You didn't hail the boat we sent out.?

?I tried to do it; perhaps you couldn't hear me.?

Captain Candage's countenance showed gratitude and relief.

?This morning I tried Lumbo and two other shelters, and then chased along the trail of the blow.?

Mayo trod carefully down the bilge and clasped the mate's hand. ?I was looking for you, Mr. McGaw. I know what kind of a chap you are.?

McGaw, still holding to the captain's hand, spoke in lower tones. ?Had a devil of a time with the owner, sir. He was bound to have it that you had deserted.?

?I was afraid he would think something of the sort.?

The mate showed frank astonishment. ?You was afraid of _what?_ Why, sir, I wanted to tell him that he was a crazy man to have any such ideas about you! Yes, sir, I came nigh telling him that! I would have done it if I hadn't wanted to keep mild and meek whilst I was arguing with him and trying to make him give me leave to search!?

?We have had a terrible time of it, Mr. McGaw,? stated Mayo, avoiding the mate's inquisitiveness. ?I am going to take these folks on board and set them ashore.?

?Ay, sir, of course.?

The two of them stood with clasped hands and held the tender close to the wreck until the passengers embarked. When they reached the foot of the _Olenia_'s steps Captain Mayo sent his guests ahead of him.

Marston paused in his march and scowled, and the folks on the quarter-deck crowded to the rail, showing great interest.

Captain Mayo exchanged a long look with Alma Marston when he came up the steps. Love, pity, and greeting were in his eyes. Her countenance revealed her vivid emotions; she was overwrought, unstrung, half-crazed after a night spent with her fears. When he came within her reach caution was torn from her as gossamer is flicked away by a gale. Impulse had always governed her; she gave way to it then.

?I don't care,? she sobbed. ?I love you. They may as well know it!?

Before he understood her intentions or could prevent her rashness she flung her arms about his neck and kissed him repeatedly.

Marston stood in his tracks like a man stricken by paralysis; his cigar dropped from his open mouth. This exhibition under his very nose, with

his guests and the whole crew of his yacht looking on, fairly stunned him.

"If you had died I would have died!" she wailed.

Then her father plunged toward her, elbowing the astonished Beveridge out of his way.

Captain Mayo gently unhooked the arms of the frantic girl from about his neck and stepped forward, putting himself between father and daughter. He was not taking sensible thought in the matter; he was prompted by an instinctive impulse to protect her.

Mayo had no word ready at his tongue's end, and Marston's anathema was muffled and incoherent. The girl's rash act had tipped over the sane and manly self-possession of both of them. The captain was too bewildered to comprehend the full enormity of his action in standing guard over the daughter of Julius Marston, as if she needed protection on her father's quarter-deck. He did not move to one side of the alley when Marston jerked an impatient gesture.

"I want to say that I am wholly to blame, sir," he faltered. "I hope you will overlook--"

"Are you presuming to discuss my daughter's insanity with me?" He noticed that the sailors were preparing to hoist the tender to the davits. "Drop that boat back into the water!" he shouted. There was an ugly rasp in his voice, and for a moment it seemed as if he were about to lose control of himself. Then he set a check on his temper and tongue, though his face was deathly white and his eyes were as hard as marbles. Resolve to end further exhibition in this incredible business dominated his wrathful shame.

"If you will set us ashore--" pleaded Mayo.

"Get back into that boat, you and your gang, whatever it is!"

"Mr. Marston, this young woman needs--"

"Get into that boat, or I'll have the bunch of you thrown overboard!"

The owner spoke in low tones, but his furious determination was apparent.

"We will go without being thrown, sir. Will you order us set aboard that fisherman?" He pointed to the little schooner which was almost within hailing distance.

"Get off! I don't care where you go!" He crowded past Mayo, seized his daughter's arm, and led her aft.

She seemed to have expended all her determination in her sensational outburst.

The captain met her pleading gaze as she turned to leave. "It's for the

best,? he declared, bravely. ?I'll make good!?

The pathetic castaways from the _Polly_ made a little group at the gangway, standing close to the rail, as if they feared to step upon the white deck. Mate McGaw intercepted Mayo as he was about to join them.

?Hadh't I better stretch Section Two of the collision act a mite and scare him with the prospect of a thousand-dollar fine?? asked the mate, eagerly. ?My glory, Captain Mayo, I'm so weak I can hardly stand up! Who'd have thought it??

?We'll go aboard the schooner, Mr. McGaw. It's the place for us.?

?Maybe it is, but I'll speak up if you say the word, and make him set you ashore--even if I leave along with you??

?Keep your job, sir. Will you pick up my few little belongings in my stateroom and bring them to me, Mr. McGaw? I'd better stay here on deck with my friends.? He emphasized the last word, and Captain Candage gave him a grateful look. ?I'm sorry, mates! I can't say any more!?

Captain Mayo did not allow himself to make further comment on the melancholy situation. The others were silent; the affair was out of their reckoning; they had no words to fit the case. Polly Candage stood looking out to sea. He had hoped that she would give him a glance of understanding sympathy, at least. But she did not, not even when he helped her down the steps into the tender.

Mate McGaw came with the captain's bag and belongings, and promptly received orders from the owner from the quarter-deck.

?Go on to the bridge and hail that schooner. Tell her we are headed for New York and can't be bothered by these persons!?

Mr. McGaw grasped Mayo's hand in farewell, and then he hurried to his duty. His megaphoned message echoed over their heads while the tender was on its way.

?Ay, ay, sir!? returned the fishing-skipper, with hearty bellow. ?Glad to help sailors in trouble.?

?And that shows you--? blurted Captain Candage, and stopped his say in the middle of his outburst when his daughter shoved a significant fist against his ribs.

Captain Mayo turned his head once while the tender was hastening toward the schooner. But there were no women in sight on the yacht's deck. There was an instant's flutter of white from a stateroom port, but he was not sure whether it was a handkerchief or the end of a wind-waved curtain. He faced about resolutely and did not look behind again. Shame, misery, hopelessness--he did not know which emotion was stinging him most poignantly. The oarsmen in the tender were gazing upward innocently while they rowed, but he perceived that they were hiding grins. His humiliation in that amazing fashion would be the forecastle jest. Through him these new friends of his had been subjected to insult. He

felt that he understood what Polly Candage's silence meant.

The next moment he felt the pat of a little hand on the fist he was clenching on his knee.

"Poor boy!" she whispered. "I understand! It will come out right if you don't lose courage."

But she was not looking at him when he gave her a quick side-glance.

The fisherman had come into the wind, rocking on the long swell, dingy sails flapping, salt-stained sides dipping and flashing wet gleams as she rolled. Her men were rigging a ladder over the side.

"I want to say whilst we're here together and there's time to say it," announced Captain Candage, "that we are one and all mighty much obliged for that invite you gave us to come aboard the yacht, sir, and we all know that if--well, if things had been different from what they was you would have used us all right. And what I might say about yachts and the kind of critters that own 'em I ain't a-going to say."

"You are improving right along, father," observed Polly Candage, dryly.

"Still, I have my own ideas on the subject. But that's neither here nor there. You're a native and I'm a native, and I want ye should just look at that face leaning over the lee rail, there, and then say that now we know that we're among real friends."

It was a rubicund and welcoming countenance under the edge of a rusty black oilskin sou'wester hat, and the man was manifestly the skipper. Every once in a while he flourished his arm encouragingly.

"Hearty welcome aboard the _Reuben and Esther_," he called out when the tender swung to the foot of the ladder. "What schooner is she, there?"

"Poor old _Polly_," stated the master, first up the ladder. In his haste to greet the fishing-skipper he left his daughter to the care of Captain Mayo.

"That's too bad--too bad!" clucked the fishing-skipper, full measure of sympathy in his demeanor. "She was old, but she was able, sir!"

"And here's another poor Polly," stated Captain Candage. "I was fool enough to take her out of a good home for a trip to sea."

The skipper ducked salute. "Make yourself to home, miss. Go below. House is yours!"

Then the schooner lurched away on her shoreward tack, and the insolent yacht marched off down across the shimmering waves.

Mayo shook hands with the solicitous fisherman in rather dreamy and indifferent fashion. He realized that he was faint with hunger, but he refused to eat. Fatigue and grief demanded their toll in more imperious

fashion than hunger. He lay down in the sun in the lee alley, put his head on his crossed arms, and blessed sleep blotted out his bitter thoughts.

XI ~ A VOICE FROM HUE AND CRY

But when the money's all gone and spent,
And there's none to be borrowed and none to be lent,
In comes old Grouchy with a frown,
Saying, "Get up, Jack, let John sit down."
For it's now we're outward bound,
Hur-rah, we're outward bound!
--Song of the Dog and Bell.

Captain Mayo, when he woke, had it promptly conveyed to him that hospitality on board the _Reuben and Esther_ had watchful eyes. While he was rubbing feeling back into his stiffened limbs, sitting there in the lee alley, the cook came lugging a pot of hot coffee and a plate heaped with food.

"Thought you'd rather have it here than in the cuddy. The miss is asleep in the house," whispered the cook.

Captain Candage came to Mayo while the latter was eating and sat down on the deck. Gloom had settled on the schooner's master. "I don't want to bother you with my troubles, seeing that you've got aplenty of your own, sir. But I'm needing a little advice. I have lost a schooner that has been my home ever since I was big enough to heave a dunnage-bag over the rail, and not a cent of insurance. Insurance would have et up all my profits. What do you think of my chances to make a dollar over and above providing I hire a tugboat and try to salvage?"

"According to my notion your chances would be poor, sir. Claims in such cases usually eat up all a craft is worth. Besides, you may find those yachtsmen on your back for damages, providing you get her in where she can be libeled."

"I shouldn't wonder a mite," admitted Captain Candage. "The more some folks have the more they keep trying to git."

"I was looking her bottom over while we sat there, and it must be owned up that her years have told on her."

"I hate to let her go."

"That's natural, sir. But I have an idea that she will be reported as a menace to navigation, and that a coastguard cutter will blow her up before you can get around to make your salvage arrangements."

"When a man is down they all jump on him."

?I can agree with you there,? affirmed Captain Mayo, mournfully.

?She showed grit--that girl,? ventured Candage, giving the other man keen survey from under his grizzled brows.

?I must ask you to furl sail on that subject, sir,? snapped Mayo, with sailor bluntness.

?I only said it complimentary. Lots of times girls have more grit than they are given credit for. You think they're just girls, and then you find out that they are hero-ines! I thought I had some grit, but my own Polly has shamed me. I was just down watching her--she's asleep in Cap'n Sinnett's bunk. Made the tears come up into my eyes, sir, to ponder on what she has been through on account of my cussed foolishness. Of course, you haven't been told. But confession is good for a man, and I'm going to own up. I took her with me to get her away from a fellow who is courting her.?

Mayo did not offer comment. He wanted to advise the skipper to keep still on that subject, too.

?I don't say he ain't good enough for her. Maybe he is. But I 'ain't been realizing that she has growed up. When I found she was being courted it was like hitting a rock in a fairway. You are young, and you are around consid'able and know the actions of young folks. What's your advice??

?I don't know anything about the circumstances, sir.?

?But speaking generally,? insisted Captain Candage. ?I want to do what's right. There ain't many I can bring myself to ask. I'm a poor old fool, I'm afraid. Won't you kind of grab in on this, Captain Mayo? I do need a little advice.? His rough hands trembled on his knees.

?If the young man is worthy--is the right sort,? returned Mayo, in gentler tones, ?I think you are making a great mistake by interfering.?

?I'll go look that young fellow over--re-survey him, as ye might say,? stated the skipper, after a moment's meditation.

?I don't know your daughter very well, sir, but I have much faith in her judgment. If I were you I'd allow her to pick her own husband.?

?Thanks for that advice. I know it comes from a man who has shown that he knows exactly what to do in emergencies. I have changed my mind about her being courted, sir.?

?Honest love isn't a question of money, Captain Candage. Many good girls are ruined by--? He was speaking bitterly and he checked himself. ?Where is Captain Sinnett going to set us ashore??

?Maquoit. He is going to take his fish to the big market. But he said he would set us ashore anywhere, and so I said Maquoit. I might as well be there as anywhere till I know what I'm going to do.?

?Same thing holds good for me, I suppose. I don't feel like going to the city just yet.?

Captain Sinnett came rolling into the alley, and when Mayo started to thank him for the trouble he was taking he raised in genial protest a hand which resembled in spread a split codfish.

?Trouble! It ain't trouble. Was going to call into Maquoit to ice up, anyway. I know my manners even if them yachting fellows didn't.?

Captain Candage preserved the demeanor of innocence under Mayo's scrutiny.

?I've missed you off the fishing-grounds--didn't know you had gone on to a yacht, sir,? pursued Captain Sinnett. ?Hope to see you back into the fishing business again; that is, providing you don't go on one of them beam trawlers that are hooking up the bottom of the Atlantic and sp'iling the thing entire for us all.?

?I agree with you about the trawler; that's why I quit. And as to yachting, I think I'll go after a real man's job, sir!?

?So do! You'll be contenteder,? replied the other, significance in his tones.

Mayo knew that his secret had been exposed, but he had no relish for an argument with Captain Candage on the subject of garrulity. He finished his coffee and went forward where the fishermen were coiling the gang-lines into the tubs.

The fisherman made port at Maquoit late in the afternoon, and was warped to her berth at the ice-house wharf.

The castaways went ashore.

Maquoit was a straggling hamlet at the head of a cove which nicked the coast-line.

Captain Candage, an Apple-treer, who knew every hole alongshore where refuge from stress of weather was afforded, led his party through the village with confidence.

?There's a widder here who will put us up for what time we want to stay--and be glad of the money. I knowed her husband in the coasting trade. I like to get into a place like this that 'ain't been sp'iled by them cussed rusticators and the prices they are willing to pay,? he confided to Mayo. He slyly exhibited a wallet that was stuffed with paper money. ?I ain't busted, but there's no sense in paying more 'n five dollars a week anywhere for vittles and bed. She will make plenty off'n us at that rate. You just let me do the dickering.?

The widow proved to be a kindly soul who, in the first excitement of her sympathetic nature, resolutely refused to consider the matter of any

payment whatever.

?You are shipwrecked, and my poor husband's body wouldn't rest quiet wherever it is in the Atlantic Ocean if I grabbed money from shipwrecked folks.?

However, in the end, Captain Candage worked her up from three dollars to five per week, and she took Polly Candage into her heart and into the best chamber.

Captain Mayo came back to supper after a moody stroll about the village. Skipper Candage was patrolling the widow's front yard and was exhibiting more cheerfulness.

?It's God's Proverdunce and your grit that has saved us, sir. I have come out of my numb condition and sense it all. What's your plans??

?I don't seem to be able to make any just yet.?

?I'm going to stay right here for a spell, and shall keep Dolph and Otie with me. We shall be here on the coast where we can hear of something to grab in on. As soon as Polly gets straightened around I'll let her go home to her aunt. But, of course, hanging around here doesn't offer you any attractions, sir. You're looking for bigger game than we are.?

?I have about made up my mind to leave in the morning on the stage. I'll go somewhere.?

The widow tapped her knuckles on the glass of a near-by window. ?Supper!? she announced. ?Hurry in whilst it's hot!?

?I always do my best pondering on a full stomach,? said Captain Candage. ?And I smell cream-o'-tartar biskits and I saw her hulling field strorb'ries. Better look on the bright side of things along with me, Captain Mayo.?

Captain Mayo failed to find any bright side as he turned his affairs over in his mind. He had only a meager stock of money. He had used his modest earnings in settling the debts of the family estate. The outlook for employment was vague--he could not estimate to what extent the hostility of Julius Marston might block his efforts, provided the magnate troubled himself to descend to meddle with the affairs of such an inconspicuous person. His poor little romance with Alma Marston had been left in a shocking condition. He did not talk at the supper-table, and the widow's wholesome food was like ashes in his mouth. He went out and sat on the porch of the widow's cottage and looked into the sunset and saw nothing in its rosy hues to give him encouragement for his own future.

Polly Candage came timidly and sat down beside him. ?Father says you think of leaving in the morning!?

?There's nothing for me here.?

?Probably not.?

A long silence followed.

?I suppose you don't care to have me talk to you, Captain Mayo??

?I'll listen to you gratefully, any time.?

?I'm only a country girl. I don't know how to say it--how to tell you I'm so sorry for you!?

?That one little pat on my hand to-day, it was better than words.?

?It's all I can think about--your unhappiness.?

?That touches me because I know that you have enough sorrow of your own.?

?Sorrow!? She opened her eyes wide.

?Perhaps I have no business speaking of it,? he returned, with considerable embarrassment.

?And yet I have been so bold as to speak to you!?

There was a touch of reproach in her voice, and therefore he ventured:

?Your father told me--I tried to stop him, but he went on and said--Well, I understand! But I have some consolation for you and I'm going to speak out. He says he is going to allow you to marry your young man.?

?Did he dare to talk such matters over with you??

?He insisted on doing it--on asking my advice. So I advised in a way to help you. I am glad, for your sake, that he is coming to his senses.?

?I thank you for your help,? she said, stiffly.

?Of course it's none of my business. I'm sorry he told me. But I wish you all happiness.?

She rose as if to go away. Then she stamped her foot and sat down. ?My father ought to be muzzled!?

She realized that he might misinterpret her indignation, for he said:

?I'm ashamed because I meddled in your affairs. But from what you saw to-day in my case, I felt that I ought to help others who are in the same trouble.?

?But my father has mistaken my--? She broke off in much confusion, not understanding the queer look he gave her. ?I--I am glad my father is coming to his senses and will allow me to--to--marry the young man,? she stammered. ?And now I think I may be allowed to say that I hope you may have the girl you love, some day. Would you like to have me talk to you

about her--how dear and pretty I think she is??

?No, it hurts! But I do want you to know, Miss Candage, that I'm not out fortune-hunting. I love her for herself--just herself--nothing more!?

?I know it must be so.?

?And I know that a young man you would choose is worthy of you. I told your father--?

?No matter. _That_ hurts, too! We both understand. We'll leave it there!?

After the declaration of that truce they were frankly at ease and began to chat with friendly freedom. The dusk came shading into the west, the evening star dripped silver light.

?It's a peaceful spot here,? she suggested. ?Everybody seems to be contented.?

?Contentment--in a rut--that may be the best way of passing this life, after all.?

?But if you were in the rut, Captain Mayo, you might find that contentment would not agree to come and live with you.?

?Probably it wouldn't! I'd have to be born to the life here like this chap who is coming up the hill. You can see that he isn't worrying about himself or the world outside.?

The man was clumping slowly along in his rubber boots; an old cap was slewed awry on his head, its peak drawn down over one ear. He cocked up the other ear at sound of voices on the porch and loafed up and sat down on the edge of the boarding. Captain Mayo and the girl, accustomed to bland indifference to formality in rural neighborhoods, accepted this interruption without surprise or protest.

?Tain't a bad night as nights go,? stated the caller.

?It's a beautiful night,? said Polly Candage.

?I reckon it seems so to you, after what you went through. I've been harking to your father telling the yarn down to the store.?

They did not reply, having their own ideas as to Captain Candage's loquacity.

The caller hauled a plug of tobacco from his pocket, gnawed off a chew, and began slow wagging of his jaws. ?This world is full of trouble,? he observed,

?It seems to be,? agreed Captain Mayo.

?Them what's down get kicked further down.?

?Also true, in many cases.?

?Take your case! It's bad. But our'n is worse! The caller pointed to the dim bulk of a small island which the cove held between the bold jaws of its headland. ?The old sir who named that Hue and Cry Island must have smelt into the future so as to know what was going to happen there some day--and this is the day!? He chewed on, and his silence became irritating.

?Well, what has happened?? demanded the captain.

?It hasn't happened just yet--it's going to.?

Further silence.

?Tell us what's going to happen, can't you??

?Of course I can, now that you have asked me. I ain't no hand to butt in. I ain't no hand to do things unless I'm asked. There's seventeen fam'lies of us on Hue and Cry and they've told us to get off.?

?Who told you??

?The state! Some big bugs come along and said the Governor sent 'em, and they showed papers and we've got to go.?

?But I know about Hue and Cry!? protested Mayo. ?You people have lived there for years!?

?Sure have! My grandfather was one of the first settlers. Most all of us who live there had grandfathers who settled the place. But according to what is told us, some heirs have found papers what say that they own the island. The state bought out the heirs. Now the state says get off. We're only squatters, state says.?

?But, good Caesar, man, you have squatter rights after all these years. Hire a lawyer. Fight the case!?

?We ain't fighters. 'Ain't got no money--'ain't got no friends. Might have fit plain heirs, but you can't fight the state--leastways, poor cusses like us can't.?

?Where are you going??

?Well, there's the problem! That's what made me say that this world is full of trouble. You see, we have taken town help in years past--had to do it or starve winters. And we have had state aid, too. They say that makes paupers of us. Every town round about has served notice that we can't settle there and gain pauper residence. Hue and Cry 'ain't ever been admitted to any town. Towns say, seeing that the state has ordered us off, now let the state take care of us.?

?And men have been here, representing the state??

?You bet they have.?

?What do they say??

?Say get off! But they won't let us settle on the main. Looks like they wanted us to go up in balloons. But we hain't got no balloons. Got to move, though.?

?I never heard of such a thing!?

?Nor I, neither,? admitted this man, with a sort of calm numbness of discouragement. ?But that ain't anyways surprising. We don't hear much about anything on Hue and Cry till they come and tell us. Speaking for myself, I ain't so awful much fussed up. I've got a house-bo't to take my wife and young ones on, and we'll keep on digging clams for trawlers--sixty cents a bucket, shucked, and we can dig and shuck a bucket a day, all hands turning to. We won't starve. But I pity the poor critters that 'ain't got a house-bo't. Looks like they'd need wings. I ain't worrying a mite, I say. I had the best house on the island, and the state has allowed a hundred and fifty dollars for it. I consider I'm well fixed.?

The plutocrat of the unhappy tribe of Hue and Cry rose and stretched with a comfortable grunt.

?If it ain't one thing it's another,? he said, as he started off. ?We've got to have about so much trouble, anyway, and it might just as well be this as anything else.? %

?Why, that's an awful thing to happen to those people!? declared the girl. ?I must say, he takes it calmly.?

?He is a fair sample of some of the human jellyfish I have found hidden away in odd corners on this coast,? stated Captain Mayo. ?Not enough mind or spirit left to fight for his own protection. But this thing is almost unbelievable. It can't be possible that the state is gunning an affair like this! I'll find somebody who knows more about it than that clam-digging machine!?

A little later a man strolled past, hands behind his back. He was placidly smoking a cigar, and, though the dusk had deepened, Mayo could perceive that he was attired with some pretensions to city smartness.

?I beg your pardon, sir,? called the young man. ?But do you know anything about the inwardness of this business on Hue and Cry Island??

?I can tell you all about it,? stated the person who had been hailed. He sauntered up and sat down on the edge of the porch. He showed the air of a man who was killing time. ?I'm in charge of it.?

?Not of putting those people off the island??

?Sure! That's what I'm here for. I'm state agent on pauper affairs, acting for the Governor and Council.?

?You say the state is back of this?? demanded Mayo, incredulously.

?Certainly! It's a matter that the state was obliged to take up. State has bought that island from the real heirs, has ordered off those squatters, and we shall burn down their shacks and clear the land up. Of course, we allow heads of families some cash for their houses, if you can call 'em houses. That's under the law regulating squatter improvements. But improvements is a polite word for the buildings on that island. It is going to cost us good money to clear up for that New York party who has made an offer to the state--he's going to use the island for a summer estate.?

He flicked the ashes from his cigar and broke in on Mayo's indignant retort.

?It had to be done, sir. They have intermarried till a good many of the children are fools. The men are breaking into summer cottages, after the owners leave in the fall. They steal everything on the main that isn't nailed down. They have set false beacons in the winter, and have wrecked coasters. Every little while some city newspaper has written them up as wild men, and it has given the state a bad name. We're going to break up the nest.?

?But where will they go??

?Fools to the state school for the feeble-minded, cripples to the poorhouse. The able-bodied will have to get out and go to work at something honest.?

?But, look here, my dear sir! Those poor devils are starting out with too much of a handicap. After three generations on that island they don't know how to get a living on the main.?

?That's their own lookout, not the state's! State doesn't guarantee to give shiftless folks a living.?

?How about using a little common sense in the case of such people??

?You are not making this affair your business, are you?? asked the commissioner, with acerbity.

?No.?

?Better not; and you'd better not say too much to _me!_? He rose and dusted off his trousers. ?I have investigated for the Governor and Council and they are acting on my recommendations. You might just as well advise nursing and coddling a nest of brown-tail moths--and we are spending good money to kill off moths. We don't propose to encourage the breeding of thieves. We are not keeping show places of this sort along the coast for city folks to talk about and run down the state after they go back home. It hurts state business!? He marched away.

Captain Mayo strode up and down the porch and muttered some emphatic opinions in regard to the intellects and doings of rulers.

“You see, I know the sort of people who live on that island, Miss Candage. I have seen other cases alongshore. They are blamed for what they don't know--and what they are led into. Amateur missionaries will load them down in a spasm of summer generosity with a lot of truck and make them think that the world owes them a living. The poor devils haven't wit enough to look ahead. When it comes winter they are starving--and when children are hungry and cold a man will tackle a proposition that is more dangerous than a summer cottage locked up for the winter. Next comes along some chap like that state agent, who prides himself on being straight business and no favors! He puts the screws to 'em! There's nobody to help those folks in the real and the right way. I pity them!”

“I live in the country and I know how unfeeling the boards of selectmen are in many of the pauper cases. When it's a matter of saving money for the voters and making a good town record, they don't care much how poor folks get along.”

Mayo continued to patrol the porch. “I'm in a rather rebellious state of mind just now, I reckon,” he admitted. “Seems to me that a lot of folks, including myself, are getting kicked. I'm smarting! I have a fellow-feeling for the oppressed.” He laughed, but there was no merriment in his tones. “It's the little children who will suffer most in this, Miss Candage,” he went on. “They are not to blame--they don't understand.”

“And of course nothing can be done.”

“Nothing sensible, I'm afraid.” He walked to and fro for many minutes. “You see, it's none of my business,” he commented, when he came and sat down beside her.

“I suppose there's not one man in the world to step forward and say a good word for them,” said the girl, softly, uttering her thoughts.

“Words wouldn't amount to anything--with the machinery of the state grinding away so merrily as it is. But this matter is stirring my curiosity a little, Miss Candage. That's because I am one of the oppressed myself, I reckon.” Again his mirthless chuckle. “I intended to take the stage out of here in the morning, but I have an idea that I'll stay over and see what happens when that gentleman who represents our grand old state proceeds to scatter those folks to the four winds.”

“I was hoping you would stay over, Captain Mayo.” She declared that with frank delight.

“But you don't expect me to do anything, of course!”

“It's not that. You see, I'd like to go down to the island and--and father is so odd he might not be willing to escort me,” she explained,

trying to be matter-of-fact, her air showing that she regretted her outburst.

‘I volunteer, here and now.’

She rose and put out her hand to him. ‘I have not thanked you for saving my life--saving us all, Captain Mayo. It is too holy a matter to be profaned by any words. But here is my hand--like a friend--like a sister--no?’--she held herself straight and looked him full in the face through the gloom and tightened her hold on his fingers--‘like a man!’

He returned her earnest finger-clasp and released her hand when her pressure slackened. That sudden spirit, the suggestion that she desired to assume the attitude of man to man with him, seemed to vanish from her with the release of her fingers.

She quavered her ‘Good night!’ There was even a hint of a sob. Then she ran into the house.

Mayo stared after her, wrinkling his forehead for a moment, as if he had discovered some new vagary in femininity to puzzle him. Then he resumed his patrol with the slow stride of the master mariner. Hue and Cry raised dim bulk in the harbor jaws, showing no glimmer of light. It was barren, treeless, a lump of land which towns had thrust from them and which county boundaries had not taken in. He admitted that the state had good reasons for desiring to change conditions on Hue and Cry, but this callous, brutal uprooting of helpless folks who had been attached to that soil through three generations was so senselessly radical that his resentment was stirred. It was swinging from the extreme of ill-considered indulgence to that of utter cruelty, and the poor devils could not in the least understand!

‘There seem to be other things than a spiked martingale which can pick a man up and keep him away from his own business,’ he mused. ‘What fool notion possesses me to go out there to-morrow I cannot understand. However, I can go and look on without butting into stuff that’s no affair of mine.’

Two men were shuffling past in the road. In the utter silence of that summer night their conversation carried far.

‘Yes, sir, as I was saying, there he lays dead! When I was with him on the _Luther Briggs_ he fell from the main crosstrees, broke both legs and one arm, and made a dent in the deck, and he got well. And a week ago, come to-morrow, he got a sliver under his thumb, and there he lays dead.’

‘It’s the way it often is in life. Whilst a man is looking up into the sky so as to see the big things and dodge ‘em, he goes to work and stubs his toe over a knitting-needle.’

‘That’s right,’ Captain Mayo informed himself; ‘but I can’t seem to help myself, somehow!’

XII ~ NO PLACE FOR THE SOLES OF THEIR FEET

Don't you hear the old man roaring, Johnny,
One more day? Don't you hear that pilot bawling,
One more day? Only one more day, my Johnny,
One more day! O come rock and roll me over,
One more day.

--Windlass Song.

When the subject of the proposed expedition to Hue and Cry was broached at the breakfast-table, Captain Epps Candage displayed prompt interest.

'It's going to be a good thing for the section round about here--roust 'em off! Heard 'em talking it over down to Rowley's store last evening. I'll go along with you and see it done.'

Mayo and Polly Candage exchanged looks and refrained from comment. It was evident that Captain Candage reflected the utilitarian view of Maquoit.

Mayo had put off that hateful uniform of Marston's yacht, and the girl gave him approving survey when he appeared that morning in his shore suit of quiet gray. With the widow's ready aid Polly Candage had made her own attire presentable once more. When they walked down to the shore she smiled archly at Mayo from under the brim of a very fetching straw poke.

'I ran down to the general store early and bought a boy's hat,' she explained. 'I trimmed it myself. You know, I'm a milliner's apprentice. Does it do my training credit?'

He was somewhat warm in his assurances that it did.

'I ought to be pleased by your praise,' she said, demurely, 'because women wear hats for men's approval, and if my customers go home and hear such nice words from their husbands my business career is sure to be a success.'

'Your business career?'

'Certainly, sir!' She bobbed a little courtesy. 'I have money, sir! Money of my own. Five thousand dollars in the bank, if you please! Oh, you need not stare at me. I did not earn it. My dear mother's sister left it to me in her will. And some day when you are walking down the city street you'll see a little brass sign--very bright, very neat--and there'll be 'Polly' on it. Then you may come up and call on the great milliner--that will be this person, now so humble.'

'But that young man!' he protested, smiling at her gaiety.

'Oh, that young man?' She wrinkled her nose. Then she flushed, conscious

that he was a bit surprised at her tone of disdain. "Why, he will wear a frock-coat and a flower in the buttonhole and will bow in my customers. You didn't think my young man was a farmer-boy, did you?"

She hurried ahead of him to the beach, where her father was waiting with his men. Captain Candage had borrowed a dory for the trip. He installed himself in the stern with the steer-oar, and the young man and the girl sat together on the midship seat. The skipper listened to their chat with bland content.

"There's a fellow that's one of our kind, and he ain't trying to court my girl," he had confided to Mr. Speed. "He is spoke for and she knows it. And under them circumstances I believe in encouraging young folks to be sociable."

It was still early morning when they arrived at the island, but the state agent was there ahead of them. They saw him walking briskly about among the scattered houses, puffing on his cigar.

He was making domiciliary visits and was transacting business in a loud tone of voice. That business was paying over the money which the state had allowed for "squatter improvements." In the case of the settlers on Hue and Cry the sums were mere pittances; their improvements consisted of tottering shacks, erected from salvaged flotsam of the ocean and patched over and over with tarred paper.

There was only one building on the island which deserved

the name of dwelling; from this their communicative caller of the preceding evening was removing his scant belongings. His wife and children were helping. He set down a battered table when he met Mayo and his party.

"I'm the only citizen who can get away early and--as you might call it--respectable, gents. I took my hundred and fifty and bought that house-bo't out there." It was an ancient scow, housed over, and evidently had grown venerable in service as a floating fish-market. "They can't drive me off'n the Atlantic Ocean! The others 'ain't woke up to a reelizing sense that they have got to go and that this all means business! I'm getting away early or else they'd all be trying to climb aboard my bo't like the folks wanted to do to Noah's ark when they see that the flood wasn't just a shower." He lifted his table upon his head and marched on, leading his flock.

All the population of the island was out of doors. The women and the children were idling in groups; the men were listlessly following the commissioner on his rounds. No spirit of rebelliousness was evident. The men acted more like inquisitive sheep. They were of that abject variety of poor whites who accept the rains from heaven and bow to the reign of authority with the same unquestioning resignation.

But Mayo discovered promptly an especial reason for the calmness exhibited by these men. Their slow minds had not wakened to full comprehension.

‘What do you men propose to do?’ demanded Captain Mayo of a group which had abandoned the commissioner and had strolled over to inspect the new-comers.

‘There ain’t nothing we can do,’ stated a spokesman.

‘But don’t you understand that this man is here with full power from the state to put you off this island?’

‘Oh, they have threat’ed us before. But something has allus come up. We haven’t been driv’ off.’

‘But this time it’s going to happen! Why don’t you wake up? Where are you going?’

‘That’s for somebody else to worry about. This ain’t any of our picking and choosing.’

‘What’s the use of trying to beat anything sensible through the shells of them quahaugs?’ snarled Captain Candage, with ‘longcoast scorn for the inefficient.

‘Not much use, I’m afraid,’ acknowledged the young man. ‘But look at the children!’

Those pathetic waifs of Hue and Cry were huddled apart, dumb with terror which their elders made no attempt to calm. They were ragged, pitiful, wistful urchins; lads with pinched faces, poor little snippets of girls. Their childish imaginations made of the affair a tragedy which they could not understand. Under their arms they held frightened cats, helpless kittens, or rag dolls. The callous calm of the men mystified them; the weeping of their mothers made their miserable fear more acute. They stared from face to face, trying to comprehend.

‘What can I say to them?’ asked Polly Candage, in a whisper. ‘It’s wicked. They are so frightened.’

‘Perhaps something can be done with that agent. I’m trying to think up something to say to him,’ Mayo told her.

An old man, a very old man, sat on an upturned clamhord and yawled a discordant miserere on a fiddle. His eyes were wide open and sightless. A woman whose tattered skirt only partly concealed the man’s trousers and rubber boots which she wore, occasionally addressed him as ‘father.’

She was piling about him a few articles of furniture which she was lugging out of their home; that house was the upper part of a schooner’s cabin--something the sea had cast up on Hue and Cry. She was obliged to bend nearly double in order to walk about in the shelter. Dogs slinked between the feet of their masters, canine instinct informing them that something evil was abroad that day. The children staring wide-eyed and white-faced, the weeping women, the cowed men who shuffled and mumbled! Among them strode the god of the machine, curt, contemptuous, puffing his cigar! He came past Captain Mayo and his friends.

"I beg your pardon, sir," called the captain; "but are you sure that you are doing this thing just right?"

"Let's see--if I remember, I had a little talk with you last night!" suggested the agent, frostily. "Whom do you represent?" "Myself."

"Just how do you fit into this matter?" "I don't think I do fit--there seem to be too many sharp corners," stated Mayo, not liking the other's insolent manner. "Well, I fit! I have state authority." "So you have told me. May I ask you a question?" "Go ahead, but be lively. This is my busy day." "These people are being rooted up; they don't seem to know what's to become of them. What will be done?"

"I told you last evening! Fools in an institution; able-bodied must go to work. The state proposes--?" "When you say 'state' just what do you mean, sir?" "I mean that I have investigated this matter and I'm running it."

"That's what I thought! The state usually doesn't know much about what its agents are doing."

"You are not doubting my authority, are you?"

"No, but I'm doubting your good judgment."

"Look here, my man!"

"We'd better not lose our tempers," advised Mayo, calmly. "You are a state servant, you say. Then a citizen has a right to talk to you. Let's leave the state out of this, if you question my right. Man to man, now! You're wrong."

The population of the island had drawn close circle about them.

"That's enough talk from you," declared the agent, wrathfully.

"You are trying to make over all at once what it has taken three generations to bring about," insisted Mayo. "You can't do it!"

"You watch me and see if I can't! When I transact any business I'm paid to transact it gets transacted. I might have given these people a few more days if you had not come sticking your oar in here. But now I propose to show you! I'll have 'em off here by nightfall, and every shack burned to the ground."

"Do you mean to say you're going to rub it into these poor folks just because I have tried to say something to help them?"

"I'll show you and them that it isn't safe to monkey with the state when the state gets started."

"Oh, the state be condemned!" exploded Mayo, feeling his own temper getting away from him. "This isn't the state--it's a case of a man's

swelled head!?

‘Get off this island, you and your meddlers,’ commanded the agent.

‘Yes, when we are ready to leave, sir.’

Mayo was wondering at his own obstinacy. He knew that a rather boyish temper, resentment roused by the other man's arrogance, had considerable to do with his stand in the matter, but underneath there was protest at the world's injustice. He felt that he had been having personal experience with that injustice. He knew that he had not come out to Hue and Cry to volunteer as the champion of these unfortunates, but now that he was there and had spoken out it was evident that he must allow himself to be forced into the matter to some extent; the agent had declared in the hearing of all that this interference had settled the doom of the islanders. Polly Candage was standing close to the champion, and she looked at him with eyes that flashed with pride in him and spirit of her own. She reached and took one of the frightened children by the hand.

‘If I have been a little hasty in my remarks I apologize,’ pleaded the captain, anxious to repair the fault. ‘I don't mean to interfere with your duty. I have no right to do so!’

‘You hear what your friend says, after getting you into the mess,’ shouted the agent, so that all might hear. ‘Now he is getting ready to trot away and leave you in your trouble.’

‘You are wrong there, my friend. If you are angry with me, go ahead and have your quarrel with me. Don't bang at me over the shoulders of these poor folks. It isn't a square deal.’

‘They go off to-day--and they go because you have butted into the matter. The whole of you have got to be shown that the state doesn't stand for meddlers after orders have been given.’ Then he added, with malice: ‘You folks better ride this chap down to the beach on a rail. Whatever happens to you is his fault!’

This attempt to shift responsibility as a petty method of retaliation stirred Mayo's anger in good earnest.

The agent was dealing with men who were scarcely more than children in their estimates of affairs; they muttered among themselves and scowled on this stranger who had brought their troubles to a climax.

‘I'm not going to allow you to get away with that kind of talk, Mr. Agent. You know perfectly well that people on the main will not hire these men, even if they _are_ able-bodied. Everybody is down on them. You said that to me last evening. They will be kicked from pillar to post--from this town to that! They will be worse than beggars. And they must drag these women and little children about with them. I will expose this thing!’

‘That exposure will sound fine!’ sneered the commissioner. ‘Exposing a

state officer for doing what the Governor and Council have ordered!?

?Yes, ordered on your advice!?

?Well, it has been ordered! And I'll be backed up! As soon as I can get to a justice I shall swear out a warrant against you for interfering with a state officer.? He flung down the stub of his cigar. ?Listen, you people! Get off this island. Anybody who is here at sunset--man, woman, or child--will be arrested and put in jail for trespassing on state land. Now you'd all better give three cheers for your meddling friend, here!?

?They have allus let us stay, even when they have threatened us before now,? whimpered a man. ?He has poured the fat into the fire for us, that's what he has done!? He pointed his finger at Mayo.

?It's wicked!? gasped the girl. ?These poor folks don't know any better, they are not responsible!?

?Say, look here, you folks!? shouted Mr. Speed, who had been holding himself in with great difficulty. ?It's about time for you to wake up!?

The plutocrat of the house-boat had come up from the beach and had been listening. The whimpering man started to speak again, and the magnate of the island cuffed him soundly; it was plain that this man, who had lived in the best house, had been a personage of authority in the tribe.

?I'm ashamed of the whole caboodle of ye,? he vociferated. ?Here's a gent that's been standing up for us. He's the only man I ever heard say a good word for us or try to help us! Nobody else in the world ever done it! Take off your hats and thank him!?

?I'm in it!? whispered Mayo to the girl. ?For heaven's sake, what am I going to do??

?Do all you can--please, Captain Mayo!?

He stepped forward. The agent began to shout.

?Hold on, sir!? broke in the captain with quarter-deck air that made for obedience and attention. ?You have had your say! Now I'm going to have mine. Listen to me, folks! I'm not the man to get my friends into trouble and then run off and leave 'em. All of you who are kicked out by the state--all men, women, and children who are ready to go to work--come over to me on the main at Maquoit with what stuff you can bring in your dories. I'll be waiting for you there. My name is Boyd Mayo.?

?I'll remember that name, myself,? declared the angry agent. ?You'll be shown that you can't interfere in a state matter.?

?You have turned these folks loose in the world, and I'm going to give 'em a hand when they come to where I am. If you choose to call that interference, come on! It will make a fine story in court!?

He did not stop to shake the grimy hands which were thrust out to him. He pushed his way out of the crowd, and his party followed.

'Meet me yonder on the main, boys,' he called back with a sailor heartiness which they understood. 'We'll see what can be done!'

'Well, what in the infernal blazes can be done?' growled Captain Candage, catching step with the champion.

'I don't know, sir.'

'You can't do nothing any more sensible with them critters than you could with combined cases of the smallpox and the seven years' itch.'

'Father!' cried the girl, reproachfully.

'I know what I'm talking about! This is dum foolishness!'

'Captain Mayo is a noble man! You ought to be ashamed of hanging back when your help is needed.'

'I don't blame you for sassing that skewangled old tywhoopus, sir,' admitted the old skipper. 'I wanted to do it myself. But--'

'I'm afraid I don't deserve much praise,' said Mayo. 'I've been getting back at that agent. He made me mad. I'm apt to go off half-cocked like that.'

'So am I, sir--and I'm always sorry for it. We'd better dig out before that tribe of gazaboos lands on our backs.'

'Oh, not a bit of it! I have given my word, sir. I must see it through.'

'But what are you going to do with 'em?'

'Blessed if I know right now! When I'm good and mad I don't stop to think.'

'Suppose I meet 'em for you and tell 'em you have had a sudden death in your family and have been called away? They won't know the difference,' volunteered Captain Candage. 'And a real death would be lucky for you beside of what's in store if you hang around.'

'I shall hang around, sir. I can't afford to be ashamed of myself.'

'I think you have said quite enough, father,' stated Polly Candage, with vigor.

'I have heard of adopting families before,' said the irreconcilable one, 'but I never heard of any such wholesale operation as this. I'm thinking I'll go climb a tree.'

They embarked in the dory. Mr. Speed and Dolph splashed their oars and

rowed, exchanging looks and not venturing to offer any comment.

"You might auction 'em off to farmers for scarecrows," pursued Captain Candage, still worrying the topic as a dog mouths a bone. "They ain't fit for no more active jobs than that."

"I do hope you'll forgive my father for talking this way," pleaded Polly Candage. She raised brimming eyes to the sympathetic gaze of the young man beside her. "He doesn't understand it the way I do."

"Perhaps I don't exactly understand it myself," he protested.

"But what you are doing for them?"

"I haven't done anything as yet except start trouble for them. Now I must do a little something to square myself."

"There's a reward for good deeds, Captain Mayo, when you help those who cannot help themselves. I believe what the Bible says about casting bread on the waters. It will return to you some day!"

He smiled down on her enthusiasm tolerantly, but he was far from realizing then that this pretty girl, whose eyes were so bright behind her tears, and whose cheeks were flushed with the ardor of her admiration, was speaking to him with the tongue of a sibyl.

XIII ~ A CAPTAIN OP HUMAN FLOTSAM

O what is that which smells so tarry?
I've nothing in the house that's tarry.
It's a tarry sailor, down below,
Kick him out into the snow!
Doo me axna, dinghy a-a-a ma!
Doo me ama-day!
--Doo Me Ama.

Captain Candage growled and complained so persistently during the trip to the main that Mayo expected to be deserted by the querulous skipper the moment the dory's prow touched the beach. But the skipper came dogging at his heels when Mayo set off up the one street of Maquoit.

"May I come along with you?" asked the girl at his side. "I can see that you are thinking up some plan. I do hope I may come!" He gave her his aim for answer.

"I haven't been into this port for some time, Captain Candage, but the last trip I made here, as I remember, a man named Rowley, who runs the general store, was first selectman."

"Is now," grunted the skipper. "They've got into the habit of electing him and can't seem to break off."

When they arrived in front of the store Captain Candage took the lead.

?I may as well go in and introduce you, whatever it is you want of him.
I know Rufe Rowley as well as anybody ever gets to know him.?

Mr. Rowley leaned over his counter and acknowledged the introduction with a flicker of amiability lighting his reserve. But his wan smile faded into blankness and he clawed his chin beard nervously when Mayo informed him that he had invited the evicted folks of Hue and Cry to land on the mainland that day.

?As overseer of the poor in this town I can't allow it, Captain Mayo!?

?Those people must land somewhere.?

?Yes, yes, of course!? admitted Selectman Rowley. ?But not here! I'm beholden to the taxpayers.?

?And I suppose the officers of all the other towns about here will say the same??

?Yes, yes! Of course.?

?Do you still own that old fish-house?? asked the captain, after hesitating for a few moments; ?the sardine-canning plant??

?Yes, sir.?

?You're not using it now??

?No, sir.?

?It isn't paying you any revenue, eh??

?No, sir.?

?Then you ought to be willing to let it pretty cheap--month-to-month lease!?

?Depends on what I'm letting it for.?

?I want to stow those poor people in there till I can arrange further for them, either show the matter up to the state, or get work for them, or something! Will you let me have it??

?No, sir!? declared the selectman, with vigor.

?It's only monthly lease, I repeat. You can prevent them from getting pauper residence here, in case none of my plans work.?

?Don't want 'em here--won't have 'em! I consider taxpayers first!?

?Don't ye ever consider common, ordinary, human decency?? roared Captain

Epps Candage.

It was astonishing interruption. Its violence made it startling. Mayo whirled and stared amazedly at this new recruit.

Captain Candage yanked his fat wallet from his pocket and dammed it down on the counter with a bang which made the selectman's eyes snap.

?You know _me_, Rowley! We've got the money to pay for what we order and contract for. Them folks ain't paupers so long as we stand be-hind 'em. We are bringing 'em ashore, here, because it's right to help 'em get onto their feet. Hold on, Captain Mayo; you let me talk to Rowley! Him and me know how to get sociable in a business talk!?

However, Captain Candage seemed to be seeking sociability by bellowing ferociously, thudding his hard fist on the counter. Mayo was not easily surprised by the temperamental vagaries of queer old 'longcoast crabs like Captain Candage, but this sudden conversion did take away his breath.

?When a close and partickler friend of mine, like this one I've just introduced, comes to you all polite and asks a favor, I want general politeness all around or I'll know the reason why,? shouted the intermediary. ?Look-a-here, Rowley, you pretend to be a terrible Christian sort of a man. When I have been fog-bound here I've tended out on prayer-meetings, and I have heard you holler like a good one about dying grace and salvation is free. I've never heard you say much about living charity that costs something!?

?I claim to be a Christian man,? faltered Rowley, backing away from the banging fist.

?Then act like one. If you don't do it, blast your pelt, I'll post you for a heathen from West Quoddy to Kittery!?

?God bless you, my dad!? whispered the girl, snuggling close to the skipper's shoulder.

?Furthermore, Rowley, besides paying you a fair rental for that old fish-house we'll buy grub for them poor devils out of your store.?

Mr. Rowley caressed his beard and blinked.

?They're like empty nail-kags, and they'll eat a lot of vittles and we've got the money to pay!?

?I have a wallet of my own,? stated Captain Mayo. He had not recovered from his amazement at the sudden shift about of Captain Candage. After all the sullen growling he had been tempted to ask the old skipper to stop tagging him about on his errand of mercy.

?Hear that, Rowley? This is the best friend I've got in the whole world! Brought him in here! Introduced him to you! Here's my daughter! Interested, too! Now, whatever you say, you'd better be sure that you

pick the right words.?

?Well, I'm always ready to help friends,? stated Mr. Rowley.

?Yes, and do business in a slack time,? added Captain Candage.

?I'm willing to show Christian charity to them that's poor and oppressed. But what's the sense in doing it in this case??

?A great many folks in this life need a hard jolt before they turn to and make anything of themselves,? said Captain Mayo. ?The people on Hue and Cry have had their jolt. I do believe, with the right advice and management, they can be made self-supporting. They have been allowed to run loose until now, sir. I have been pulled into the thing all of a sudden, and now that I'm in I'm willing to give up a little time and effort to start 'em off. I haven't much of anything else to do just now,? he added, bitterly.

?Come into my back office,? invited Mr. Rowley.

?Much obleeged--we'll do so,? said Captain Candage. ?You're a bright man, Rowley, and I knowed you'd see the p'int when it was put up to you right and polite.?

The business in the back office was soon settled satisfactorily, and a busy day followed on the heels of that momentous morning. When night fell the men, women, and children whom a benevolent state--through its ?straight-business? agent--had turned loose upon the world to shift for themselves, were located in a single colony in the spacious fish-house.

A few second-hand stoves, hired from Rowley, served to cook the food bought from Rowley, and the families grouped themselves in rooms and behind partitions and arranged the poor belongings they had salvaged from their homes. Even the citizen who had at first resolved to go floating on the bosom of the deep joined the colony.

?It's more sociable,? he explained, ?and my wife don't like to give up her neighbors. Furthermore, I know the whole bunch, root and branch, whims, notions, and all, and they can't fool me. I'll help boss 'em!? He became a lieutenant of value.

This community life under a better roof than had ever sheltered them before in their lives seemed to delight the refugees. Old and young, they enjoyed the new surroundings with the zest of children. They had never taken thought of the morrow in their existence on Hue and Cry. Given food and shelter in this new abode, they did not worry about the problems of the future. They roamed about their domain with the satisfaction of princes in a palace. They did not show any curiosity regarding what was to be done with them. They did not ask Captain Mayo and his associates any questions. They surveyed him with a dumb and sort of canine thankfulness when he moved among them. He himself tried questions on a few of the more intelligent men, hoping that they would show some initiative. They told him with bland serenity that they would leave it all to him.

?But what are you going to do for yourselves??

?Just what you say. You're the boss. Show us the job!?

It was borne in upon him that he had taken a larger contract than he had planned on. Rowley and the taxpayers on the main looked to him on one side, and his dependents on the other.

?It seems to be up to me--to us, I mean,? he told the girl, ruefully, when they were on their way to the widow's cottage that evening. ?It's up to me most of all, however, for I'm the guilty party--I have pulled you and your father in. I'm pegged in here till I can think up some sort of a scheme.?

She had been working all day faithfully by his side, a tactful and indefatigable helper. He would have been all at sea regarding the women and children without her aid, and he told her so gratefully.

?Both my hands and my heart are with you in this thing, Captain Mayo. And I know you'll think of some way out for them--just as you helped us out of the schooner after we had given up all hope.?

?Getting out of the schooner was merely a sailor's trick of the hands, Miss Candage. I don't believe I'll be much of a hand at making over human nature. I have too much of it myself, and the material down in that fish-house would puzzle even a doctor of divinity.?

?Oh, you will think of some plan,? she assured him-with fine loyalty. ?If you will allow me to help in my poor way I'll be proud.?

?I'll not tell you what I think of your help; it might sound like soft talk. But let me tell you that you have one grand old dad!? he declared, earnestly; but although he tried to keep his face straight and his tones steady he looked down at her and immediately lost control of himself. Merriment was mingled with tears in her eyes.

?Isn't he funny?? she gasped, and they halted in their tracks and laughed in chorus with the whole-hearted fervor of youth; that laughter relieved the strain of that anxious day.

?I am not laughing _at_ your father--you understand that!? he assured her.

?Of course, you are not! I know. But you are getting to understand him, just as I understand him. He is only a big child under all his bluster. But he does make me so angry sometimes!?

?You can't tell much about a Yankee till he comes out of his shell, and I agree with you as to the aggravating qualities in Captain Candage. I'm not very patient myself, when I'm provoked! But after this he and I will get along all right.?

They walked on to the cottage.

?Good night,? he said at the door.

?And you have no plan as yet??

?Maybe something will come to me in a dream.?

The dream did not come to him, for his sleep was the profound slumber of exhaustion. He went down in the early dawn and plunged into the sea, and while he was walking back toward the cottage an idea and a conviction presented themselves, hand in hand. The conviction had been with him before--that he could not back out just then and leave those poor people to shift for themselves, as anxious as he was to be off about his own affairs; his undertaking was quixotic, but if he abandoned it at that juncture a queer story would chase him alongcoast, and he knew what sort of esteem mariners entertained for quitters.

However, deep in his heart, he confessed that it was not merely sailor pride that spurred him. The pathetic helplessness of the tribe of Hue and Cry appealed with an insistence he could not deny. He understood them as he understood similar colonies along the coast--children whom an indifferent world classed as man and treated with thoughtless injustice! Work was prescribed for them, as for others! But, they did not know how to work or how to make their work pay them.

The idea which came to him with the conviction that he must help these folks concerned work for them.

After breakfast he took Captain Candage into his confidence, much to the skipper's bland delight at being considered.

?I hope it's something where we can fetch Rowley in,? confessed the skipper. ?I don't care anything for them critters,? he added, assuming brusqueness. ?Don't want it hinted around that I'm getting simple in my old age. But they give me an excuse to bingdoodle Rowley.?

?To carry out that plan I have outlined we need some kind of a packet,? said Mayo.

?Sure! We'll go right to Rowley. He'll know. If there's anything in this section that he 'ain't got his finger on some way--bill of sale, mortgage, debt owed to him or expecting to be owed, then it ain't worth noticing.?

Mr. Rowley listened in his back office. He stroked his beard contentedly and beamed his pleasure when he saw the prospect of making another profitable dicker with men who seemed to be reliable and energetic.

?I had a mortgage on the _Ethel and May_ when Captain Tebbets passed on to the higher life,? he informed them. ?Widder gave up the schooner when I foreclosed, she not desiring to--er--bother with vessel propetty. So I have it free and clear without it standing me such a terrible sum! Shall be pleased to charter to you gents at a reasonable figure. Furthermore, seeing that industry makes for righteousness, so we are told, your plan

of making those critters go to work may be a good one, providing you'll use a club on 'em often enough.?

?From what I've heard of your talk in prayer-meeting I should think you'd advise moral suasion,? suggested Captain Candage, plainly relishing this opportunity to ?bingdoodle.?

?I use common sense, whether it's in religion or politics or business,? snapped Rowley, exhibiting a bit of un-Christian heat.

?It's advisable to ile up common sense with a little charity, and then the machine won't squeak so bad.?

?I wouldn't undertake to trot a dogfish on my knee or sing him to sleep with a penny'r'yal hymn, Captain Candage.?

?I think we can show results without the club,? interposed Mayo, with mild intent to smooth the tone of this repartee.

The clerk called Mr. Rowley out into the store on some matter of special importance, and the selectman departed, coming down rather hard on his heels.

?The old Adam sort of torches up through his shell once in a while,? commented Candage.

?We'd better settle the charter price, sir, before you lay aboard him too much,? advised the young man.

?I just natch'ally can't help harpooning him,? confessed the skipper. ?He's a darned old hypocrite, cheating widders and orphans by choice because they 'ain't got the spunk to razoo back, and I've allus enjoyed fighting such as him. Him and me is due for a row. But I'll hold off the best I can till we have got him beat down.?

Mayo's plan involved the modest venture of chartering a craft suitable for fishing. There was no material for real Banksmen in the Hue and Cry colony, but the run of the men would serve to go trawling for ground and shack fish a few miles off the coast. It was the only scheme which would afford employment for the whole body of dependents; older and more decrepit men and the women and children could dig and shuck clams for the trawl bait. In order to encourage ambition and independence among the abler men of the colony, Mayo suggested that the fishermen be taken on shares, and Captain Candage agreed.

When Mr. Rowley came back into the office he found his match waiting for him in the person of Captain Candage, primed and ready to drive a sharp bargain. At the end of an hour papers representing the charter of the _Ethel and May_ were turned over.

?I reckon it's a good job,? affirmed the skipper, when he and Mayo were outside the Rowley store. ?I have made up my mind to let poor old _Polly_ go to Davy Jones's locker. I wrote to the shippers and the consignees of the lumber last night. If they want it they can go after

it. I may as well fish for the rest of this season! He regarded Captain Mayo with eyes in which query was almost wistful. "Of course, you can depend on me to see to it that you get your share, sir, just as if you were aboard."

"I'm going aboard, Captain Candage."

The old man stopped stock still and stared.

"I haven't anything in sight just now. You need help in getting the thing started right. I'm not going away and leave that gang on your hands until I can see how the plan works out. I'll go as mate with you."

"Not by a blame sight you won't go as no mate with me," objected Candage. "You'll go as skipper and I'll be proud to take orders from you, sir."

They were wrangling amiably on that point when they returned to the widow's cottage. Polly Candage broke the deadlock.

"Why not have two captains? That will be something brand new along the coast!"

"The rest of it is brand new enough without that," blurted her father. "But considering what kind of a crew we've got I guess two captains ain't any too much! I'll be captain number two and I know enough to keep my place."

"I do not think you and I will ever do much quarreling again!" smiled Captain Mayo, extending his hand and receiving Candage's mighty grip. "I am going to start out a few letters, and I'll go now and write them. Until those letters bring me something in the way of a job I am with you, sir."

Captain Candage walked down toward the fish-house with his daughter. "Polly," he declared, after an embarrassed silence, "I have been all wrong in your case, girl. Here and now I give you clearance papers. Sail for home just as soon as you want to. I'm asking no questions! It's none of my business!"

"My little affairs must always be business of yours, father," she returned.. "I love you. I will obey you."

"But I ain't giving off no more orders. I ain't fit to command in the waters where you are sailing, Polly dear. So run along home and be my good girl! I know you will be!"

"I have changed my mind about going home--just now!" Her eyes met his frankly. "I have written to Aunt Zilpah to send me some of my clothes. Father," there was feminine, rather indignant amazement in her tones, "do you know that there isn't a single woman from Hue and Cry who knows how to use a needle?"

"I might have guessed it, judging from the way their young ones and men

folk go looking!?

?Do you realize that those children don't even know their A-B-C's??

?Never heard of any college professors being raised on that island.?

?I am going to take a vacation from the millinery-shop, now that I am down here. I'll show those women how to sew and cook, and I'll teach those children how to read. It's only right--my duty! I couldn't go home and be happy without doing it!?

?Calling that a vacation is putting a polite name to it, Polly.?

?If you could have seen their eyes, father, when I promised to help them, you wouldn't wonder why I am staying.?

?I don't wonder, Polly, my girl! If you had gone away and--and left us--Mayo and me--I should have been mighty disappointed in ye! But I really never thought much about your going--'cause you wouldn't go, I knew, till you had helped all you could.? He put his arm around her. ?I have been worrying about having brought you away. But I guess God had it all figured out for us. I didn't know my own girl the way I ought to have known her. I'd been away too much. But now we're sort of growing up--together--sort of that, ain't we, Polly dear??

She put her arms about his neck and answered him with a kiss.

XIV ~ BEARINGS FOR A NEW COURSE

And now, my brave boys, comes the best of the fun,
It's hands about ship and reef topsails in one;
So it's lay aloft, topman, as the hallow goes down,
And clew down your topsails as the mainyard goes round.
--La Pique.

At the end of that week the _Ethel and May_ had delivered at market her first fare of fish and her captains had divided her first shares. Mayo decided that the results were but of proportion to the modest returns. He was viewing the regeneration of the tribe of Hue and Cry. In their case it had been the right touch at the right time. For years their hopes had been hungry for a chance to make good. Now gratitude inspired them and an almost insane desire to show that they were not worthless drove them to supreme effort. The leaven of the psychology of independence was getting in its work.

The people of Hue and Cry for three generations had been made to feel that they were pariahs. When they had brought their fish or clams to the mainland the buyers were both unjust and contemptuous, as if they were dealing with begging children who must expect only a charitable gift for their product instead of a real man's price. Prices suited the fish-buyers' moods of the day. The islanders had never been admitted

to the plane of straight business like other fishermen. They had always taken meekly what had been offered--whether coin or insults. Therefore, their labor had never returned them full values.

They who bought made the poor wretches feel that it constituted a special favor to take their fish at any price.

They seemed to come into their own that first day at market when the _Ethel and May_ made her bigness in the dock at the city fish-house. Masterful men represented them in the dealings with the buyers. The crew hid their delighted grins behind rough palms when Captain Epps Candage bawled out bidders who were under market quotations; they gazed with awe on Captain Mayo when he read from printed sheets--print being a mystery they had never mastered--and figured with ready pencil and even corrected the buyer, who acknowledged his error and humbly apologized. No more subservient paltering at the doors of fish-houses!

Back home the women and the children and the old folks had a good roof over their heads; the fishers had the deck of a tidy schooner under their feet. Shiftlessness departed from them. After years of oppression they had found their opportunity. More experienced men would have found this new fortune only modest; these men grasped it with juvenile enthusiasm.

They were over the side of the schooner and out in their dories when more cautious trawlsmen hugged the fo'c'sle. On their third trip, because of this daring, they caught the city market bare on a Thursday and made a clean-up.

?I'm told that Saint Peter started this Friday notion because he was in the fish business,? stated Captain Candage, sorting money for the shares. ?All I've got to say is, he done a good job of it.?

Mr. Speed, sailing as mate, always found ready obedience.

Smut-nosed Dolph never listened before to such praise as was lavished by the hungry men over the pannikins which he heaped.

Captain Mayo, casting up accounts one day, was honestly astonished to find that almost a month had passed since he had landed at Maquoit.

?That goes to show how a man will get interested when he is picked up and tossed into a thing,? he said to Polly Candage.

?You are making real men of them, Captain Mayo!? She added, with a laugh, ?And you told me you were no kind of a hand at making over human nature!?

?They are doing it themselves.?

?I will say nothing to wound your modesty, sir.?

?Now I must wake up. I must! There's nothing worth while in the profit for both your father and myself. I want him to have the proposition

alone. There'll be a fair make for him. I didn't intend to stay here so long. I guess I sort of forgot myself.? He went on with his figures.

?But I knew you could not forget,? she ventured, after a pause.

He glanced up and found a queer expression on her countenance. There were frank sympathy and friendliness in her eyes. He had revolved bitter thoughts alone, struggling with a problem he could not master. In sudden emotion--in an unpremeditated letting-go of himself--he reached out for somebody in whom to confide. He needed counsel in a matter where no man could help him. This girl was the only one who could understand.

?There may be letters waiting for me in the city--in the big city where I may be expected,? he blurted. ?I haven't dared to send any.? He hesitated, and then gave way to his impulse. ?Miss Polly, I haven't any right to trouble you with my affairs. I may seem impertinent. But you are a girl! Does a girl usually sit down and think over all the difficulties--when she doesn't get letters--and then make allowances??

?I'm sure she does--when she loves anybody.?

?And yet it may seem very strange. I am worried out of my senses. I don't know what to do.?

She was silent for a long time, looking away from him and twisting her hands in her lap; she was plainly searching her soul for inspiration--and courage!

?You think she will understand the situation?? he insisted.

?She ought to.?

?But no word from me! Silence for weeks!?

Her voice was low, but she evidently had found courage. ?I have not heard one word--not a letter has come to me--since I left my aunt's home.?

?Do you feel sure that he loves you just the same? You don't need letters??

?Oh no! I don't need letters.?

?But in my case??

?I could see that she loves you very much. She stood out before them all, Captain Mayo. That sort of a girl does not need letters.?

?You have put new courage in me. I believe you understand just how a girl would feel. You know a Yankee! He expects to find a friend just where he left him, in the matter of affection.?

?A girl does not need to be a Yankee to be that way in her love.?

?I can't sneak around to her by the back way--I can't do that!? he cried. ?I don't want to be ashamed of myself. I don't want to bring more trouble to her. Don't you think she will wait for me until I can come--and come right!?

?She will wait for you, sir. It's the nature of women to wait--when they love.?

?But I cannot ask her to wait forever. That's why I must go away and try to make good.? He set his teeth, and his jaw muscles were ridged. ?I believe a man can get what he goes after in the right spirit, Miss Polly.? He swung off the porch and left her.

The fog was heavy on shore and sea that day, holding the _Ethel and May_ in port. He disappeared into the stifling mist, and the girl sat and stared into that vacancy for a long time.

Mayo rowed out to the schooner, which was anchored in the harbor roads. He was carrying his accounts to Captain Candage.

Standing and facing forward as he rowed, he came suddenly upon a big steam-yacht which had stolen into the cove through the fog and was anchored in his course. She was the _Sprite_, and he had formed a 'longshore acquaintance with her skipper that summer, meeting him in harbors where the _Sprite_ and _Olenia_ had been neighbors in the anchorage. He stopped rowing and allowed the dory to drift. He noted that the blue flag was flying at the main starboard spreader, announcing the absence of the owner, and he understood that he could call for the skipper without embarrassing that gentleman. One of the crew was putting covers on the brasswork forward.

?Compliments to Captain Trott, and tell him that Captain Mayo is at the gangway.?

The skipper appeared promptly, replying to the hail before the sailor had stirred. ?Come aboard, sir.?

?I'll not bother you that much, captain. I can ask my question just as well from here. Do you know of any good opening for a man of my size??

The captain of the _Sprite_ came to the rail and did not reply promptly.

?I have left the _Olenia_ and I'm looking for something.?

Captain Trott started for the gangway. ?Oh, you needn't trouble to come down, sir.?

?I'd rather, Captain Mayo.? After he had descended he squatted on the platform at the foot of the ladder and held the dory close, grasping the gunwale. ?What are you doing for yourself these days??

Mayo had no relish for a long story. ?I'm waiting to grab in on something,? he replied.

Captain Trott did not show any alacrity in getting to the subject which Mayo had broached. ?It has set in pretty thick, hasn't it? I have been ordered in here to wait for my folks; they're visiting at some big estate up-river.?

?But about the chance for a job, captain!?

?Look here! What kind of a run-in did you have with the _Olenia_ owner??

Mayo opened his mouth and then promptly closed it. He could not reveal the nature of the trouble between himself and his former employer.

?We had words,? he said, stiffly.

?Yes, I reckon so! But the rest of it!?

?That's all.?

?You needn't tell me any more than you feel like doing, of course,? said Captain Trott. ?But I have to tell _you_ that Mr. Marston has come out with some pretty fierce talk for an owner to make. He has made quite a business of circulating that talk. I didn't realize that you are of so much importance in the world, Mayo,? he added, dryly.

?I don't know what he is saying.?

?Didn't you leave him in the night--without notice, or something of the kind??

?It was an accident.?

?I hope you have a good story to back you up, Captain Mayo, for I have liked you mighty well ever since meeting you first. What is behind it??

?I can't tell you.?

?But you can tell somebody--somebody who can straighten the thing out for you, can't you??

?No, Captain Trott.?

?Well, you know what has happened in your case, don't you?? The skipper of the _Sprite_ exhibited a little testiness at being barred out of Mayo's confidence.

The young man shook his head.

?Marston claims that you mutinied and deserted him--slipped away in the night--threw up your job on the high seas--left him to work to New York with a short crew--the mate as captain.?

?That's an infernal lie!?

?Then come forward and show him up.?

?I cannot talk about the case. I have my reasons--good ones!?

?I'm sorry for you, Mayo. You are done in the yachting game, I'm afraid. He'll blacklist you in every yacht club from Bar Harbor to Miami. I have heard my folks talking about it. He seems to have a terrible grudge--more than a big man usually bothers about in the case of a skipper.?

Mayo set his oar against the edge of the platform and pushed off. The skipper called after him, but he was instantly swallowed up by the fog and did not reply.

On board the _Ethel and May_ his ragged but cheery crew were baiting up, hooking clams upon the ganging hooks, and coiling lines into tubs. The men grinned greeting when he swung over the rail. He scowled at them; he even turned a glowering look on Captain Candage when he met the latter on the quarter-deck.

?Yes, sir! I see how it is! You're getting cussed sick of this two-cent game here,? said Candage, mournfully. ?I don't blame ye. We ain't in your class, here, Captain Mayo.? He took the papers which the young man held out to him. ?I suppose this is the last time we'll share, you and me. I'll miss ye devilish bad. I'd rather go for nothing and let you have it all than lose ye. But, of course, it ain't no use to argue or coax.?

Mayo went and sat on the rail, folding his arms, and did not reply. The old skipper trudged forward, his head bowed, his hands clutched behind his back. When he returned Mayo stood up and put his hand on the old man's shoulder.

?Captain Candage, please don't misunderstand me. Just at present I feel that the only friends I have in the world are here. Don't mind the way I acted just now when I came on board. I have had a lot of trouble--I'm having more of it. I'm not going to leave you just yet. I want to stay aboard until I can think it all over--can get my grip. That is, if you're satisfied to have it that way!?

?Satisfied! Jumping Cicero!?! exploded Captain Candage. He took the dory and rowed ashore. He found his daughter gazing into the fog from the porch of the widow's cottage. ?He is going to stay a while longer,? he informed her, rapturously. ?Something has happened. Do you suppose that girl has thrown him over??

?Father, do you dare to chuckle because a friend is in trouble??

?I'll laugh and slap my leg if he ever gets shet of that hity-tity girl,? he rejoined, stoutly.

?I am astonished--I am ashamed of you, father!?

?Polly dear, be honest with your dad!?! he pleaded. ?Do you want to see him married off to her??

"I certainly do. I only wish I might help him." Her lips were white, her voice trembled. She got up and hurried into the house.

"I'll be cussed if I understand wimmen," declared Captain Candage, fiddling his finger under his nose. "That feller she has picked out for herself must be the Emp'ror of Peeroo."

Captain Mayo did not come ashore again before the _Ethel and May_ sailed.

The fog cleared that night and they smashed out to the fishing-grounds ahead of a cracking breeze, and had their trawls down in the early dawn. At sundown, trailed by a wavering banner of screaming gulls who gobbled the "ports" tossed over by the busy crew cleaning their catch, they were docking at the city fish-house.

"Lucky again," commented Captain Candage, returning from his sharp dicker with the buyer. "The city critters are all hungry for haddock, and that's just what we hit to-day." He surveyed his gloomy partner with sympathetic concern. "Why don't you take a run uptown?" he suggested. "You're sticking too close to this packet for a young man. Furthermore, if you see a store open buy me a box of paper collars. Rowley hain't got my size!"

Mayo, unreconciled and uneasy, hating that day the sound of the flapping, sliding fish as they were pitchforked into the tubs for hoisting, annoyed by the yawling of pulleys and realizing that his nerves were not right at all, obeyed the suggestion. He had a secret errand of his own, yielding to a half-hope; he went to the general-delivery window of the post-office and asked for mail. He knew that love makes keen guesses. The _Olenia_ had visited that harbor frequently for mail. But there was nothing for him. He strolled about the streets, nursing his melancholy, forgetting Captain Candage's commission, envying the contentment shown by others.

In that mood he would have avoided Captain Zoradus Wass if he had spied that boisterously cheerful mariner in season. But the captain had him by the arm and was dancing him about the sidewalk, showing more affability than was his wont.

"Heifers o' Herod! youngster," shouted the grizzled master, "have you come looking for me?"

"No," faltered Mayo. "Did you want to see me?"

"Have worn taps off my boots to-day chasing from shipping commissioner's office to every hole and corner along the water-front. Heard you had quit aboard a yacht, and reckoned you had got sensible again and wanted real work."

"If you had asked down among the fish-houses you might have got on track of me, sir." Mayo's tone was somber.

?Fish! You fishing?? demanded Captain Wass, with incredulity.

?Yes, and on a chartered smack at that--shack-fishing on shares!? Mayo was sourly resolved to paint his low estate in black colors. ?And I have concluded it's about all I'm fit for.?

?That's fine, seaman-like talk to come from a young chap I have trained up to master's papers, giving him two years in my pilot-house. I was afraid you were going astern, you young cuss, when I heard you'd gone skipper of a yacht, but I didn't think it was as bad as all this.?

?My yachting business is done, sir.?

?Thank the bald-headed Nicodemus! There's hopes of you. Did anybody tell you I've been looking for you??

?No, sir!?

?Glad of it. Now I can tell you myself. Do you know where I am now??

?I heard you were on a Vose line freighter, sir.?

?Don't know who told you that--but it wasn't Ananias. You're right. She's the old _Nequasset_, handed back to me again because I'm the only one who understands her cussed fool notions. First mate got drunk yesterday and broke second mate's leg in the scuffle--one is in jail and t'other in the hospital, and never neither of 'em will step aboard any ship with me again. I sail at daybreak, bade to the Chesapeake for steel rails. Got your papers??

?Yes, sir!?

?Come along. You're first mate.?

?Do you really want me, sir??

?Want you? Confound it all, I've got you! In about half a day I'll have all the yacht notions shaken out of you and the fish-scales stripped off, and then you'll be what you was when I let you go--the smartest youngster I ever trained.?

Mayo obeyed the thrust of the jubilant master's arm and went along.
?I'll go and explain to Captain Can-dage, my partner.?

?All right. I'll go along, too, and help you make it short.?

As they walked along Captain Wass inspected his companion critically.

?High living aboard Marston's yacht make you dyspeptic, son? You look as if your vittles hadn't been agreeing with you.?

?My health is all right, sir.?

?Heard you had trouble with Marston,? proceeded the old skipper, with

brutal frankness. 'Anybody who has trouble with that damnation pirate comes well recommended to me. He is trying to steal every steamboat line on this coast. Thank Gawd, he can never get his claws on the old Vose line. Some great doings in the steamboat business are ahead, Mayo. Reckon it's a good line to be in if you like fight and want to make your bigness.'

Mayo walked on in silence. He was troubled by this added information that news of his affair with Marston had gained such wide currency. However, he was glad that this new opportunity offered him a chance to hide himself in the isolation of a freighter's pilot-house.

Captain Candage received the news with meek resignation. 'I knowed it would have to come,' he said. 'Couldn't expect much else. Howsomever, it ain't comforting.'

'Can't keep a good boy like this pawing around in fish gurry,' stated Captain Wass.

'I know it, and I wish him well and all the best!'

Their leave-taking, presided over by the peremptory master of the _Nequasset_, was short.

'I'll probably have a chance to see you when we come here again,' called Mayo from the wharf, looking down into the mournful countenance of the skipper. 'Perhaps I'll have time to run down to Maquoit while we are discharging. At any rate, explain it all for me, especially to your daughter.'

'I'll tell all concerned just what's right,' Captain Candage assured him. 'I'll tell her for you.'

She was on the beach when the skipper came rowing in alone from the _Ethel and May_.

'He's gone,' he called to her. 'Of course we couldn't keep him. He's too smart to stay on a job like this.'

When they were on their way up to the widow's cottage he stole side-glances at her, and her silence distressed him.

'Let's see! He says to me--if I can remember it right--he says, says he, 'Take my best respects and '--let's see--yes, 'take my best respects and love to your Polly--'?

'Father! Please don't fib.'

'It's just as I remember it, dear. 'Especial,' he says. I remember that! 'Especial,' he says. And he looked mighty sad, dear, mighty sad.' He put his arm about her. 'There are a lot of sad things in this world for everybody, Polly. Sometimes things get so blamed mixed up that I feel like going off and climbing a tree!'

XV ~ THE RULES OF THE ROAD

Now the _Dreadnought's_ a-sailing the Atlantic so wide,
Where the high, roaring seas roll along her black side.
Her sailors like lions walk the deck to and fro,
She's the Liverpool packet--O Lord let her go!
--Song of the Flash Packet.

On a day in early August the _Nequasset_ came walloping laboriously up-coast through a dungeon fog, steel rails her dragging burden, caution her watchword.

The needle of her indicator marked 'Half speed,' and it really meant half speed. Captain Zoradus Wass made scripture of the rules laid down by the Department of Commerce and Labor. There was no tricky slipping-over under his sway--no finger-at-nose connivance between the pilot-house and the chief engineer's grille platform. No, Captain Wass was not that kind of a man, though the fog had held in front of him two days, vapor thick as feathers in a tick, and he had averaged not much over six nautical miles an hour, and was bitterly aware that the rate of freight on steel rails was sixty-five cents a ton.

'And as I've been telling you, at sixty-five cents there's about as much profit as there would be in swapping hard dollars from one hand to the other and depending on what silver you can rub off,' said Captain Wass to First-mate Mayo.

The captain was holding the knob of the whistle-pull in constant clutch. Regularly every minute _Nequasset's_ prolonged blast sounded, strictly according to the rules of the road.

Her voice started with a complaining squawk, was full toned for a few moments, then trailed off into more querulousness; the timbre of that tone seemed to fit with Captain Wass's mood.

'It's tough times when a cargo-carrier has to figger so fine that she can lose profit on account of what the men eat,' he went on. 'If you're two days late, minding rules in a fog, owners ask what the tophet's the matter with you! This kind of business don't need steamboat men any longer; it calls for boarding-house keepers who can cut sirloin steak off'n a critter clear to the horn, and who are handy in turning sharp corners on left-overs. I'll buy a book of cooking receets and try to turn in dividends.'

The captain was broad-bowed, like the _Nequasset_, he sagged on short legs as if he carried a cargo fully as heavy as steel rails, his white whiskers streamed away from his cutwater nose like the froth kicked up by the old freighter's forefoot. He chewed slowly, conscientiously and continuously on tobacco which bulged in his cheek; his jaws, moving as steadily as a pendulum swings, seemed to set the time for the isochronal whistle-blast. Sixty ruminating jaw-wags, then he spat into the fog,

then the blast--correct to the clock's tide!

The windows of the pilot-house were dropped into their casings, so that all sounds might be admitted; the wet breeze beaded the skipper's whiskers and dampened the mate's crisp hair. While the mate leaned from a window, ear cocked for signals, the captain gave him more of the critical inspection in which he had been indulging when occasion served.

Furthermore, Captain Wass went on pecking around the edges of a topic which he had been attacking from time to time with clumsy attempt at artful inquisition.

?As bad as it is on a freighter, I reckon you ain't sorry you're off that yacht, son??

?I'm not sorry, sir.?

?From what you told me, the owner was around meddling all the time.?

?I don't remember that I ever said so, sir.?

?Oh, I thought you did,? grunted Captain Wass, and he covered his momentary check by sounding the whistle.

?Now that you are back in the steamboat business, of course you're a steamboat man. Have the interests of your owners at heart,? he resumed.

?Certainly, sir.?

?It would be a lot of help to the regular steamboat men--the good old stand-bys--if they could get some kind of a line on what them Wall Street cusses are gunning through with Marston leading 'em--or, at leastways, he's supposed to be leading. He hides away in the middle of the web and lets the other spiders run and fetch. But it's Marston's scheme, you can bet on that! What do you think??

?I haven't thought anything about it, Captain Wass.?? ?But how could you help thinking, catching a word here and a word there, aboard that yacht??

?I never listened--I never heard anything.?

?But he had them other spiders aboard--seen 'em myself through my spy-glass when you passed us one day in June.?

?I suppose they talked together aft, but my duty was forward, sir.?

?It's too bad you didn't have a flea put into your ear about getting a line on Marston's scheme, whatever it is. You could have helped the real boys in this game!?

Mayo did not reply.

Captain Wass showed a resolve to quit pecking at the edges and make a

dab at the center of the subject. He pulled the whistle, released the knob, and turned back to the window, setting his elbows on the casing.

"Son, you ain't in love with that pirate Marston, are you?"

"No, sir!" replied the young man, with bitterness that could not be doubted.

"Well, how about your being in love with his daughter?" The caustic humor in the old skipper's tones robbed the question of some of its brutal bluntness, and Mayo was accustomed to Captain Wass's brand of humor. The young man did not turn his head for a few moments; he continued to look into the fog as if intent on his duty; he was trying to get command of himself, fully aware that resentment would not work in the case of Zoradus Wass. When Mayo did face the skipper, the latter was discomposed in his turn, for Mayo showed his even teeth in a cordial smile.

"Do you think I have been trying the chauffeur trick in order to catch an heiress, sir?"

"Well, there's quite a gab-wireless operating along-coast and sailors don't always keep their yawp closed after they have taken a man's money to keep still," stated Captain Wass, pointedly. "I wouldn't blame you for grabbing in. You're good-looking enough to do what others have done in like cases."

"Thank you, sir. What's the rest of the joke?"

"I never joke," retorted the skipper, turning and pulling the whistle-cord. "Nequasset's" squall rose and died down in her brazen throat. "Her name is Alma?" he prodded. "Something of a clipper. If Marston ever makes you general manager, put me into a better job than this, will you?"

"I will, sir!"

The skipper gave his mate a disgusted stare. "You're a devil of a man to keep up a conversation with!" He spat against the wall of the fog and again let loose the freighter's hoarse lament.

From somewhere, ahead, a horn wailed, dividing its call into two blasts.

"Port tack and headed acrost us," snarled the master, after a sniff at the air and a squint at the sluggish ripple.

"Why ain't the infernal fool anchored, instead of drifting around underfoot? How does he bear, Mr. Mayo?" He was now back to pilot-house formality with his mate.

"Two points and a half, starboard bow, sir. And there's another chap giving one horn in about the same direction."

"Another drifter--not wind enough for 'em to know what tack they're

really on. Well, there's always Article Twenty-seven to fall back on,? grumbled the skipper. He quoted sarcastically in the tone in which that rule is mouthed so often in pilot-houses along coast: '?Due regard shall be had to all dangers of navigation and collision, and to any special circumstances which may render a departure from the above rules necessary, and so forth and et cetera. Meaning, thank the Lord, that a steamer can always run away from a gad-slammed schooner, even at half speed. Hope if it ever comes to a showdown the secretary of the bureau of commerce will agree with me. Ease her off to starboard, Mr. Mayo, till we bring 'em abeam.?

The mate gave a quick glance at the compass. '?East by nothe, Jack,?' he commanded.

'?East by nothe, sir,?' repeated the quartermaster in mechanical tones, spinning the big wheel to the left.

It was evident that the _Nequasset_ had considerable company on the sea that day. A little abaft her beam a tugboat was blowing one long and two short, indicating her tow. She had been their '?chum?' for some time, and Mayo had occasionally taken her bearings by sound and compass and knew that the freighter was slowly forging ahead. He figured, listening again to the horns, that the Nequasset was headed to clear all.

'?You take a skipper who studies his book and is always ready to look the department in the eye, without flinching, he has to mind his own business and mind the other fellow's, too,?' said Captain Wass, continuing his monologue of grouch. '?Dodging here and there, keeping out of the way, two days behind schedule, meat three times a day or else you can't keep a crew, and everybody hearty at meal-time! My owners have never told me to let the law go to hoot and ram her for all she's worth! But when I carry in my accounts they seem to be trying to think up language that tells a man to do a thing, and yet doesn't tell him. What's that?? He put his head far out of the window.

Floating out of the fog came a dull, grunting sound, a faint and far-away diapason, a marine whistle which announced a big chap.

'?I should say it is a Union liner, sir--either the _Triton_ or _Neptune_.?

They listened. They waited two long minutes for another signal.

'?Seems to be taking up his full, legal time,?' growled Captain Wass. '?Since Marston has gobbled that line maybe he has put on a special register to keep tabs on tooting--thinks it's waste of steam and will reduce dividends. Expects us little fellows to do the squawking!?

The big whistle boomed again, dead ahead, and so much nearer that it provoked the skipper to lash out a round oath.

'?He is reeling off eighteen knots for a gait, or you can use my head for a rivet nut!?' He yanked the cord and the freighter howled angrily. The other replied with bellowing roar--autocratic, domineering. With irony,

with vindictiveness, Captain Wass pitched his voice in sarcastic nasal tone and recited another rule--thereby trying to express his irate opinion of the lawlessness of other men.

?Article Sixteen, Mr. Mayo! He probably carries it in his watch-case instead of his girl's picture! Nice reading for a rainy day! 'A steam-vessel hearing apparently forward of her beam the fog signal of a vessel, the position of which is not ascertained, shall, so far as the circumstances of the case permit, stop her engines and then navigate with caution until all danger of collision is over.' Hooray for the rules!?

Captain Wass hooked a gnarled finger into the loop of the bell-pull and yanked upward viciously. A dull clang sounded far below. He pulled again and the vibration of the engine ceased.

?Gad rabbit it! I'll go the whole hog as the department orders! If he bangs into me we'll see who comes off best at the hearing.?

He gave the bell-loop two quick jerks; then he shifted his hand to another pull and the jingle bell sounded in the engine-room--the _Nequasset_ was ordered to make full speed astern.

The freighter shook and shivered when the screw began to reverse, pulling at the frothing sea, clawing frantically to haul her to a stop. The skipper then gave three resentful, protesting whistle-blasts.

But the reply he received from ahead was a hoarse, prolonged howl. In it there was no hint that the big fellow proposed to heed the protest of the three blasts. It was insistence on right of way, the insolence of the swaggering express liner making time in competition with rivals; it hinted confident opinion that smaller chaps would better get out of the way.

The on-comer had received a signal which served to justify that opinion. Captain Wass had docilely announced that he was going full speed astern, his whistle-blasts had declared that he had stepped off the sidewalk of the ocean lane--as usual! The big fellows knew that the little chaps would do it!

Mate Mayo leaned from the window, his jaw muscles tense, anxiety in his eyes.

The big whistle now was fairly shaking the curtains of the mists and was not giving him any comforting assurance that the liner was swinging to avoid them.

The quartermaster was taking the situation more philosophically than his superiors. He hummed:

Sez all the little fishes that swim to and fro,
She's the Liverpool packet--O Lord let her go!

?Does that gor-righteously fool ahead there think I blowed three

whistles to salute Marston's birthday or their last dividend, Mr. Mayo?? shouted Captain Wass.

Fogs are freaky; ocean mists are often eerie in movements. There are strata, there are eddying air-currents which rend the curtain or shred the massing vapors. The men in the pilot-house of the _Nequasset_ suddenly found their range of vision widened. The fog did not clear; it became more tenuous and showed an area of the sea. It was like a thin veil which disclosed dimly what it distorted and magnified.

In a fog, experienced steamboat men always examine with earnest gaze the line where fog and ocean merge. They do not stare up into the fog, trying to distinguish the loom of an on-coming craft; they are able to discern first of all the white line of foam marking the vessel's cutwater kick-up or her wake.

?There she comes, sir!? announced the mate. He pointed his finger at a foaming upthrust of tossing water.

?Yes, sir! Eighteen knots and both eyes shut!? But there was relief mingled with the resentment. His quick glance informed him that the liner would pass the _Nequasset_ well to starboard--her bow showed a divergence of at least two points from the freighter's course. But the next instant Captain Wass yelped a shout of angry alarm. ?Yes, both eyes shut!? he repeated.

Right in line with the liner's threshing bow was a fisherman's Hampton boat, disclosed as the fog drifted.

The passenger-steamer gave forth a half-dozen ?woofs? from her whistle, answering the freighter's staccato warning, but gave no signs of slowing. But that they were making an attempt to dodge the mite in their path was made known by a shout from their lookout and his shrill call: ?Port! Hard over!?

The fisherman had all the alertness of his kind, trained by dangers and ever-present prospect of mischance to grab at desperate measures. He leaped forward and pulled out his mast and tossed mast and sail overboard.

He knew that he must encounter the tremendous wash and wake of the rushing hull. His shell of a boat, if made topheavy by the sail, would stand small show.

?He's a goner!? gasped Captain Wass. ?She's a-going to tramp him plumb underfoot--unless she's going to get up a little more speed and jump over him!? he added, moved to bitter sarcasm.

They saw the little boat go into eclipse behind the black prow, the first lift of the churning waters flipping the cockleshell as a coin is snapped by the thumb. The fisherman was not in view--he had thrown himself flat in the bottom of his boat.

?He's under for keeps,? stated the skipper, with conviction. ?If her

bilge-keel doesn't cooper him, her port propeller will!?

So rapidly was the liner moving, so abrupt her swoop to the right, that she leaned far over and showed them the red of her huge bilge. Her high speed enabled her to make an especially quick turn. As they gaped, her two stacks swung almost into line. Her shearing bow menaced the _Nequasset_.

?The condemned old hellion is going to nail _us_, now! bellowed Captain Wass. In his panic and his fury he leaped up and down, pulling at the whistle-cord.

She was almost upon them--only a few hundred yards of gray water separated the two steamers.

She was the _Triton!_

Her name was disclosed on her bow. Her red hawse-holes showed like glowering and savage eyes. There was indescribably brutal threat in this sudden dart in their direction. It was as if a sea monster had swallowed an insect in the shape of a Hampton boat and now sought a real mouthful. But her great rudder swung to the quick pull of her steam steering-gear and again she sheered, cutting a letter s. The movement brought her past the stern of the _Nequasset_, a biscuit-toss away. The mighty surge of her roaring passage lifted the freighter's bulk aft, and the huge wave that was crowded between the two hulls crowned itself with frothing white and slapped a good, generous ton of green water over the smaller steamer's superstructure.

Captain Wass grabbed down his megaphone; he wanted to submit a few remarks which seemed to fit the incident.

But the captain of the Triton was beforehand with a celerity which matched the up-to-date speed of his craft. He was bellowing through the huge funnel which a quartermaster was holding for him. His language was terrific. He cursed freighters in most able style. He asked why the _Nequasset_ was loafing there in the seaway without steering headway on her! That amazing query took away Captain Wass's breath and all power to retort. Asking that of a man who had obeyed the law to the letter! A fellow who was banging through the fog at eighteen knots' speed blaming a conscientious skipper because the latter had stopped so as to get out of the way!

And, above all, going so fast when he asked the question that he was out of ear-shot before suitable answer could be returned!

Captain Wass revolved those whirling thoughts in a brain which flamed and showed its fires through the skipper's wide-propped eyes.

Then he banged his megaphone across the pilot-house. It rebounded against him, and he kicked it into a corner. He began to whack his fist against a broad placard which was tacked up under his license as master. The cardboard was freshly white, and its tacks were bright, showing that it had been recently added as a feature of the pilot-house. Big letters

in red ink at the top counseled, "Safety First." Other big letters at the bottom warned, "Take No Chances." The center lettering advised shipmasters that in case of accident the guilty parties would feel all the weight of Uncle Sam's heavy palm; it was the latest output from the Department of Commerce and Labor, and bore the signature of the honorable secretary of the bureau.

Mayo noted that his chief was wholly absorbed in this speechless activity; therefore he pulled the bells which stopped the backward churning and sent the freighter on her way. They passed the fisherman in the Hampton boat; he was bailing his craft.

"That was a rather close call, sir! I am glad that I have been trained by you to be a careful man. You took no chances!?"

"And where have I got to by obeying the United States rules and never taking chances, Mr. Mayo? At sixty-five I'm master of a freight-scow, sassed by owners ashore and sassed on the high seas by fellows like that one who just slammed past us! If that passenger-steamer had hit me the lawyers would have shoved the tar end of the stick into my hands! It's all for the good of the hellbent fellows the way things are arranged in this world at the present time. I'll be lucky if he doesn't lodge complaint against me when he gets to New York, saying that I got in his way!?" He cut off a fresh sliver of black plug and took his position at the whistle-pull. "You'd better go get an heiress," he advised his mate, sourly. "Being an old-fashioned skipper in these days of steam-boating is what I'm too polite to name. And as to being the other kind--well, you have just seen him whang past!?"

However, as they went wallowing up the coast, their old tub sagging with the weight of the rails under her hatches, Mate Mayo felt considerable of a young man's ambitious envy of that spick-and-span swaggerer who had yelled anathema from the pilot-house of the "Triton". It was real steamboating, he reflected, even if the demands of owners and dividend-seekers did compel a master to take his luck between his teeth and gallop down the seas.

XVI ~ MILLIONS AND A MITE

To Tiffany's I took her,
I did not mind expense;
I bought her two gold ear-rings,
They cost me fifty cents.
And a-a-away, you santee!
My dear Annie!
O you New York girls!
Can't you dance the polka!
--Shanty, "The Lime Juicer."

Mr. Ralph Bradish, using one of the booth telephones in the Wall Street offices of Marston & Waller, earnestly asked the cashier of an up-town

restaurant, as a special favor, to hold for twenty-four hours the personal check, amount twenty-five dollars, given by Mr. Bradish the evening before.

Ten minutes later, with the utmost nonchalance and quite certain that the document was as good as wheat, Mr. Bradish signed a check for one million two hundred and fifty thousand dollars.

That amount in no measure astonished him. He was quite used to signing smashing-big checks when he was called into the presence of Julius Marston. Once, the amount named was two millions. And there had been numbers and numbers of what Mr. Bradish mentally termed "piker checks"--a hundred thousand, two and three hundred thousand. And he had never been obliged to request any hold up on those checks for want of funds. Because, in each instance, there had been a magic, printed line along which Mr. Bradish had splashed his signature.

Before he blotted the ink on this check Bradish glanced, with only idle curiosity, to note in what capacity he was serving this time. The printed line announced to him that he was "Treasurer, the Paramount Coast Transportation Company, Inc." He remembered that in the past he had signed as treasurer of the "Union Securities Company," the "Amalgamated Holding Company," and for other corporations sponsoring railroads and big industries with whose destinies Julius Marston, financier, appeared to have much to do. It was evident that Financier Marston preferred to have a forty-dollar-a-week clerk do the menial work of check-signing, or at least to have that clerk's name in evidence instead of Marston's own.

That modesty about having his name appear in public on a check seemed to attach to the business habits of Mr. Marston.

Mighty few person were ever admitted to this inner sanctuary where Bradish sat facing his employer across the flat-topped desk. And men who saw that employer outside his office did not turn their heads to stare after him or point respectful finger at him or remark to somebody else, "There's the big Julius Marston." In the first place, Mr. Marston was not big in a physical sense, and there was nothing about him which would attract attention or cause him to be remarked in a crowd. And only a few persons really knew him, anyway.

He sat in his massive chair; one hand propped on the arm, his elbow akimbo, and with the other hand plucked slowly at the narrow strip of beard which extended from his lower lip to the peaked end of his chin.

"Very well, Mr. Bradish," he remarked, after the latter had lifted the blotter from the check.

Bradish rose and bowed, and started to leave. He was a tall and shapely young man, with a waist, with a carriage. His garb was up-to-the-minute fashion--repressed. He was a study in brown, as to fabric of attire and its accessories. One of those white-faced chaps who always look a bit bored, with a touch of up-to-date cynicism! One of those fellows who listen much and who say little!

"Just a moment, Bradish," invited Marston, and the young man stopped. "I like your way in these matters. You don't ask questions. You show no silly interest in any check you sign."

Bradish reflected an instant on the check in the restaurant cashier's drawer, and pinched his thin lips a little more tightly.

"I'm quite sure you don't do any broadcast talking about the nature of these special duties." The financier pointed to the check. "I'll say quite frankly that I didn't select you for this service until I had ascertained that you did no talking about your own affairs in the office with my other clerks."

Bradish inclined his head respectfully.

"In financial matters it is necessary to pick men carefully. I trust you understand my attitude. These transactions are quite legitimate. But modern methods of high finance make it necessary to manipulate the details a little. Your attitude in accepting these duties, as a matter of course is very gratifying from a business standpoint. As a little mark of our confidence in you, you will receive seventy-five dollars per week hereafter."

"Thank you."

Mr. Martson allowed himself a quick, dry smile. "This isn't a bribe, you understand. There is nothing attached to this nominal service which requires bribing. We merely want to make it worth while for a prudent and close-mouthed young man to remain with us."

A buzzer, as unobtrusive as were all the characteristics of Financier Marston, sounded its meek purr.

"Yes," he murmured into the receiver of the telephone which communicated with the watchful picket of the Marston & Waller offices. "Who? Oh, she may come in at once."

"Wait here a moment, if you please, Mr. Bradish. It is my daughter who has dropped in for a moment's word with me. I have something more for you to attend to."

Bradish walked to one of the windows. He stared sharply at the girl who hurried in. Her hat and face were shrouded in an automobile veil, and the cloistered light of the big room helped to conceal her features. But Bradish seemed to recognize something about her in spite of the vagueness of outline. When she spoke to her father the young man's eyes snapped in true astonishment.

"I couldn't explain it very well over the telephone, papa, so I came right down. Do forgive me if I bother you for just a minute." She glanced quickly at the young man beside the window, but found him merely an outline against the light.

"Only one of our clerks," said her father. "What is it, my girl?"

"It's Nan Burgess's house-party at Kingston! There's to be an automobile parade--all decorated--at the fête, and I want to go in our big car, and have it two days. I was afraid you'd say no if I asked you over the telephone, but now that I'm right here, looking you in the eyes with all the coaxing power of my soul, you just can't refuse, can you, papa?"

"I think perhaps I would have consented over the telephone, Alma."

"Then I may take the car?" Her playful tones rose in ecstatic crescendo. The impulsiveness of her nature was displayed by her manner in accepting this favor. She danced to her father and threw her arms about him. She exhibited as much delight as if he had bestowed upon her a gift of priceless pearls. The exuberance of her joy appeared to annoy him a bit.

"Gently, gently, Alma! If you waste your thanks in this manner for a little favor, what will you do some day for superlatives when you are really eager to thank some-body for a big gift?"

"Oh, I'll always have thanks enough to go around--that's my disposition. The folks who love me, I can love them twice as much. You're a dear old dad, and I know you want me to run along so that you can go to making a lot more money. So I'll just take myself out from underfoot."

When she turned she glanced again at the person near the window, and this time she got a good look at his face. Even the veil could not hide from Bradish the color which spread into her cheeks. She was so conscious of her embarrassment and of her appearance that she did not turn her face to her father when he spoke to her.

"One moment, Alma! Seeing that my big car is going to have a two days' vacation in the country, I may as well make it do one last business errand for me."

He called Bradish to the desk by a side jerk of the head.

"I want that check put into the hands of the brokerage firm of Mower Brothers as quickly as possible. My car is at the door, and it may as well take you along. Alma, allow this young man of ours to ride with you to the place where I'm sending him."

He did not present Bradish to Miss Marston. Bradish did not expect the financier to do so. But this dismissal of him as a mere errand-boy--with the young lady staring him out of countenance in a half-frightened way--did cut the pride a bit, even in the case of a mere clerk. And this clerk was pondering on the memory that only the night before he had clasped this young lady--then a party unknown who was evidently bent upon an escapade _incog_.--had encircled this selfsame maiden with his arms during many blissful dances in one of the gorgeous Broadway public ball-rooms. And he had regaled her and a girl friend on viands for which his twenty-five-dollar check had scarcely sufficed to pay.

Bradish was pretty familiar with the phases and the oddities of the

dancing craze, but this _contretemps_ rather staggered him.

They had asked no questions of each other during those dances. They had been perfectly satisfied with the joy of the moment. She had looked at him in a way and with a softness in her eyes which told him that she found him pleasing in her sight. She had been enthusiastic, with that same exuberance he had just witnessed, over his grace in the dance. They had promised to meet again at the ball-room where social conventions did not prevent healthy young folks from enjoying themselves.

?Good heavens!? she whispered to him, as she preceded him through the door. ?You work in my father's office??

?You are surprised--a little shocked--and I don't blame you,? he returned, humbly. ?As for me, I am simply astounded. But I am not a gossip.?

She stole a look at his pale, impassive face, and some of her father's instinct in judging men seemed to reassure her.

?One must play a bit,? she sighed. ?And it's so stupid most of the time, among folks whom one knows very well. There are no more surprises.?

As he shut the door softly behind them Bradish heard Marston, once more immersed in his affairs of business, directing over the telephone that one Fletcher Fogg be located and sent to him.

?I apologize,? said Bradish, in the corridor. They were waiting for the elevator.

?For what?? She lifted her eyebrows, and there was no hint of annoyance in her dark eyes.

?For--well--seeing how the matter stands, it almost seems as if I had presumed--was masquerading. I am only a clerk, and--?

?But you are a clerk in Julius Marston's offices,? she said, with pride, ?and that means that you are to be trusted. I require no apology from you, Mr.--er--?

?My name is Ralph Bradish.?

?I dodged away from dullness last evening; I was hoping to have a bit of a frolic. And I found a young gentleman who asked no impertinent questions, who was very gracious, and who was a delight in the dance. It was all very innocent--rather imprudent--but altogether lovely. There!?

?I thank you.?

?And--well, after Nan Burgess's house-party, I--?

She glanced up at him, provocation in her eyes.

?But I don't dare to hope, do I, that you will condescend to come again

and dance with me??

?Julius Marston has taught his daughter to keep her promise, sir. If I remember, I promised.?

He did not reply, for the elevator's grille door clashed open for them to enter.

And in the elevator, and later in the car, he was silent, as became the clerk of Marston's offices in the company of Marston's daughter when there were listeners near.

Her eyes gave him distinct approval and her lips gave him a charming smile when he alighted at his destination.

Bradish stood for a moment and gazed after the car when it threaded its way into the Broadway traffic.

?She's a flighty young dame, with a new notion for every minute,? he told himself. ?You can see that plain enough. It's probably all jolly on her part. However, in these days, if a fellow keeps his head steady and his feet busy, there's no telling what the tango may lead to. This may be exactly, what I've been paying tailors' bills for.?

Indicating that in these calculating times the spirit of youth in the ardor of love at first sight is not as the poet of romance has painted it.

XVII ~ ?EXACTLY!? SAID MR. FOGG

?O I am not a man o' war or privateer,? said he,
Blow high, blow low, and so sailed we!
?But I'm an honest pirate a-looking for my fee,
Cruising down along the coast of the High Barbaree.?
--Shanty of the ?Prince Luther.?

Mr. Fletcher Fogg privately and mentally and metaphorically slapped himself on the back whenever he considered his many activities.

He was perfectly certain that he was the best little two-handed general operator of an all-around character that any gentleman could secure when that gentleman wanted a job done and did not care to give explicit instructions as to the details of procedure.

The look of grief and regret that the fat face of Mr. Fogg could assume when said gentleman--after the job was done--blamed the methods as unsanctioned, even though the result had been achieved--that expression was a study in humility--humility with its tongue in its cheek.

If Mr. Fogg could have advertised his business to suit himself--being not a whit ashamed of his tactics--he would have issued a card inscribed

about as follows:

?Mr. FLETCHER FOGG: Promoting and demoting. Building and busting. The whole inside of any financial or industrial cheese cleaned out without disturbing the outside rind. All still work done noiselessly. Plenty of brass bands for loud work. Broad shoulders supplied to take on all the blame.?

Mr. Fogg, in the presence of Julius Marston, was properly obsequious, but not a bit fawning. He wiped away the moisture patches beside his nose with a purple handkerchief, and put it back into his outside breast pocket with the corners sticking out like attentive ears. He crossed his legs and set on his knee an ankle clothed in a purple silk stocking. On account of his rotundity he was compelled to hold the ankle in place in the firm clutch of his hand. He settled his purple tie with the other hand.

?I'm glad I was in reach when you wanted me,? he assured Mr. Marston. ?I'm just in on the _Triton_. And I want to tell you that you're running that steamboat line in the way an American business man wants to have it run. If I had been on any other line, sir, I wouldn't have been here to-day when you were looking for me. Everything else on the coast prowling along half-speed, but down slammed the old _Triton_, scattering 'em out from underfoot like an auto going through a flock of chickens, but not a jar or a scrape or a jolt, and into her dock, through two days of thick fog, exactly on the dot. That's the way an American wants to be carried, sir.?

?I believe so, Mr. Fogg,? agreed Julius Marston. ?And that's why we feel it's going to be a good thing for all the coast lines to be under one management--our management.?

?Exactly!?

?It's true progress--true benefit to travelers, stockholders, and all concerned. Consolidation instead of rivalry. I believe in it.?

?Exactly!?

?As a broad-gauged business man--big enough to grasp big matters--you have seen how consolidation effects reforms.?

?No two ways about it,? affirmed Mr. Fogg.

?That was very good missionary work you did in the matter of the Sound & Cape line--very good indeed.?

?It's astonishing what high and lofty ideas some stockholders have about properties they're interested in. In financial matters the poorest conclusion a man can draw is that a stock will always continue to pay dividends simply because it always has done so. I had to set off a pretty loud firecracker to wake those Sound & Cape fellows up. I had to show 'em what damage the new deals and competition and our combination would do to 'em if they kept on sleeping on their stock certificates.

Funny how hard it is to pry some folks loose from their par-value notions. ? Mr. Fogg delivered this little disquisition on the intractability of stockholders with reproachful vigor, staring blandly into the unwinking gaze of Mr. Marston. ?I don't want to praise my own humble efforts too much,? he went on, ?but I truly believe that inside another thirty days the Sound crowd would have been ready to cash in at fifty, in spite of that minority bunch that was hollering for par. That was only a big yawp from a few folks.?

?Fifty was a fair price in view of what's ahead in the way of competition, but we have made it a five-eighths proposition in order to clinch the deal promptly. I just sent one of our boys around with the check.?

Mr. Fogg beamed. He used his purple handkerchief on his cheeks once more. He allowed to himself a few words of praise: ?They'll understand some day that I saved 'em from a bigger bump. But it's hard to show some people.?

?Now, Mr. Fogg, we come to the matter of the Vose line. What's the outlook??

Mr. Fogg looked sad. ?After weeks of chasing 'em, I can only say that they're ugly and stubborn, simply blind to their best interests.?

?Insist on par, do they??

?Worse than that. Old Vose and his sons and those old hornbeam directors--retired sea-captains, you know, as hard as old turtles--they have taken a stand against consolidation. They belong in the dark ages of business. Old Vose had the impudence to tell me that forming this steamboat combine was a crime, and that he wouldn't be a party to a betrayal of the public. He won't come in; he won't sell; he's going to compete.?

Mr. Marston stroked his strip of beard. ?In order for our stock to be what we intend it to be, the Paramount Coast Transportation has got to operate as a complete monopoly, as you understand, Mr. Fogg. A beneficent monopoly--consolidation benefiting all--but nevertheless a monopoly. With one line holding out on us, we've got only a limping proposition.?

?Exactly!?

?What are we going to do about the Vose line??

?Let it compete, sir. We can kill it in the end.?

?Possibly--probably. But that plan will not serve, Mr. Fogg.?

?It's business.?

?But it is not finance. I'm looking at this proposition solely as a financier, Mr. Fogg. I hardly know one end of a steamboat from the

other. I'm not interested in rate-cutting problems. I don't know how long it would take to put the Vose line under. But I do know this, as a financier, handling a big deal, that the Paramount stock will not appeal to investors or the bonds to banks unless we can launch our project as a clean, perfect combination, every transportation charter locked up. I handle money, and I know all of money's timidity and all of money's courage. You think the Vose directors are able to hold their stockholders in line, do you??

Mr. Fogg uncrossed his legs, put both feet on the floor, hooked his hands across his paunch, and gazed up at the ceiling, evidently pondering profoundly.

“I repeat, I'm not viewing this thing as a steamboating proposition, not figuring what kind of tariffs will kill competition,” stated Mr. Marston. “I'm not estimating what kind of tariffs will make a profit for the Paramount. I'd as soon sell sugar over the counter. My associates expect me to make money for them in another way--make it in big lumps and on a quick turn. The Vose line, competing, kills us from the financial viewpoint.”

“Exactly.”

There was silence in the room for some time.

“There's never any telling what stockholders will do,” remarked Mr. Fogg, his eyes still studying the panels of the ceiling.

Mr. Marston did not dispute that dictum.

His field-marshal slowly tipped down his head and gave his superior another of those bland stares.

“So I'll go right ahead and see what they'll do, sir.”

He rose and kicked the legs of his trousers into place.

“You understand that in this affair, as in all matters where you have been employed, there must be absolutely clean work. There must be no come-back. Of course, I have instructed you to this effect regularly, but I wish to have you remember that I have repeated the instructions, sir.”

“Exactly!” Mr. Fogg's eyes did not blink.

“You will be prepared to testify to that effect in case the need ever arises.”

“Exactly!”

Mr. Fogg delivered that word like a countersign. Into it, in his interviews with Julius Marston, he put understanding, humility, promise.

“May we expect quick action?” asked the financier. “The thing mustn't

hang fire. We have a lot of our nimble money tied up as it is.?

?Exactly!? returned Mr. Fogg, on his way to the door. ?Quick action it is!?

?This is probably the craziest idea that ever popped into a man's head when that man was sitting in Julius Marston's office,? reflected Mr. Fogg, marching through the anteroom of this temple of finance. ?There's one thing about it that's comforting--it's so wild-eyed it will never be blamed on to Julius Marston as any of his getting up. And that's his principal lookout when a deal is on. It seems to be up to me to deliver the goods.?

He sat down on a bench in the waiting-room and rubbed his knuckles over his forehead.

?Just let me get this thing right end to,? he told himself. ?How did the idea happen to hit me, anyway? Oh, yes! Old Vose bragging to me that every stockholder in the Vose line was behind him, and that the annual meeting was about to come off, and then I would see what a condemned poor show I stood to get even the toe of my boot into the crack of the company door. He's a Maine corporation. I've known of cases where that fact helped a lot. There are plenty of ifs and buts in this thing, but here goes!?

He applied himself to one of the office telephones, asked for several numbers, one after the other, and put questions with eagerness and rapidity.

The information he received seemed to disturb him considerably. He came out of the booth and scrubbed his cheeks with his purple handkerchief.

?Their annual meeting at ten o'clock to-morrow morning, four hundred miles from here! Well, I suppose I ought to be thankful that it's not being held right now,? Mr. Fogg informed himself, determined to fan that one flicker of hope with both wings of his optimism. ?But I've got to admit that twenty-four hours is almighty scant time for a job of this sort, even when the operator is the little Fogg boy himself. Damme, I haven't come to a full, realizing sense yet of all I've got to do and how I'm going to do it.?

He hurried out, dove into an elevator, and was shot down to the street.

He was lucky enough to find a taxi at the curb.

?Grand Central,? he told the driver. ?I've got five dollars that says you can beat the Subway express and land me in season for the ten-o'clock limited for Boston.?

As soon as it became evident to Mr. Fogg that his driver had seen his duty and was going to do it, traffic squad be blown, the promoter settled back, and his thoughts began to revolve faster than the taxi's wheels.

?It's going to be like the mining-camp 'lulu hand,'? was his mental preface to his plans. ?It can be played only once in a sitting-in; it has got to be backed with good bluff, but it's a peach when it works. And what am I a promoter for? What have I studied foreign corporation laws for??

Mr. Fogg took off his hat and mopped his bald spot, wrinkling his eyelids in deep reflection.

?The idea is,? he mused, ?I'm a candidate for the presidency of the Vose line at to-morrow's meeting. But I haven't been elected yet!?

However, Mr. Fogg's preliminary sniffing at the affairs of the Vose line had informed him where he could pick up at least ten scattered shares of their stock. He figured that before midnight he would have them in his possession. As to the next day and the next steps, well, the nerve of a real American plunger clings to life until the sunset of all hopes, even as the snake's tail, though the serpent's head be bruised beyond repair, is supposed to wriggle until sunset.

He despatched a telegram at New Haven. He received a reply at Providence, and he read it and felt like a gambler who has drawn a card to fill his bobtail hand. When a design is brazen and the game is largely a bluff, plain, lucky chance must be appealed to.

The telegram had been addressed to Attorney Sawyer Franklin, in a Maine city. It had requested an appointment with Mr. Franklin on the following morning.

The reply had stated that Mr. Franklin was critically ill in a hospital, but that all matters of business would be attended to by his office force, as far as was possible.

Attorney Sawyer Franklin, as Mr. Fogg, of course, was fully aware, was clerk of the Vose line corporation, organized according to the Maine law as a ?foreign corporation,? under the more liberal regulations which have attracted so many metropolitan promoters into the states of Maine and New Jersey.

XVIII ~ HOW AN ANNUAL MEETING WAS HELD--ONCE!

O, a ship she was rigged and ready for sea,
And all of her sailors were fishes to be!
 Windy-y-weather,
 Stormy-y-weather!
When the wind blows we're all together!
 --The Fishes.

Fletcher Fogg, suave, dignified, radiating business importance, freshened by a barber's ministrations, walked into the Franklin law-offices the next morning at nine-thirty.

He announced himself to a girl typist, and she referred him to a young man who came forth from a private room.

"I have power of attorney from Mr. Franklin to transact his routine business," explained the young man. "Of course, if it's a new case or a question of law--"

"Neither, neither, my dear sir! Simply a matter of routine. But," he leaned close to the young man's ear, "strictly private."

Mr. Fogg himself closed the door of the inner office when the two had retired there.

"One of your matters to-day, I believe, is the annual meeting of the Vose line. I am a stockholder."

Fogg produced a packet of certificates and laid them on the desk.

"Are there to be any officers or other stockholders present?" he asked, showing just a bit of solicitude, in spite of himself.

"I think not," returned the young man. "Nothing has been said about it. The proxies and instructions have been sent in, as usual, by registered mail." He indicated documents stacked on the desk. "I was just about to begin on the matter."

"I suppose our proxies run to the clerk of the corporation, as usual, with full power of substitution, clerk to follow instructions," said Mr. Fogg, a bit pompously, using his complete knowledge of corporation routine.

"Yes, sir. We handle most of the corporation meetings that way when it's all cut and dried. In this case, it's simply a re-election of the old officers."

"Exactly!"

Mr. Fogg pulled his chair closer, dabbed his purple handkerchief on each side of his nose, and inquired, kindly and confidentially: "My son, what's your name?"

"David Boyne."

"Law student here--secretary, eh?"

"Yes, sir."

"Exactly--and a long, hard pull ahead of you. It's too bad you're not in New York, where a young man doesn't have to travel the whole way around, but can cut a corner or two. I could give you a lot of examples of bright young chaps who have grabbed in when the grabbing was good.

"But I haven't the time. You take my word for it. I'm a plain, outspoken

business man, and I'm in with the biggest financial interests in New York. And I'm going to offer you the grandest opportunity of your life right now, David.?

He picked up his certificates and arranged them in one hand, as a player arranges his cards.

?I have here ten shares, say, and each share is owned by a different individual--all good men. You don't know them, but I do. They are connected with our big interests. And I'm right here as a stockholder. Do you realize, David, that instructing you to hold this meeting without a single stockholder present is really asking you to do something that's not strictly legal??

?We usually do it this way,? faltered Boyne.

?Exactly! Men like those who are running the Vose line are always asking an innocent man to do something illegal. I'm going to come right to the point with you, David. Those old moss-backs who have sent those instructions are trying to wreck the Vose line. I want you to disregard those instructions. I am anxious to be president and general manager of the line. I want you to elect as directors these stockholders.? He tapped his finger on the certificates.

The young man was both frightened and bewildered. He turned pale. ?I can't do that,? he gasped.

?Yes, you can. There are the proxies. It's up to you to vote 'em as you want to. They allow full power of substitution, usual fashion!?

?But I can't disobey my instructions.?

?I say you can, if you've got grit enough to make a good thing for yourself.?

?Such a thing was never done here.?

?Probably not. It's a new idea. But new things are being done right along in high finance. You ought to be up where big things are happening every day. You stand in with me, and I'll put you there. You see, I'm getting right down to cases on this matter with you, David. Vote those proxies as I direct and I'll hand you five thousand dollars inside of two hours, and will plant you in a corking job with my people as soon as this thing calms down. I could have palavered a long time before coming to business in this way, but I see you're a bright young fellow and don't need a lot of hair-oil talk. I don't ask you to hurt anybody in especial. You can elect the old treasurer--we don't want to handle the money--this is no cheap brace game. But I want a board of directors who will put me in as general manager until certain reforms can be instituted so as to bring the line up to date. Five thousand dollars, mind you, and then you'll be taken care of.?

?But I'll be put into state prison.?

?Nonsense, my boy! Why would you vote those proxies according to your instructions? Why, because it would be for your interest to do so if I hadn't come in here with a better proposition. Now it's for your interest to vote 'em as I tell you. The most they can make out of it is a breach of trust, and that amounts to nothing. With five thousand dollars in your mitt, you wouldn't need to hang around here to take a lot of slurs. I'll slip you another thousand for your expenses on a little trip till the air is all clear.?

Boyne stared at this blunt and forceful tempter; his hand which clutched the chair-arms trembled; ?I'm going to be still more frank with you, my boy. And, by the way, you must know that I'm no mere four-flusher. You've heard of Fletcher Fogg, eh? You knew who I was when you got that wire from me yesterday??

?Why, yes, I know of you through our corporation work, sir.?

?Exactly!? Mr. Fogg assumed even more unctuously the manner of an old friend. ?Now, as I say, I'm going to be frank--take you in on the ground floor. Of course, they can have another--a special meeting of the Vose line after a thirty days' notice to the stockholders. They will probably call that meeting, and I don't care if they do. But I have an ambition to be general manager of the line for those thirty days to make--well, I want to make a little investigation of general conditions,? declared Mr. Fogg, resorting to his purple handkerchief. ?That's all I care to say. At the end of thirty days we may--I'm speaking of the big interests I represent--we may decide to buy the line and make it really worth something to the stockholders. You understand, I hope. It's strictly business--it's all right--it's good financiering. After it's all over and those old, hardshell directors wake up, I'll venture to say they'll be pleased all around that this little turn has been made. In the mean time, having been taken care of, you needn't mind whether they're pleased or not.?

Boyne looked at the sheaf of certificates in Fogg's hand; he bent frightened gaze on the documents stacked on the desk. They lay there representing his responsibility, but they also represented opportunity. The sight of them was a rebuke to the agitated thoughts of treason which assailed him. But the mere papers had no voice to make that rebuke pointed.

Mr. Fogg did have a voice. ?Five thousand dollars in your fist, my boy, as soon as I can work the wire to New York--and there's no piker about the man who can have five thousand flashed in here when he asks for it. You can see what kind of men are behind me. What do you care about old man Vose and his crowd??

?There's Mr. Franklin! I'll be doing a mighty mean trick, Mr. Fogg. No, I'll not do it.?

Mr. Fogg did not bluster. He was silent for some time. He pursed his lips and stared at Boyne, and then he shifted his gaze to the ceiling.

?It's too bad--too bad for a young fellow to turn down such an

opportunity," he sighed. "It can be done without you, Boyne, in another way. The same result will happen. But you might as well be in on it. Now let me tell you a few instances of how some of the big men in this country got their start."

Mr. Fogg was an excellent raconteur with a vivid imagination, and it did not trouble his conscience because the narratives he imparted to this wide-eyed youth were largely apocryphal.

"You see," he put in at the end of the first tale, "what a flying start will do for a man. Suppose that chap I've just told you about sat back and refused to jump when the road was all open to him! You don't hear anybody knocking that man nowadays, do you? And yet that's the trick he pulled to get his start."

With a similar snapper did Mr. Fogg touch up each one of his stories of success.

"I--I didn't have any idea--I thought they managed it some other way," murmured David Boyne.

"Your horizon has been limited; you haven't been out in the world enough to know, my son."

"I have heard of all those men, of course. They're big men to-day."

"You didn't think they got to be millionaires by saving the money out of clerks' salaries, did you? Of course, Boyne, I admit that in this affair you'll be up to a little sharp practice. But you're not stealing anything. Nobody can lug off steamships in a vest pocket. It's only a deal--and deals are being made every day."

Fogg was a keen judge of his fellow-men. He knew weakness when he saw it. He could determine from a man's lower lip and the set of his nose whether that person were covetous. And he knew now what signified the flush on Boyne's cheeks and the light in his eyes. However, there was something else to reckon with.

"I will not betray Mr. Franklin's confidence in me. Positively, I will not," said the young man. "He's sick, and that would make it worse."

"How sick is he?"

"He is very, very ill. It was an operation, and he has had a relapse. But we hope he's coming out all right."

"What hospital is he in?"

Boyne gave the name.

"I think I'll call up and ask when it is expected that he can see visitors," announced Fogg, with business briskness. "I wish Franklin had been here on deck--Franklin, himself."

"I don't believe Mr. Franklin would turn a trick of this sort," asserted the clerk. "I'd hate to face him, after doing it myself."

"Franklin would be able to see further into a financial deal than a young chap," said Mr. Fogg, severely, and then he found his number and made his call. "Good heavens!" he blurted, after a question. "I am in his office. Yes, I'll tell Boyne."

With a fine affectation of grief and surprise, he snapped the transmitter upon the hook and whirled on Boyne. His back had been toward the young man--he had spoken with hand across the receiver.

"He has just died--he's dead! Franklin has passed away."

"I would have been notified," gasped Boyne.

"They were just going to call you. You heard me say I'd inform you."

"But I must call the hospital--offer my services. I must go up there."

Mr. Fogg put out his hand and pressed the young man back into his chair. "A lulu must be played quick and the pot raked sudden," he reflected.

"Just a moment, my son. Now you're standing on your own bottom. You won't have to explain to Mr. Franklin."

He pointed to the clock. His stories had consumed time. The hour was ten-thirty-five.

"That annual meeting of the Vose line was called for ten of the clock to-day. Mr. Franklin was alive at that hour. He was the clerk of that corporation. What happens now will not embarrass you so far as he's concerned. Be sensible. Make a stroke for yourself. You're out of a job, anyway. Go to it, now."

Fogg spoke sharply, imperiously. He exerted over the young man all the force of his personality.

"Five thousand dollars--protected by my interests--slipped out of sight for a few months--it's easy. Sit down there and make up your records; vote those proxies. Vote 'em, I say. This meeting was held at ten o'clock. Make up your records."

He stood over Boyne, arguing, promising, urging, and the young man, at last, sweating, flushed, trembling, bent over his documents, sorted them, and made up his records.

"We'll send on a copy to the office of the Vose line by registered mail," commanded Fogg. "Attest it as a copy of the true record by notary. When it drops in on 'em I will be there, with my directors and my little story--and the face of Uncle Vose will be worth looking at, though his language may not be elevating. You come out with me, Boyne. I'm going to the telegraph office."

"But I must get in touch at once with Mr. Franklin's family--offer my services," pleaded the clerk.

"There isn't a thing you can do right now," snapped the masterful gentleman from New York. "I suggest that you close the office. Send the girl home. You should do that much out of respect to your employer's memory."

Ten minutes later the record had been mailed and the flustered Boyne was trotting around town with Mr. Fogg. The latter seemed to have a tremendous amount of business on his hands. He hired a cab and was hustled yon and thither, leaving the young man in the vehicle, with instructions to stay there, whenever a stop was made. But at last Mr. Fogg returned from an errand with some very tangible results. He put a packet of bank-notes into Boyne's shaking hands.

"Did you ever see as much real money before, my son?" asked Fogg, genially. "That's your five thousand. And here's five hundred toward that expense money we promised. I'm suggesting that you leave town to-night. Tuck that cash away on yourself and duck out of sight."

Having secured the money and placed that powerful argument in the young man's hands, Mr. Fogg's hurry and anxiety seemed to be over. When he had seen the packet buttoned inside Boyne's coat he smiled.

"The trade is clinched and the job is done, son, and I feel sure that, being a healthy young American citizen with plenty of cash to pay your way, you're not going to let go that cash nor do any foolish squealing."

"I've gone too far to back out," admitted Boyne, patting the outside of his coat. "But it seems like a dream."

"I've heard a little piece of good news while I've been running around--forgot to tell you," said Fogg, in a matter-of-fact way. "That fool attendant at the hospital must have misunderstood me, or I misunderstood him. Franklin isn't dead."

"He isn't dead?"

"No. Last report is that he's better this forenoon. But that's the way some of these crazy attendants mix things up when anybody inquires at a hospital. Now, of course, seeing that the registered copy is on its way and Franklin is getting better, that's all the more reason why you don't care to hang around these diggings and be annoyed. I've got a scheme. It will take you out of town in a very quiet style. I have telephoned down to the docks, and there's a Vose freighter in here discharging rails. Do you live at home or at a boarding-place?"

"I board," said Boyne, still wrestling with the sickening information that he had betrayed an employer who was alive; somehow the sentiment that it was equally base to betray a deceased employer had not impressed itself on his benumbed conscience. He was now keenly aware that he feared to meet up with a living and indignant Lawyer Franklin. Fogg questioned, and Boyne gave his boarding-house address.

?We'll drive there, and I'll wait outside in the cab until you can scratch together a gripful of your things. Don't load yourself down too much. Remember, you've got plenty of cash in your pockets.?

A little later Fogg escorted the young man up the gang-plank of the _Nequasset_, from whose hold the last of her load of clanging rails was being derricked by panting windlass engines. To Captain Zoradus Wass, who was lounging against the rail just outside the pilot-house, Mr. Fogg marched with business promptitude, and spoke with assurance.

?Captain, my name is Fletcher Fogg. Within forty-eight hours the directors of the Vose line will elect me president and general manager. That news may be rather astonishing, but it's true.?

The veteran skipper did not reply. He shifted a certain bulge from one cheek to the other.

?Well?? queried Fogg, a bit sharply.

?I ain't saying anything?

?You believe what I tell you, don't you??

?I don't know you.?

?This young man is David Boyne, acting clerk of the Vose line corporation. The annual meeting has just been held in this city. He made the official records. He will tell you that a new board of directors has been chosen--the old crowd is out.?

?That is so,? stated Boyne, obeying the prompting of Fogg's quick glance.

?I don't know you, either.?

Mr. Fogg was not abashed. ?It isn't especially necessary that you know us. How soon do you leave??

?We're going out light as soon as them rails are on the wharf.?

?I am sending Mr. Boyne with you on a tour of inspection, captain. Please give him quarters and use him right.?

?Nothing doing till I get orders from the owners,? declared Captain Wass.

?Haven't I told you that I shall be general manager of this line to-morrow, or next day, at the latest??

?When you're general manager come around and give off your orders, sir.?

?I'll do it. I'll come aboard in New York--?

?I'm ordered to Philadelphia,? prompted Captain Wass. ?That's where you'll find me.?

?Philadelphia, then! I'll come aboard and fire you.?

?Do just as you feel like doing.?

?You refuse to take along this young man??

?This ain't a passenger-boat. I don't know you. Show orders from owners--otherwise nothing doing.?

Mate Mayo had come out of his cabin, near at hand. With a young man's quicker perception of possibilities and contingencies he realized that his skipper might be letting an old man's obstinacy block common sense.

The first mate had an eye for men and their manners. He had been listening to Mr. Fogg. That gentleman certainly seemed to know what he was talking about. And young Mate Mayo, having a nose for news as well as an eye for men, understood that the coast transportation business was in a touchy state generally. He gave Mr. Fogg further inspection and decided that a little skilful compromising was advisable.

?Captain Wass, will you step aside with me a moment?? asked the mate.

?What for??

?I want to have a word with you.?

?Have it right here,? said the captain, tartly. ?I never have any business that's got to be whispered behind corners.? He scowled when his mate gave him a wink, both suggestive and imploring. ?Spit it out!?

?The law doesn't allow us to take passengers, as you suggest. And naturally you don't like to act without orders from owners.? He looked at Mr. Fogg as he spoke, plainly offering apology to that gentleman. ?But we need a second steward and--?

?We don't!? Captain Wass was blunt and tactless.

?I beg pardon--we really do. And we can sign this young man in a--a sort of nominal way, and then when we get to Philadelphia we'll probably find the matter all straightened out.?

?What's your name?? asked Mr. Fogg.

?Boyd Mayo, sir. First mate.?

?Mr. Mayo, you're a young man with a lot of common sense,? declared Fogg.

To himself, staring at the young man, he said: ?I'm going to play this game out with two-spots, and here's one ready for the draw!?

"I'll see you in Philadelphia, Mr. Mayo," he continued, aloud. "I am exactly what I say I am. Captain Wass, you've got something coming to you. Mr. Mayo, you've got something coming to you, also--and it's good!" His assertiveness was compelling, and even the captain displayed symptoms of being impressed. "It isn't at all necessary that my agent make this trip with you, Captain Wass. Perhaps I had no distinct right to bring him here. But I am a hustling sort of a business man and I want to get at matters in short order. However, I ask no favors. Come on, Boyne!"

"We'll sign him on as steward to cover the law," proffered the captain, as terse in consent as he was in refusal.

"Very well," agreed Fogg. "You've got an able first mate, sir." He flipped his watch out. "I've got a train to make, gentlemen. Good day!"

He took Boyne by the arm and led him to the ladder from the bridge. "Son," said he, "you dig into that Mayo chap till you know him up and down and through and through. I'm going to use him. And you keep your mouth shut about yourself." He backed down the ladder, feeling his way cautiously with his fat legs, trotted to the waiting cab, and was whirled away.

At high noon the next day Fletcher Fogg marched into the general offices of the Vose line in company with ten solid-looking citizens. Imperturbable and smiling, he allowed President Vose to shriek anathema and to wave the certified copy of the record of the annual meeting under the snub Fogg nose.

"What you say doesn't change the situation in the least," affirmed Mr. Fogg. "You'll find the actual records of the meeting deposited in the usual place in the state of your incorporation. If you think these new directors are not lawfully and duly elected, you can apply to the courts."

"You confounded thief, it's likely to take a year to get a decision. This is damnable. It's piracy. You know what courts are!"

"Poke up your courts, then. It isn't my fault if they're slow."

The new directors filed into the board-room and with great celerity proceeded to elect Fletcher Fogg to be president and general manager of the Vose line.

"What are you going to do?" pleaded the deposed executive head. "My money is in here--my whole life is in it--my pride--my intention to see that the public gets a square deal. You infernal rogue, what are you going to do with my property?"

"That's my own business," said Fletcher Fogg.

"You can't get away with it--you can't do it!" raged Vose. "I'll get at the inside of how that meeting was conducted. You'd better take backwater right now, Fogg, and save yourself. I'm not afraid to tell

you what I'm going to do. I'll have a temporary injunction issued. I'll prove fraud was used at that meeting--bribery, yes, sir!?

Mr. Fogg smiled and sat down at the president's desk. ?First he'll have to find a young man by the name of David Boyne,? he told himself.

?Vose,? said the new president, ?all you can show a court is the record of an annual meeting, duly and legally held. And if the judge wants to have a look at me he'll find me running this line a blamed sight better than you have ever run it.?

?It's a cheap, plain trick,? bleated the aged steamship manager. ?Your crowd is going to sell out to the Paramount--it's your plot.?

?Oh no! We're not inviting injunctions and law and newspaper talk and slurs and slander, Mr. Vose. If there's ever any selling out you'll be the first to suggest it; I never shall. You see, I'm just as frank with you as you are with me. Selling this line to the Paramount right now, just because the new board is in, would be ragged work--very coarse work. Thank Heaven, I have a proper respect for the law--and what it can do to bother a fool. I am not a fool, Mr. Vose.?

XIX ~ THE PRIZE PACKAGE FROM MR. FOGG

Our captain stood on his quarter-deck,
And a fine little man was he!
?Overhaul, overhaul, on your davit tackle fall,
And launch your boats to the sea,
Brave boys! And launch your boats to the sea.?
--The Whale.

A slowing, tug, tooting fussy and staccato blasts which Captain Wass translated into commands to hold up, intercepted the _Nequasset_ in Hampton Roads.

Mr. Fletcher Fogg was a passenger on the tug. In a suit of natty gray, he loomed conspicuously in the alley outside the tug's pilot-house. He cursed roundly when he toilsomely climbed the ladder to the freighter's deck, for the rusty sheathing smutched the knees of his trousers.

?I'm doing a little better than I promised you, captain,? he stated when he arrived finally in the presence of the master. ?I said Philadelphia. But here I am. Do you know me now??

?Your name is Fogg,? returned Captain Wass, exhibiting no special delight.

?And I'm manager of this line. As it seems to be pretty hard for you to get anything through that thick nut of yours, I'll ask you to glance at a paper which will save argument.?

The paper was an attested notification, signed by the directors, stating in laconic legal phrase what Mr. Fogg had just declared.

“You recognize my authority, do you?”

“Your bill of lading reads O. K.,” assented the skipper.

“Very well! Exactly! Then you take your orders. Proceed to an anchorage off Lambert Point below Norfolk, pick a berth well off the channel, and put down both hooks. The boat is going out of commission. I find you're not making any money for the owners.”

“It ain't my fault. With charters at--” began the master, indignantly.

“I haven't any time for a joint debate. You are laid off. Bring your accounts to the main office as soon as you have turned the steamer over to the caretaker--he'll come out from Norfolk.” Manager Fogg turned on his heel to meet Mate Mayo. “You will report at the main offices, too, Mr. Mayo. Have you master's papers?”

“I have, sir--Atlantic waters, Jacksonville to East-port.”

“Very good--you're going to be promoted. I shall put you aboard the passenger-steamer Montana as captain.” He looked about sharply. “Where is my agent?”

“There, in the quartermaster's cabin. We gave him that,” replied Captain Wass, gruffly. “I'm glad I'm out of steamboating. I've learned how to run a boarding-house and make money out of it.”

Mr. Fogg did not understand that sneer, and he paid no attention to the captain's manner. He started for the cabin indicated.

“Well, you can swell around in gold braid now and catch your heiress,” observed Captain Wass to his mate.

“I'm sorry, skipper,” said the young man, with real feeling. “You are the man to be promoted, not I. It isn't right--it doesn't seem real.”

“There isn't any real steamboating on this coast any longer. It is--I don't know what the devil it is,” snarled the veteran. “I have been sniffing and scouting. I'd like to be a mouse in the wall of them New York offices and hear what it is they're trying to do to us poor cusses. Ordered one day to keep the law; ordered the next day to break the law; hounded by owners and threatened by the government! I'm glad I'm out of it and glad you've got a good job. That last I'm specially glad about. But keep your eye peeled. There are queer doings round about you!”

Fogg entered the cabin and shut the door behind him. He found Boyne sitting on a stool and looking somewhat apprehensive. “Hiding?” inquired Fogg.

“I thought I wouldn't show myself till I was sure about who was on that tug,” said the young man.

?That's the boy, David,? complimented Fogg, with real heartiness.
?You're no fool. Nothing like being careful. Pack your bag and go aboard the tug.? He marched out.

?Philadelphia charter has been canceled, eh?? asked Captain Wass. The tone of his voice did not invite amity.

?It has, sir.?

?Seems queer to turn down a cargo that's there waiting--and the old boat can carry it cheaper than anybody else, the way I've got expenses fined down.?

?Are you trying to tell me my business??

?I have beep steamboating forty years, and I know a little something about it.?

Mr. Fogg looked at the old mariner, eyes narrowed. He wanted to inform Captain Wass that the latter knew altogether too much about steamboating for the kind of work that was planned out along the coast in those ticklish times.

?Then I ain't to expect anything special from now on?? asked the skipper. In spite of his determination to be crusty and keep his upper lip stiff, he could not repress a little wistfulness, and his eyes roved over the old freighter with affection.

?Not a thing, sir!? Mr. Fogg was blunt and cool. He started for the ladder. He slapped the shoulder of Mayo as he passed the young man.
?Here's the kind of chap we're looking for nowadays. The sooner you report, my boy, the better for you.?

With Boyne following him, he climbed down the swaying ladder, and was lifted from the lower rungs over the tug's rail to a secure footing.

After the lines had been cast off and the tug went floundering away at a sharp angle, Captain Wass scuffed into his pilot-house and gave the bells.

?She seems to feel it--honest she does!? he told Mate Mayo. ?She goes off logy. She doesn't pick up her heels. Nor could I do it when I walked in here. Going to be scrapped--the two of us! Cuss their picking and stealing and fighting and financing. They ain't steam-boating any longer. They're using good boats to play checkers in Wall Street with. Well, son,? he mourned, hanging dispiritedly over the sill of the window and staring up the wind-swept Chesapeake, ?I ain't going to whine--but I shall miss the old packet and the rumble and racket of the old machine down there in her belly. I'd even take the job of watchman aboard her if he would hire me.?

?He seems to fancy me a bit. I'll ask him to hire you,? proffered the mate, eagerly.

?I reckon you didn't get the look in his eye when he fired me,? said Captain Wass. ?I won't allow you to say a word to him about me. You go ahead, boy, and take the job he has offered. But always remember that he's a slick operator. See what he has done to Uncle Vose; and we haven't been able to worm it out of that passenger how it was done, either. Financing in these days comes pretty nigh to running without lights and under forced draught. It gets a man to Prosperity Landing in a hurry, providing he doesn't hit anything bigger than he is. They're going to haul up this freighter and blame it on to me because I ain't making money for the owners. They'll have plenty of figgers to show it. Look out that they don't lay something worse and bigger to you. They're going to play a game with the Vose line, I tell you! In the game of big finance, 'tag-gool,' making 'it' out of the little chap who can't run very fast, seems to be almighty popular.?

He slowed the freighter to a snail's pace when he approached the dredged channel, and at last the leadsman found suitable bottom. Both anchors were let go.

The old skipper sounded the jingle, telling the chief engineer that the engine-crew was released. In a speaking-tube the captain ordered both boilers to be blown off.

?And there's the end of me as master of my ship,? he said.

Mate Mayo's eyes were wet, but words of sympathy to fit the case did not come to his sailor tongue, and he was silent.

When the tug was near Newport News, Manager Fogg took David Boyne apart from all ears which might hear. He gave the young man another packet of money.

?The rest of your expenses for a good trip,? he said. ?You seem to be a chap who knows how to mind his own business--and able to get at the other fellow's business in pretty fair shape. You haven't told such an awful lot about young Mayo, but it's satisfactory to learn that he has lived such a simple and every-day life that there isn't much to tell.?

?I never saw a man so sort of guileless,? affirmed Boyne. ?Not that I have had a lot of experience, but in a lawyer's office you are bound to see considerable of human nature.?

?He is no doubt a very deserving young man--and I'm glad I can use him,? said Fogg, not able to keep all the grimness out of his tones. ?Now, son,? he went on, after a moment of pondering, ?you stay on board this tug till I have been gone five minutes. There are a lot of sharp eyes around in these times, and some of Vose's friends would be glad to run to him with a story about me. After five minutes, you take your bag and walk to Dock Seven and go aboard the freighter _Ariel_--go just as if you belonged there. Tell the captain that you are Daniel Boyle--get the name--Daniel Boyle. And never tell anybody until you hear from me that your name is David Boyne. That freighter leaves to-night for Barbados with sugar machinery. You'll have a nice trip.?

"I don't care how far away I get," declared Boyne, rather bitterly. "I have done a tough trick. I'm pretty much of a renegade. No, I don't care how far I go."

"Nor I, either," agreed Fogg, but a smile relieved the brutality of the speech. "You see, son, both of us have special reasons why it's just as well for you to be away from these diggings for a time. If some folks get hold of you they'll bother you with a lot of foolish questions. When you get tired of Barbados go ahead and pick out another nice trip, and keep going, and later on we'll find a good job for you up this way. Keep me posted. Good-by."

The tug had docked and he hurried off and away.

"It's quite a game," reflected Mr. Fogg. "I've bluffed a pot with one two-spot. Work was a little coarse because it had to be done on short notice. The work I do with my second two-spot is going to be smoother, and there won't be so much beefing after the pot is raked in. Too much hollering, and your game gets raided! I can see what would happen to me--Julius Marston doing it--if I give the strong-arm squad an opening. But if they see the little Fogg boy slip a card in the next deal he's going to make--well, I'll eat the _Montana_, if that's the only way to get rid of her."

Boyd Mayo lost no time in obeying his orders to report in New York. He gave his name to a clerk at the offices of the Vose line and asked to see Mr. Fogg. He presented himself a bit timorously. He was not at all sure of his good fortune. It is rather bewildering for a young man to have the captaincy of a twin-screw passenger racer popped at one as carelessly as tossing a peanut to a child. He crushed his cap between trembling palms when he followed the clerk into the inner office.

Mr. Fogg rose and greeted Mayo with great cordiality. "Good morning, captain," said the manager. "Allow me to hope that you're going to be as lively in keeping to schedule time as you have been in getting here from Norfolk."

"I didn't feel like wasting much time, considering what was promised me," stammered Mayo, not yet sure of himself.

"Afraid I might change my mind?"

"It seemed too good to be true. I wanted to get here as soon as I could and make sure that I had heard right, sir. Here are my papers."

He laid them in the manager's hand. Fogg did not unfold them. He fanned them, indicating a chair.

"Sit down, Captain Mayo. You understand that new management has taken hold of the Vose line in order to get some life and snap into the business. We have strong competition. A big syndicate is taking over the other steamship properties, and we must hustle to keep up with the procession. I'm laying off freighters that are not showing a proper

profit--I'm weeding out the moss-covered captains who are not up with the times. That's why I'm putting you on the _Montana_ in place of Jacobs.?

?He's a good man--one of the best,? ventured Mayo, loyalty to his kind prompting him. ?I'll be sorry to see him step aside, as glad as I am to be promoted--and that's honest.?

?That's the way to talk; but we've got to have hustle and dash, and young men can give us what we're after. It doesn't mean that you've got to take reckless chances.?

?I hope not, Mr. Fogg. My training with Captain Wass has been the other way. And if you could only give him--?

?Captain, you've got your own row to hoe. Keep your eye on it,? advised the general manager, sharply. ?I'm picking captains for the Vose boats, and I think I understand my business. Now what I want to know is, do you have confidence in me? Are you going to be loyal to me??

?Yes, sir!? affirmed Mayo, impressed by his superior's brisk, brusque business demeanor.

?Exactly! And the only talk I want you to turn loose is to the effect that you believe I'm doing my best to make this line worth something to the stockholders. Where are you stopping??

Mayo named a little hotel around the corner.

?I'll put you aboard the _Montana_ just as soon as I can arrange the details of transfer. I may let Jacobs make another trip or so. Report here each morning at nine. For the rest of the time keep within reach of the hotel telephone.?

Mayo saluted and went out.

Fogg called the observer at the weather bureau on the telephone and asked some questions. He was informed that the wind had swung into the northwest and that the long-prevailing fog had been blown off the coast.

Mr. Fogg appeared to feel somewhat peevish over this sudden departure of the weather phenomenon which bore his family name. He slammed the receiver on to the hook and said a naughty word. A person overhearing might have wondered a bit, for here was a steamboat manager cursing the absence of the fog instead of preserving his profanity to expend on the presence of the demoralizing mists. But the reign of the north wind in late summer is never long; three days later the breeze shifted, and the gray banks of the fog marched in from the open sea.

Mayo was awakened early by the clamor of the whistles of river craft, for the little hotel was near the water-front. He saw the fog drifting in shredded masses against the high buildings, shrouding the towers. He had been waiting his call to duty with much impatience, finding the confinement of the hotel irksome in the crisp days of sunlight, eager to

be out and about this splendid new duty which promised so much.

It was the _Montana's_ sailing-day from the New York end.

He had gone to sleep thrilling with the earnest hope that he would be called to take her out. But when he looked out into that morning, saw the draping curtains of the stalking mists, heard the frantic squallings of craft in the harbor, frenzied howls of alarm, hoarse hootings of protests and warnings, he was suddenly and pointedly anxious to have his elevation to the pilot-house of the _Montana_ deferred. Better the smoky, cramped office of the little hotel where he had been chafing in dismal waiting. He was perfectly willing to sit there and study over again the advertising chromos on the walls and gaze out on the everlasting procession of rumbling drays. But at eight o'clock the telephone summoned him.

?This is General-Manager Fogg,? the voice informed him, though he did not require the information; he knew those crisp tones. ?I am speaking from my apartments. Please proceed at once to the _Montana_. I'll come aboard within an hour.?

?Do you expect me to take command--to--take her out to-day?? faltered Mayo.

?Certainly. Captain Jacobs will transfer command as soon as I get down.?

Mayo had just been rejoicing in his heart because Jacobs would be obliged to bear the responsibility of that day's sailing; he had been perfectly sure that a new man would not be summoned under the conditions which prevailed. He wanted to suggest to Manager Fogg that making the change just then would be inadvisable. He cleared his throat and searched his soul for words. But a sharp and decisive click told him that Mr. Fogg considered the matter settled. He came away from the telephone, dizzy and troubled, and he was not comforted when he recollected how Manager Fogg had received meek suggestions in the past. He paid his modest account, took his traveling-bag, and started for the Vose line pier.

When he saw her looming in the fog--his ship at last--he felt like running away from her incontinently, instead of running toward her.

Mayo had all of a young man's zeal and ambition and courage--but he had in full measure a sailor's caution and knowledge of conditions; he had been trained by that master of caution, Captain Zoradus Wass. He was really frightened as he stared up at the towering bow, the mighty flanks, the graceful sweep of superstructure, and realized that he must guide this giant and her freightage of human beings into the white void of the fog. In his honesty he acknowledged to himself that he was frightened.

The whole great fabric fairly shouted responsibility at him.

He was confident of his ability. As chief mate he had mastered the problems of courses and manoeuvres in the fog along that same route

which he must now take. But until then the supreme responsibility had devolved upon another.

Men were rushing freight aboard on rattling trucks--parallel lines of stevedores were working. There were many trunks, avant couriers of the passengers.

He went aboard by the freight entrance and found his way to the row of officers' staterooms. He recognized the gray-bearded veteran who was pacing the alley outside the pilot-house, though the man was not in uniform; it was the deposed master.

"Good morning, Captain Mayo," he said, without any resentment in his tones. "I congratulate you on your promotion."

"I hope you understand that I didn't go hunting for this job," blurted Mayo.

"I believe it's merely a matter of new policy--so Manager Fogg tells me. Understand me, too, Captain Mayo! I harbor no resentment, especially not against you."

He put out his hand in fine, manly fashion, and was so distinctly the best type of the dignified, self-possessed sea-captain of the old school, that Mayo fairly flinched at thought of replacing this man.

Captain Jacobs opened the door lettered "Captain." "All my truck is out and over the rail. I'll sit in with you, if you don't mind, until Mr. Fogg arrives. You're going to have a thick passage, Captain Mayo."

"It doesn't seem right to me--putting a new man on here in this fog," protested Mayo, warmly. "I ought to have her in clear weather till I know her tricks. In a pinch, when you've got to know how a boat behaves, and know it mighty sudden in order to avoid a smash, one false move puts you into the hole."

"They seem to be running steamboat lines from Wall Street nowadays, instead of from the water-front," said Captain Jacobs, dryly. "It's all in the game as they're playing it in these times. There's nothing to be said by the men in the pilot-house."

"I'm a sailor, and a simple one. I think I know my job, Captain Jacobs, or else I wouldn't accept this promotion. But I've got no swelled head. It's the proper and sensible thing for you to take the Montana out tonight and let me hang around the pilot-house and watch you. If I can prevail upon Mr. Fogg to allow it, will you make another trip?"

"I would do it to help you, but I'll be blasted if I'll help Fogg--not if he would get down now and beg me," declared Captain Jacobs, showing temper for the first time. "And if you had been pitchforked out as I've been after all my years of honest service you'd feel just as I do, Captain Mayo. You don't blame me, do you?"

"I can't blame you."

?You know the courses, and you'll have the same staff as I've had. You'll find every notation in the log accurate to the yard or the second. She's a steady old girl and, knowing tide set and courses, as you do, you can depend on her to the turn of a screw. You have my best wishes--but I'm done.?

He put the fervor of final resolve into the declaration. But, with sailor's fraternal spirit of helpfulness he sat down and went into the details of all the Montana's few whims. He called in the mates and introduced them to the new master. They seemed to be quiet, sturdy men who bore no malice because a new policy had put a new man over them.

Then arrived General-Manager Fogg, and in this strictly business presence Mayo did not presume to voice any of his doubts or his opinion of his inefficiency.

The rather stiff and decidedly painful ceremony of speeding the former commander was soon over, and Captain Jacobs departed.

?Why haven't you put on your uniform?? asked Fogg. ?You have fixed yourself out with a new one, of course??

?Yes, sir.? Mayo's cheeks flushed slightly when he recollected how he had strutted before the mirror in his room at the hotel. But he had been ashamed to hurry into his gilt-incrusted coat in the presence of Captain Jacobs.

?Get it on as soon as you can,? ordered the general manager. ?I want you to make a general inspection of the boat with me.?

They made the tour, and in spite of his misgivings, when he saw the mists sweeping past the end of the pier Captain Mayo, receiving the salutes of respectful subalterns, felt the proud joy of one who has at last arrived at the goal of his ambition.

Master of the crack _Montana_, queen of the Vose fleet, at the age of twenty-six!

He glanced into each of the splendid mirrors of the great saloon to make sure of the gold letters on his cap.

The thick carpet seemed grateful to his step. The ship's orchestra was rehearsing in its gallery.

If only that devilish fog would lift! But still it surged in from the sea, and the glass, down to 29.40, promised no clearing weather.

?Safety to the minutest detail--that's my motto,? declared Manager Fogg. ?Order a fire drill.?

It was accomplished, and Mr. Fogg criticized the lack of snap. He was rather severe after the life-boat drill, was over. He ordered a second rehearsal. He commanded that the crew do it a third time. The warmth

of his insistence on this feature of shipboard discipline was very noticeable.

“And when you put those boats back see to it that every line is free and coiled and every cover loose. It costs a lot of good money if you kill off passengers in these days.” Then he hurried away. “I’ll see you before sailing-time,” he informed Captain Mayo.

The new skipper was glad to be alone and to have leisure for study of the steamer’s log-books. He had been accustomed to a freighter’s slower time on the courses. He did a little figuring. He found that at seventy-five revolutions per minute the Montana would log off about the same speed that the freighter made when doing her best. He resolved to make the fog an excuse and slow down to the Nequasset’s familiar rate of progress. He reflected that he would feel pretty much at home under those circumstances. He was heartened, and went about the ship looking less like a malefactor doomed to execution.

When General-Manager Fogg, bustled on board a few minutes prior to the advertised sailing-time at five o’clock, he commented on Captain Mayo’s improved demeanor.

“Getting one of the best jobs on this coast seemed to make considerable of a mourner out of you. Perhaps a mirror has shown you how well you look in that new uniform. At any rate, I’m glad to see you have chirked up. And now I’ll give you a piece of news that ought to make you look still happier: I’m going along on this trip with you. If you show me that you can do a good job in this kind of weather you needn’t worry about your position.”

The expression on Captain Mayo’s face did not indicate unalloyed delight when he heard this “good news.” Unaccustomed as he was to the ship, he could not hope to make a smooth showing.

“And still you refuse to cheer up!” remonstrated the manager.

“I am glad you are going along, sir. Don’t misunderstand me. But a sailor is a pretty serious chap when he feels responsibility. I’m undertaking a big stunt.”

“It’s the best way to find out whether you’re the man for the job--whether you’re the man I think you are. It’s a test that beats sailing ships on a puddle.”

“I’m glad you’re aboard,” repeated the captain. “It’s going to shade down my responsibility just a little.”

“It is, is it?” cried Manager Fogg, his tones sharp. “Not by a blamed sight! You’re the captain of this craft. I’m a passenger. Don’t try to shirk. You aren’t afraid, are you?”

They were standing beside the dripping rail outside the pilot-house. Far below them, in the spacious depths of the steamer, a bugle sounded long-drawn notes and the monotonous calls of stewards warned “All

ashore!?

The gangways were withdrawn with dull ?clackle? of wet chains over pulleys, and Captain Mayo, after a swift glance at his watch, to make sure of the time, ordered a quartermaster to sound the signal for ?Cast off!? The whistle yelped a gruff note, and, seeing that all was clear, the captain yanked the auxiliary bell-pulls at the rail. Two for the port engine, two for the starboard, and the _Montana_ began to back into the gray pall which shrouded the river.

Captain Mayo saw the lines of faces on the pier, husbands and wives, mothers and sweethearts, bidding good-by to those who waved farewell from the steamer's decks. He gathered himself with supreme grip of resolve. It was up to him! He almost spoke it aloud.

Tremors of doubt did not agitate him any longer. It was unthinking faith, nevertheless it was implicit confidence, that all those folks placed in him. They were intrusting themselves to his vessel with the blind assurance of travelers who pursue a regular route, not caring how the destination is reached as long as they come to their journey's end.

The hoarse, long, warning blast which announced to all in the river that the steamer was leaving her dock drowned out the shouts of farewell and the strains of the gay air the orchestra was playing.

?See you later,? said General-Manager Fogg. ?I think I'll have an early dinner.?

Captain Mayo climbed the short ladder and entered his pilot-house.

It was up to him!

XX ~ TESTING OUT A MAN

Now the first land we made is call-ed The Deadman,
The Ramhead off Plymouth, Start, Portland and Wight.
We sail-ed by Beachy,
By Fairlee and Dungeness,
Until we came abreast of the South Foreland Light.
--Farewell and Adieu.

With starboard engine clawing her backward, and the port engine driving her ahead, the Montana swung her huge bulk when she was free of the penning piers. The churning propellers, offsetting, turned her in her tracks. Then she began to feel her way out of the maze of the traffic.

The grim, silent men of the pilot-houses do not talk much even when they are at liberty on shore. They are taciturn when on duty. They do not relate their sensations when they are elbowing their way through the East River in a fog; they haven't the language to do so.

A psychologist might make much out of the subject by discussing concentration sublimated, human senses coordinating sight and sound on the instant, a sort of sixth sense which must be passed on into the limbos of guesswork as instinct.

The man in the pilot-house would not in the least understand a word of what the psychologist was talking about.

The steamboat officer merely understands that he must be on his job!

The _Montana_ added her voice to the bedlam of river yawp.

The fog was so dense that even the lookout posted at her fore windlasses was a hazy figure as seen from the pilot-house. A squat ferryboat, which was headed across the river straight at the slip where her shore gong 'was hailing her, splashed under the steamer's bows, two tugs loafed nonchalantly across in the other direction--saucy sparrows of the river traffic, always underfoot and dodging out of danger by a breathless margin.

Whistle-blasts piped or roared singly and in pairs, a duet of steam voices, or blended at times into a puzzling chorus.

A steamer's whistle in the fog conveys little information except to announce that a steam-propelled craft is somewhere yonder in the white blank, unseen, under way. No craft is allowed to sound passing signals unless the vessel she is signaling is in plain sight.

Captain Mayo could see nothing--even the surface of the water was almost indistinguishable.

Ahead, behind, to right and left, everything that could toot was busy and vociferous. Here and there a duet of three staccato blasts indicated that neighbors were threatening to collide and were crawfishing to the best of their ability.

Twice the big steamer stopped her engines and drifted until the squabble ahead of her seemed to have been settled.

A halt mixes the notations of the log, but the mates of the steamer made the Battery signals, and after a time the spidery outlines of the first great bridge gave assurance that their allowances were correct.

Providentially there was a shredding of the fog at Hell Gate, a shore-breeze flicking the mists off the surface of the water.

Then was revealed the situation which lay behind the particularly emphatic and uproarious ?one long and two short? blasts of a violent whistle. A Lehigh Valley tug was coming down the five-knot current with three light barges, which the drift had skeowowed until they were taking up the entire channel. With their cables, the tug and tow stretched for at least four thousand feet, almost a mile of dangerous drag.

?Our good luck, sir,? vouchsafed the first mate. ?She was howling so

loud, blamed if I could tell whether she was coming or going. She's got no business coming down the Sound.?

Captain Mayo, his teeth set hard, his rigid face dripping with moisture, as he stood in the open window, stopped the engines of his giant charge and jingled for full speed astern in order to halt her. He had no desire to battle for possession of the channel with what he saw ahead.

At that moment Manager Fogg came into the pilothouse, disregarding the ?No Admittance? sign by authority of his position. He lighted a cigar and displayed the contented air of a man who has fed fully.

?You have been making a pretty slow drag of it, haven't you, Captain Mayo? I've had time to eat dinner--and I'm quite a feeder at that! And we haven't made the Gate yet!?

?We couldn't do a stroke better and be safe,? said the captain over his shoulder, his eyes on the tow.

?What's the matter now??

?A tug and three barges in the way.?

?Do you mean to say you're holding up a Vose liner with eight hundred passengers, waiting for a tugboat? Look here, Mayo, we've got to hustle folks to where they want to go, and get them there in time.?

?That tow is coming down with the current and has the right of way, sir. And there's no chance of passing, for she's sweeping the channel.?

?I don't believe there's any law that makes a passenger-boat hold up for scows,? grumbled Fogg. ?If there is one, a good man knows how to get around it and keep up his schedule.? He paced the pilot-house at the extreme rear, puffing his cigar.

He grunted when Mayo gave the go-ahead bells and the throb of the engines began.

?Now ram her along, boy. People in these days don't want to waste time on the road. They're even speeding up the automobile hearses.?

Captain Mayo did not reply. He was grateful that the dangers of Hell Gate had been revealed. The mists hung in wisps against North Brother Island when he swung into the channel of the Gate, and he could see, far ahead, the shaft of the lighthouse. It was a stretch where close figuring was needed, and this freak of the mists had given him a fine chance. He jingled for full speed and took a peep to note the bearing of Sunken Meadow spindle.

?Nothe-east, five-eighths east!? he directed the quartermaster at the wheel.

The man repeated the command mechanically and brought her to her course for the Middle Ground passage.

After they had rounded North Brother, Whitestone Point tower was revealed. It really seemed as if the fog were clearing, and even in the channel between Execution Rocks and Sands Point his hopes were rising. But in the wider waters off Race Rock the Montana drove her black snout once more into the white pall, and her whistle began to bray again.

The young captain sighed. "East, a half nothe!"

"East, a half nothe, it is, sir!"

At least, he had conquered East River, the Gate, and the narrows beyond, and had many miles straight ahead to the whistler off Point Judith. He was resolved to be thankful for small favors.

He hoped that with the coming of the night and on account of the prevalence of the fog he would find that shipping of the ordinary sort had stopped moving. However, in a few minutes he heard telltale whistles ahead, and he signaled half speed. A lumbering old lighter with a yawing derrick passed close aboard. An auxiliary fisherman, his exhaust snapping like a machine-gun, and seeming to depend on that noise for warning, was overtaken.

"Can you leave that window for a minute, Captain Mayo?" asked the general manager.

The captain promptly joined Mr. Fogg at the rear of the spacious pilot-house.

"See here, Cap," remonstrated his superior, "I came down through these waters on the Triton of the Union line the other day, and she made her time. What's the matter with us?"

"I'm obeying the law, sir. And there are new warnings just issued." He pointed to the placard headed "Safety First" in big, red letters. "The word has been passed that the first captain who is caught with the goods will be made an example of."

"Is that so?" commented Fogg, studying the end of his cigar. His tone was a bit peculiar. "But the Triton came along."

"And she nigh rammed the Nequasset in the fog the last trip I made up the coast. It was simply touch and go, Mr. Fogg, and all her fault. We were following the rules to the letter."

"And that's one way of spoiling the business of a steamboat line," snapped Fogg. He added, to himself, "But it isn't my way!"

"I'm sorry, but I have been trained to believe that a record for safety is better than all records for speed, sir."

"I let Jacobs go because he was old-fashioned, Mayo. This is the age of taking chances--taking chances and getting there! Business, politics,

railroading, and steam-boating. The people expect it. The right folks do it.?

?You are general manager of this line, Mr. Fogg. Do you order me to make schedule time, no matter what conditions are??

?You are the captain of this boat. I simply want you to deliver up-to-date goods. As to how you do it, that is not my business. I'm not a sea-captain, and I don't presume to advise as to details.?

Captain Mayo was young, He knew the 'longcoast game. He was ambitious. Opportunity had presented itself. He understood the unreasoning temper of those who sought dividends without bothering much about details. He knew how other passenger captains were making good with the powers who controlled transportation interests. He confessed to himself that he had envied the master of the rushing _Triton_ who had swaggered past as if he owned the sea.

Till then Mayo had been the meek and apologetic passer-by along the ocean lane, expecting to be crowded to one side, dodging when the big fellow bawled for open road.

He remembered with what haste he always manouvered the old _Nequasset_ out of the way of harm when he heard the lordly summons of the passenger liners. Was not that the general method of the freighter skippers? Why should he not expect them to get out of his way, now that he was one of the swaggerers of the sea? Let them do the worrying now, as he had done the worrying and dodging in the past! He stepped back to his window, those reflections whirling in his brain.

?This is no freighter,? he told himself. ?Fogg is right. If I don't deliver the goods somebody else will be called on to do it, so what's the use? I'll play the game. Just remember--will you, Mayo--that you've got your heart's wish, and are captain of the _Montana_. If I lose this job on account of a placard with red letters, I'll kick myself on board a towboat, and stay there the rest of my life.?

He yanked a log-book from the rack and noted the steamer's average speed from the entries. He signaled to the engine-room through the speaking-tube.

?Give her two hundred a minute, chief!? he ordered.

And fifteen seconds later, her engines pulsing rhythmically, the big craft was splitting fog and water at express speed, howling for little fellows to get out from underfoot.

Down in the gleaming depths of her the orchestra was lilting a gay waltz, silver clattered over the white napery of the dining-room, men and women laughed and chattered and flirted; men wrote telegrams, making appointments for the morrow at early hours, and the wireless flashed them forth. They were sent with the certainty on the part of the senders that no man in these days waits for tide or fog. The frothing waters flashed past in the night outside, and they who ventured forth upon the

dripping decks glanced at the fan of white spume spreading into the fog, and were glad to return to cozy chairs and the radiance of the saloon.

High up forward, in the pilot-house, were the eyes and the brains of this rushing monster. It was dark there except for the soft, yellow gleam of the binnacle lights. It was silent but for the low voice of a mate who announced his notations.

Occasionally the mates glanced at each other in the gloom when a steamer's whistle sounded ahead. This young captain seemed to be a chap who carried his nerve with him! They were used to the more cautious system of Captain Jacobs.

The master did not reduce speed. He leaned far out, his hand at his ear. The third time an unknown sounded her blast he took a quick glance at the compass.

"Two points shift--so she shows," he said aloud. "We'll pass her all right."

The change in the direction of the sound had assured him. A few minutes later the whistle voiced a location safely abeam. But the next whistle they heard sounded dead ahead, and increased in volume of sound only gradually. They were overtaking a vessel headed in the same direction.

Captain Mayo pulled the cord oftener and sounded more prolonged, more imperious hoots. He ordered no change in his course. He was headed for the Point Judith whistler, and did not propose to take chances on fumbling by any detours. The craft ahead at last seemed to recognize the voice of its master. The sound of the whistle showed that it had swung off the course.

The mate mumbled notations.

"All ears out!" ordered the captain. "We ought to make that whistler!" And in the next breath he said: "There she is!" He pointed a wet hand ahead and slightly to port. A queer, booming grunt came to them. "You're all right, old girl," he declared. "Jacobs wasn't over-praising you." He reached over the sill and patted the woodwork of his giant pet. He turned to the quartermaster. "East, five-eighths south," was his direction.

"East, five-eighths south, sir!"

"What's the next we make, captain?" asked the general manager from the gloom at the rear of the pilot-house.

"Sow and Pigs Lightship, entrance of Vineyard Sound, sir."

"Good work! I'm going to take a turn below. See you again! What can I tell any uneasy gentleman who is afraid he'll miss a business appointment in the morning?"

"Tell him we'll be on time to the dot," declared the captain, quietly.

Mr. Fogg closed the pilot-house door behind himself and chuckled when he eased his way down the slippery ladder.

Mr. Fogg sauntered through the brilliantly lighted saloon, hands in his pockets, giving forth an impression of a man entirely at ease. Nobody appeared to recognize the new general manager of the Vose line, and he attracted no special attention. But if any one had been sufficiently interested in Mr. Fogg to note him closely it would have been observed that his mouth worked nervously when he stood at the head of the grand stairway and stared about him. His jowls sagged. When he pulled out his handkerchief his hand trembled.

He descended the stairs to the main-deck and peered about in the smoking-quarters, running his eyes over the faces of the men gathered there. All at once he lifted his chin with a little jerk and climbed the stairs again. A big man tossed away a cigar and followed at a respectful distance. He pursued Mr. Fogg through the saloon and down a corridor and went into a stateroom on the general manager's heels.

'By gad, Burkett, I'm getting cold chills!' exploded Mr. Fogg, as soon as the door was closed.

'Don't understand just why.'

'Those people out there--I've just been looking 'em over. It's monkeying with too big a proposition, Burkett. You can't reckon ahead on a thing like this.'

'Sure you can. I've doped it right.'

'Oh, I know you understand what you're talking about, but--'

'Well, I ought to know. I've been pilot for the re-survey party on the shoals for the last two months. I know every inch of the bottom.'

'But the panic. There's bound to be one. The rest of 'em won't understand, Burkett. It's going to be awful on board here. I'll be here myself. I can't stand it.'

'Look here, governor; there won't be any panic. She'll slide into the sand like a baby nestling down into a crib. There isn't a pebble in that sand for miles. Half of this bunch of passengers will be abed and asleep. They won't wake up. The rest will never know anything special except that the engines have stopped. And that ain't anything unusual in a fog. It's a quiet night--not a ripple. Nothing to hurt us. The wireless will bring the revenue cutter out from Wood's Hole, and she'll stand by till morning and take 'em off.'

'The theory is good. It's mostly my own idea, and I'm proud of it, and I was mighty glad to find a man of your experience to back me up with the practical details,' said Fogg, trying to fortify his faith with words but failing. 'But now that it's coming down to cases I'm afraid of it.'

?Well, it's up to you, of course, governor. I insist it can be done, and done smooth, and you'll lay off this steamer nice, slick, and easy! That will put a crimp into the Vose line and make them stockholders take notice the next time a fair offer is made.?

?It's the thing to do, and I know it. The conditions are just right, and we've got a green captain to make the goat of. All set! But it's an awful thing to monkey with--eight hundred people, and no knowing how they'll take it! It came over me while I stood there and looked at 'em!?

?Sand is sand, and the whole, round earth is braced up under that sand. She can't sink. She'll simply gouge her way like a plow into a furrow, and there she'll stick, sitting straight, solid as an island--and it will be a devil of a while before they'll be able to dig her out. It's a crimp for the Vose line, I say, governor!? Malevolence glowed in Burckett's little eyes.

?Of course, the money I'm getting for this job looks good to me, governor, but my chance to put a wallop into anything that old Vose and his sons are interested in looks just as good. I wouldn't be in this just for the money end of it. I'm no pirate, but when they kicked me out of the pilot-house and posted me up and down this coast, they put themselves in line to get what's coming to 'em from me.?

?But have you considered every side of it?? pleaded Fogg. ?You're the practical man in this proposition. What can happen??

?If you do exactly what I tell you to do nothing can happen but what's on our program. Just let me stiffen you up by running the thing over once more.?

He pulled a hand-smutched, folded chart from his breast pocket and spread it over his knees. With blunt forefinger he indicated the points to which he made reference in his explanation.

?When he fetches Nobska horn on his port, bearing nor'west by west, he'll shift his course. After about five miles he's due to shift again, swinging six points to nor-rard. You'll hear the mate name the bearing of West Chop steam-whistle. Then you walk right up to the left of the compass and stand there. You may hear a little tongue-clattering for a few seconds. There'll be a little cussing, maybe, but you won't be cussed, of course. You stand right there, calm and cool, never batting an eyelid. And then it will happen, and when it does happen it will be a surprise-party all right.?

?It's wrecking a seven-thousand-ton passenger-steamer in the night!? mourned the general manager.

?It isn't! It's putting her into a safe cradle.?

?But at this speed!?

?That chap in the pilot-house is no fool. He'll get his hint in time to save her from real damage. You needn't worry!?

Fogg opened his traveling-bag and lifted out a strip of metal. He handled it as gingerly as if it were a reptile, and he looked at it with an air as if he feared it would bite him.

"That's the little joker," said Burkett. "About two points deviation by local attraction will do the business!"

"I'm tempted to throw it overboard and call it all off, Burkett. I have put through a good many deals in my life in the big game, but this looks almost too raw. I can't help it! I feel a hunch as if something was going to miscue."

"I've got no more to say, governor."

"My crowd doesn't ask questions of me, but they expect results. If I don't do it, I suppose I'll kick myself in the morning." He cocked up his ear and listened to the bawling of the liner's great whistle. "But it seems different in the night."

"You ain't leaving any tracks," encouraged Burkett. "And this being his first run makes it more plausible. You're here all naturally, yourself. It might seem rather queer if you made another trip. It's his first run on her, I remind you. If he makes a slip-up it won't surprise the wise guys-a mite."

"It seems to be all set--I've got to admit it. By gad, Burkett, I have always put a thing through when I've started on it! That's why they call in the little Fogg boy. I'd rather apologize to my conscience than to--Well, never mind who he is." He tucked the strip of metal into his inside coat pocket and buttoned the coat. "Blast it! nothing that's very bad can happen in this calm sea--and that last life-boat drill went off fine. Here goes!" declared Fogg, with desperate emphasis.

"That's the boy!" declared Burkett, encouraged to familiarity by their association in mischief.

The general manager found the night black when he edged his way along the wet deck to the pilot-house. The steamer's lights made blurred patches in the fog. Now she seemed to have the sea to herself; there were no answering whistles.

"I'm back again, Captain Mayo," he said, as he closed the door against the night. "I hope I won't bother you folks here. I'll stay out from underfoot." He sat down on a transom at the extreme rear of the house and smoked his cigar with nervous vehemence.

Another quartermaster succeeded the man at the wheel, the mate made his notations of dead reckoning and pricked the chart, the usual routine was proceeded with. Mayo continued at the window, head out-thrust, except when he glanced at chart or compass or noted the dials which marked the screws' revolutions.

Every now and then he put his ear to the submarine-signal receiver.

At last he heard the faint, far throb of the Sow and Pigs submarine bell--seven strokes, with the four seconds' interval, then the seven strokes repeated.

A bit later he got, sweet and low as an elfland horn, the lightship's chime whistle. It was dead ahead, which was not exactly to his calculation. The tide set had served stronger than he had reckoned. He ordered the helmsman to ease her off a half-point, in order to make safe offing for the turn into Vineyard Sound.

Well up in the sound the bell of Tarpaulin Cove reassured him, and after a time he heard the unmistakable blast of the great reed horn of Nobska uttering its triple hoot like a giant owl perched somewhere in the mists.

"Nobska," said the mate. "We are certainly coming on, sir."

"Nobly," agreed Captain Mayo, allowing himself a moment of jubilation, even though the dreaded shoals were ahead.

"Are you going to keep this speed across the shoals, Captain Mayo?" asked the general manager, displaying real deference.

"No, sir!" stated the captain with decision, bracing himself to give Mr. Fogg a sharp word or two if that gentleman advanced any more of his "business man's reasons" for speed. "It would not be showing due care."

"I'm glad to hear you say that," affirmed Mr. Fogg, heartily. "It may be a little out of place, right now, but I want you to know that I feel that I have picked out just the right man to command this ship. I'm glad of a chance to say this where your mates can hear me."

"Thank you, Mr. Fogg," returned the young man, gratefully. "This is a soul-racking job, and I'm glad you are here to see what we are up against. I don't feel that we'll be wasting much time in crossing the shoals if we go carefully. We can let her out after we swing east of Monomoy. She's a grand old packet."

In the gloom Fogg ran his fingers gingerly over the outside of his coat to make sure that the strip of metal was in its place.

There was silence in the pilot-house after that. Ahead there was ticklish navigation. There were the narrow slues, the crowding shoals, the blind turns of Nantucket Sound, dreaded in all weathers, but a mariner's horror in a fog.

Nobska's clarion call drew slowly abeam to port, and after due lapse of time West Chop's steam-whistle lifted its guiding voice in the mists ahead.

"Better use the pelorus and be careful about West Chop's bearing after we pass her, Mr. Bangs," Captain Mayo warned his first mate.

As a sailor well knows, the bearing of West Chop gives the compass

direction for passage between the shoals known as Hedge Fence and Squash Meadow--a ten-mile run to Cross Rip Lightship. In a fog it is vitally important to have West Chop exact to the eighth of a point.

Fogg was glad that he was alone where he sat. He trembled so violently that he set an unlighted cigar between his teeth to keep them from rattling together.

The mate was outlined against the window, his eyes on the instrument, his ear cocked. Every half-minute West Chop's whistle hooted.

"Right, sir!" the mate reported at last, speaking briskly. "I make it west by north, five-eighths north."

Fogg rose and half staggered forward, taking a position just to the left of the wheel and compass.

"East by south, five-eighths south," the captain directed the helmsman. "Careful attention, sir. Tide is flood, four knots. Make the course good!"

The quartermaster repeated and twirled his wheel for the usual number of revolutions to allow a three-points change.

Captain Mayo stepped back and glanced at the compass to make certain that his helmsman was finding his course properly. "What in tarnation's name is the matter with you, man?" he shouted. "Bring this ship around! Bring her around!" He grabbed the wheel and spun it. "You're slower than the devil drawing molasses," raged Mayo, forgetting his dignity.

"She must have yawed," protested the man. "I had her on her course, sir. I supposed I had her over."

"You are not to suppose. You are to keep your eyes on that compass card and move quicker when I give an order."

The helmsman's eyes bulged as he stared at the compass. While he had winked his eyes, so it seemed to him, the true course had fairly straddled away from the lubber line.

In his frantic haste Captain Mayo put her over too far. He helped the man set her on the right course. Then he signaled half speed. The devious and the narrow paths were ahead of them.

"That's an almighty funny jump the old dame made then," pondered the quartermaster. But he was too well trained to argue with a captain. He accepted the fault as his own, and now that she was on her course, he held her there doggedly.

Even the _Montana's_ half speed was a respectable gait, and the silent crew in her pilot-house could hear the sea lathering along her sides.

"What do you make of that, Mr. Bangs?" the captain asked, after a prolonged period of listening.

"Bell, sir!"

"But the only bell in that direction would be on Hedge Fence Lightship in case her whistle has been disabled."

"Sounds to me like a vessel at anchor."

"But it's right in the fairway." Captain Mayo convinced himself by a glance at the compass. "No craft would drop her hook in the fairway. That's no bell on the Hedge Fence," reflected the captain. "It's a schooner's bell. But sound often gets freaky in a fog. We're on our course to the fraction, and we've got to keep going!"

And after a moment the bell ceased its clangor. It was a distant sound, and its location was indefinite even to a sharp ear.

"It strikes me that sounds in general are a little warped all of a sudden," said the captain to his mate. "I'll swear that I can hear Hedge Fence's five-second blasts now. But there she howls off the starboard bow. The clouds must be giving us an echo. We've got to leave it to the compass."

A skilful mariner is careful about forsaking the steady finger of a proved compass in order to chase sounds around the corner in foggy weather. He understands that air strata raise the dickens with whistle-blasts. There are zones of silence--there is divergence of sound.

Fogg held his position, his legs braced, and nobody paid any especial attention to him. They in the pilothouse were too busy with other affairs.

There is one sound in thick weather that tells a navigator much. It is the echo of his own whistle.

The big steamer was hoarsely hooting her way.

Suddenly there was a sound which fairly flew up and hit Captain Mayo in the face. It was an echo. It was the sound of the _Montana's_ whistle-blast flung back at him from some object so near at hand that there was barely a clock-tick between whistle and echo.

The captain yelped a great oath and yanked his bell-pulls furiously. "That echo came from a schooner's sails," he shouted.

Then, dead ahead, clanged her bell. The next instant, plunging along at least eight miles an hour, in spite of engines clawing at full speed astern, the towering bow smashed into the obstacle in her path.

It was a mighty shock which sent a tremor from stem to stern of the great fabric. They saw that they hit her--a three-masted schooner at anchor, with her sails set, dingy canvas wet and idle in the foggy, breathless night. But their impact against her was almost as if they had

hit a pier. The collision sent them reeling about the pilot-house. As they drove past they saw her go down, her stern a splintered mass of wreckage, in which men were frantically struggling.

"That's a granite-lugger! See her go down, like a stone!" gasped Mate Bangs. "My God! What do you suppose she has done to us forward?"

"Get there. Get there!" roared Captain Mayo. "Get there and report, sir!"

But before the chief mate was half-way down the ladder on his way the wailing voice of the lookout reported disaster. "Hole under the water-line forward," he cried.

"There are men in the water back there, sir," said a quartermaster.

"We're making water fast in the forward compartment," came a voice through the speaking-tube.

Already they in the pilot-house could hear the ululation of women in the depths of the ship, and then the husky clamor of the many voices of men drowned the shriller cries.

Captain Mayo had seen the survivors from the schooner struggling in the water. But he rang for full speed ahead and ordered the quartermaster to aim her into the north, knowing that land lay in that direction.

"Eight hundred lives on my shoulders and a hole in her," he told himself, while all his world of hope and ambition seemed rocking to ruin. "I can't wait to pick up those poor devils."

In a few minutes--in so few minutes that all his calculations as to his location were upset--the Montana plowed herself to a shuddering halt on a shoal, her bow lifting slightly. And when the engines were stopped she rested there, sturdily upright, steady as an island. But in her saloon the men and women who fought and screamed and cursed, beating to and fro in windrows of humanity like waves in a cavern, were convinced that the shuddering shock had signaled the doom of the vessel. Half-dressed men, still dizzy with sleep, confused by dreams which blended with the terrible reality, trampled the helpless underfoot, seeking exit from the saloon.

The hideous uproar which announced panic was a loud call to the master of the vessel. He understood what havoc might be wrought by the brutal senselessness of the struggle. He ran from the pilot-house, stepping on the feet of the general manager, who was stumbling about in bewildered fashion.

"Call all the crew to stations and guard the exits," Captain Mayo commanded the second mate.

On his precipitate way to the saloon the captain passed the room of the wireless operator, and the tense crackle of the spark told him that the SOS signal was winging its beseeching flight through the night.

Three men, half dressed, with life-preservers buckled on in hit-or-miss fashion, met him on the deck, dodged his angry clutch, and leaped over the rail into the sea, yelling with all the power of their lungs.

A quartermaster was at the captain's heels.

"Get over a life-boat on each side and attend to those idiots!" roared Mayo.

He thrust his way into a crowded corridor, beating frantic men back with his fists, adjuring, assuring, appealing, threatening. He mounted upon a chair in the saloon. He fairly outbellowed the rest of them. Men of the sea are trained to shout against the tempest.

"You are safe! Keep quiet! Sit down! This steamer is ashore on a sand-bank. She's as solid as Bunker Hill." He shouted these assurances over and over.

They began to look at him, to pay heed to him. His uniform marked his identity.

"You lie!" screamed an excited man. "We're out to sea! We're sinking! Where are your life-boats?"

Bedlam began again. Like the fool who shouts "Fire!" in a throng, this brainless individual revived all the fears of the frenzied passengers.

Mayo realized that heroic action was necessary. He leaped down from the chair, seized the man who had shouted, and beat the fellow's face with the flat of his hard hand.

That scene of conflict was startling enough to serve as a real jolt to their attention. They hushed their cries; they looked on, impressed, cowed.

"If there's any other man in this crowd who wants to tell me I'm a liar, let him stand out and say so," shouted Captain Mayo. "You're making fools of yourselves. There's no danger."

He released the pallid and trembling man of whom he had made an example and stepped on to a chair. He put up his hand, dominating them until he had secured absolute silence.

"You--you--you!" he said, crisply, darting finger here and there, pointing out individuals. "You seem to have more level heads than the rest, you men! Go forward where the man is casting the lead. Cast the lead yourselves. Come back here and report to these passengers, as their committee. I'm telling you the truth. There's no water under us to speak of." He remained in the saloon until his committee returned.

The man who reported looked a bit sheepish. "The captain is right, ladies and gentlemen. We could even see the sand where she has plowed it up--they've got lanterns over the rail. There's no danger."

A steward trotted to Captain Mayo and handed him a slip of paper. The captain read the message and shook the paper in the faces of the throng.

"The revenue cutter _Acushnet_ has our wireless call and is starting, and the _Itasca_ will follow. I advise you to go to bed and go to sleep. You're perfectly, absolutely safe. You will be transferred when it's daylight. Now be men and women!?"

He hurried out on deck. His men were hoisting aboard the three dripping, sputtering passengers who had run amuck.

"And those same men would look after a runaway horse and sneer that he didn't have any brains," remarked Captain Mayo, disgustedly.

For the next half-hour he was a busy man. He investigated the _Montana's_ wound, first of all. He found her flooded forward--her nose anchored into the sand with a rock-of-ages solidity.

His heart sank when he realized what her plight meant from the wrecking and salvage viewpoint. In those shifting sands, winnowed constantly by the rushing currents of the sound, digging her out might be a Gargantuan task, working her free a hopeless undertaking.

His tour of investigation showed him that except for her smashed bow the steamer was intact. Her helplessness there in the sand was the more pitiable on that account.

He had not begun to take account of stock of his own responsibility for this disaster. The whirl of events had been too dizzying. As master of the ship he would be held to account for her mishap. But to what extent had he been negligent? He could not figure it out. He realized that excitement plays strange pranks with a man's consciousness of linked events or of the passage of time. He could not understand why the steamer piled up so quickly after the collision. According to his ample knowledge of the shoals, he had been on his true course and well off the dangerous shallows.

His first mate met him amidship. "I sent off one of our life-boats, sir. Told 'em to go back and hunt for the men we saw in the water. They found two. Others seem to be gone."

"I'm glad you thought of it, Mr. Bangs. I ought to have attended to it, myself."

"You had enough on your hands, sir, as it was. She was the _Lucretia M. Warren_, with granite from Vinal-haven. That's what gave us such an awful tunk."

"Who are the men?"

"Mate and a sailor. They've had some hot drinks, and are coming along all right."

?We'll have a word with them, Mr. Bangs.?

The survivors of the _Warren_ were forward in the crew's quarters, and they were still dazed. They had not recovered from their fright; they were sullen.

?I'm sorry, men! Sailor to sailor, you know what I mean if I don't say any more. It's bad business on both sides. But what were you doing in the fairway??

?We wa'n't in the fairway,? protested a grizzled man, evidently the mate. He was uneasy in his borrowed clothes--he had surrendered his own garments to a pantryman who had volunteered to dry them.

?You must have been,? insisted Captain Mayo.

?I know we was all of two miles north of the regular course. I 'ain't sailed across these shoals for thirty years not to know soundings when I make 'em myself. Furthermore, she'll speak for herself, where she's sunk.?

The captain could not gainsay that dictum.

The mate scowled at the young man.

?I've got a question of my own. What ye doing, yourself, all of two miles out of your course, whanging along, tooting your old whistle as if you owned the sea and had rollers under you to go across dry ground with, too??

?I was not two miles out of my course,? protested the captain, and yet the sickening feeling came to him that there had been some dreadful error, somewhere, somehow.

?When they put these steamers into the hands of real men instead of having dudes and kids run 'em, then shipping will stand a fair show on this coast,? declared the mate, casting a disparaging glance at Mayo's new uniform. ?It was my watch on deck, and I know what I'm talking about. You came belting along straight at us, two points out of your course, and I thought the fog was playing tricks, and I didn't believe my own ears. You have drowned my captain and four honest men. When I stand up in court they'll get the straight facts from me, I can tell you that. And they tell me it's your first trip. I might have knowed it was some greenhorn, when I heard you coming two points off your course. You'd better take off them clothes. I reckon you've made your _last_ trip, too!?

It was the querulous railing of a man who had been near death; it was the everlasting grouch of the sailing-man against the lordly steamboater. Mayo had no heart for rebuke or retort. What had happened to him, anyway? This old schooner man seemed to know exactly what he was talking about.

?If you don't believe what I'm telling you, go out on deck and see if

you can't hear the Hedge Fence whistle," advised the mate, sourly. "If she don't bear south of east I'll eat that suit they're drying out for me. And that will show you that you're two miles to the norward of where you ought to be."

On his way to the pilot-house Captain Mayo did hear the hollow voice of the distant whistle, with its double blast and its long interval of silence. The sound came from abaft his beam and his disquietude increased.

Then the acute realization was forced in upon him that he had the general manager of the line to face. The captain had not caught sight of his superior during the excitement; he wondered now why Mr. Fogg had effaced himself so carefully.

The red coal of a cigar glowed in a corner of the pilothouse. From that corner came curt inquiry: "Well, Captain Mayo, what have you got to say about this?"

"I think I'll do my talking after I have had daylight on the proposition, sir."

"Don't you have any idea how you happened to be off your course so far?" asked Fogg, his anxiety noticeable in his tones.

"How do you know I was off my course?"

"Well--er--why, well, you wouldn't be aground, would you, if you hadn't lost your way?"

"I didn't lose my way, Mr. Fogg."

"What did happen, then?"

"That's for me to find out."

"I'm not going to say anything to you yet, Captain Mayo. It's too sudden--too big a blow. It's going to paralyze the Vose line." Mr. Fogg said this briskly, as if he were passing small talk on the weather.

"I'm thankful that you're taking the thing so calmly, sir. I've been dreading to meet you."

"Oh--a business man in these days can't allow himself to fly to pieces over setbacks. Optimism is half the battle."

But Mayo, sitting there in that dark pilot-house for the rest of the night, staring out into the blank wall of the fog and surveying the wreck of his hopes, was decidedly not optimistic.

Bad news, bad news to our captain came
That grieved him very sore;
But when he knew that all of it was true,
It grieved him ten time more,
Brave boys!
It grieved him ten times more!
--Cold Greenland.

Morning brought to him neither cheer nor counsel. The winds swept the fog off the seas, and the brightness of the sunshine only mocked the gloom of Captain Mayo's thoughts.

He was most unmistakably far off his course. He took his bearings carefully, and he groped through his memory and his experience for reasons which would explain how he came to be away up there on Hedge Fence. Two of the masts of the sunken stone-schooner showed above the sea, two depressing monuments of disaster. He took further bearings and tested his compass with minute care. So far as he could determine it was correct to the dot.

It was a busy forenoon for all on board the steamer. The revenue cutters took off the passengers. Representatives of the underwriters came out from Wood's Hole on a tug. The huge Montana, set solidly into its bed of sand, loomed against the sky, mute witness of somebody's inefficiency or mistake.

Late in the day Captain Mayo and General-Manager Fogg locked themselves in the captain's cabin to have it out.

When the master had finished his statement Mr. Fogg flicked the ash from his cigar, studied the glowing end for a time, and narrowed his eyes.

?So, summing it all up, it happened, and you don't know just how it happened. You were off your course and don't know how you happened to be off your course. You don't expect us to defend you before the steamboat inspectors, with that for an explanation, Mayo??

?All I can do is to tell the truth at the hearing, sir.?

?They'll break you, sure as a mule wags ears. There are five dead men inside that wreck yonder. Don't you reckon you'll be indicted for manslaughter??

?I shall claim that the collision was unavoidable.?

?But you were off your course--were in a place you had no business to be in. That knocks your defense all to the devil. You are in almighty bad, Mayo. You must wake up to it.?

The young man was pale and rigid and silent.

?The Vose line is in bad enough as it is, without trying to defend you. I suppose I'll be blamed for putting on a young captain. Mayo, I am

older than you are and wiser about the law and such matters. Why don't you duck out from under, eh??

?You mean run away??

?I wouldn't put it quite as bluntly as that. I mean, go away and keep out of sight till it quiets down. If you stay they'll put you on the rack and get you all tangled up by firing questions at you. And what will you gain by going through the muss? You've got to agree with me that the inspectors will suspend you--revoke your license. Here's this steamer here, talking for herself. If you stay around underfoot, and all the evidence is brought out at the hearing, then the Federal grand jury will take the thing up, probably. They'll have a manslaughter case against you.?

Still Captain Mayo did not speak.

?If you simply drop out of sight I don't believe they'll chase you. Personally, having watched you last night, I don't believe you are guilty of any very bad break. It simply happened wrong. We don't want all the notoriety a court trial would bring to the line. And here's what I'll do, Mayo. I'll slip you a few hundred for expenses so that you can go away and grab into the shipping game somewhere else. A fellow like you can land on his feet.?

?Mr. Fogg, a renegade steamboat man stands a mighty poor show. I may be suspended, and worse may happen to me, but I'm not going to ruin myself and my good name by running away. That's confession! It's wrecking all my prospects forever--and I have worked too hard for what I've got. I'm going to stay here and face the music--tell my story like a man.?

?It will make a fine story--and you have told me yourself that they are just waiting to make a smashing example of somebody,? sneered Fogg.
?You, a cub captain, broke the navigation rules last night by running at least fifteen knots in the fog. Your log and the testimony of your mates will show that. I'm not blaming you, son. I'm showing you how it looks! You got off your course and rammed a schooner at anchor, and you didn't even stop to pick up her men. I saw that much. Mayo, the only sensible thing for you to do is to duck out from under. It will save the line from a lot of scandal and bad advertising. By gad! if you don't do that much for us, after the offer I've just made you, I'll go onto the stand and testify against you.?

?You seem to be mighty ready and anxious to make me the goat in this thing,? blazed the young man, his temper getting away from him. He had been without sleep for many hours, his soul had been crucified by the bitter experiences he had been through.

?Are you looking for a fight??

?No, Mr. Fogg, I'm looking for a square deal. I haven't done anything intentionally to make me a fugitive from justice. I won't run away.?

?You won't be the first witness who has helped big interests by keeping

out of sight and out of reach of the lawyers. It's business, Mayo.?

?It may be, Mr. Fogg. I don't know the inside of the big deals. I'm only a sailor. I associate with sailors. And I've got a little pride in my good name.?

Mr. Fogg looked at this recalcitrant with scorn. He wanted to tell this stubborn individual that he was merely a two-spot in the big game which was being played. But the expression on Mayo's face encouraged neither levity nor sneers.

?I'll give you a thousand dollars expense money for your trip and will talk job with you next year after you get your license back,? proffered the general manager.

Captain Mayo fixed flaming eyes on the tempter. ?What special, private reason have you got for wanting to bribe me?? demanded the young man, with such heat that Fogg flinched. ?You are making something very mysterious out of what should be open and aboveboard. That may be Wall Street tactics, Mr. Fogg, but it doesn't go with a sailor who has earned a master's papers and is proud of it.?

?Well, pass on then,? directed Fogg. ?There's a tug alongside to take the underwriters back to Wood's Hole. Go along--to jail, or wherever it is you'll fetch up.?

?I shall stay aboard this ship as her captain until I am relieved according to the formalities of the admiralty law,? declared Captain Mayo, with dignity. ?I don't propose to run away from duty or punishment, Mr. Fogg.?

The general manager pursed a contemptuous mouth and departed from the cabin. He went away on the tug without further word to Mayo.

During the next two days small craft buzzed about the stricken giant like flies around a carcass. There were insurance men, wreckers with plans and projects, sightseers, stockholders--and one visitor was Captain Zoradus Wass.

?Nothing else to do just now, boy, except to come and sympathize with you.? He clucked his tongue against his teeth as he looked the steamer over. It was condolence without words. ?Now tell me the story of it--with all the fine details,? he demanded, after they were closeted in the captain's cabin. He sat with elbows on his knees and gazed at the floor during the recital, and he continued to gaze at the floor for some time after Mayo had ceased speaking.

?I admit that the quartermaster let her off for just a minute--less than a minute,? repeated the young man. ?I had only just looked away for an instant. I helped him put her over. We couldn't have done more than cut a letter S for a few lengths. But the more I think of it, the queerer it seems. Two points off, almost in a finger-snap!?

?Tell that part of it over and over again, while I shut my eyes and get

it fixed in my mind as if I had seen it, requested Captain Wass. Who was there, where did they stand, and so forth and so on. When a thing happens and you can't figure it out, it's usually because you haven't pored over the details carefully enough. Go ahead! I'm a good listener.

But after he had listened he had no comments to make. He went out of the cabin after a few minutes' wait which was devoted to deep meditation, and strolled about the ship, hands behind his back, scuffing his feet. A half-hour later, meeting Captain Mayo on his rounds, the veteran inquired:

How do you happen to have Oliver Burkett aboard here? I don't know him.

You ought to know him. He is the captain the Vose line fired off the Nirvana three years ago. He gave the go-ahead and a jingle when he was making dock, and chewed up four fishing-boats and part of the pier. He had to choose between admitting that he was drunk, crazy, or bribed by the opposition. And I guess they figured that he was all three. Was he aboard here the night it happened?

I don't know, sir.

According to my notion it's worth finding out, growled Captain Wass. I'm not seeing very far into this thing as yet, son, and I'll admit it. But if dirty work was done to you, Burkett would have been a handier tool for Fogg than a Stillson wrench in a plumbing job. No, don't ask me questions now. I haven't got any consolation for you or confidence in myself. I'm only thinking.

The next day the wounded Montana was formally surrendered to the underwriters.

Captain Boyd Mayo was ordered to appear before the United States inspectors, and he went and told his story as best he could. But his best was an unconvincing tale, after all. He left the hearing after his testimony and walked down to the little hotel by the water-front to wait for news.

Captain Wass came bustling down to the little hotel, plumping along at an extra rate of speed, setting his heels down hard, a moving monument of gloom.

His protégé, removing disconsolate gaze from the dusty chromos on the office walls, did not require verbal report; Captain Wass's demeanor told all.

And you couldn't expect much of anything else, declared the old man. I made the best talk I could for you after you had finished your testimony and had gone out. But it was no use, son! The department has been laying for a victim. Both of us have known that right along. They have soaked it to you good and proper.

How long am I suspended for? faltered Mayo.

?That's the point! Indefinitely. You were meat. Everybody watching the case. They trimmed you.?

Mayo set his hands into his thick hair, propped his head, and stared at the floor.

?Indefinitely doesn't mean forever, but there ain't much comfort in that. I'll tell you what it does mean, boy. It means that if there has been crooked work we've got to show it up in order to reinstate you. And now get a good brace on yourself. I've taken a peek in at the United States court.?

The young man, without lifting his head, gave the veteran a piteous side-glance.

?Fletcher Fogg is buzzing around the outside of that hive. He has Burkett along for an understrapper. They are marshaling in witnesses before the grand jury--those men from the _Warren_, and you know what they'll say, of course! Your mates and quartermasters, too! Mayo, they're going to railroad you to Atlanta penitentiary. They have put something over on you because you are young and they figured that you'd be a little green. It seemed queer to me when Fogg was so mighty nice to you all of a sudden. But they don't lay off a man like Jacobs and put in a new man just to be nice. They either felt they couldn't work Jacobs, or else they felt a green man would give 'em a good excuse for what happened.?

?But they couldn't arrange to have a schooner--?

?That was probably more than they figured on. But as long as it has happened they're going to use it to best advantage. You're going to have both tin cans tied to you, son. Every cussed bit of influence is going to be used against you. Poor devils on the outside, like you and I, don't understand just how slick the ways can be greased. Mayo, I'm going to give you good advice. Duck out!?

?Run away like a confessed criminal? That's the advice Fogg gave me. I don't think your advice is good, Captain Wass. I won't run away.?

?It may not be good advice. I ain't wise enough to know everything that's best. But if they put you behind the bars in Atlanta, son, you'll stay there till your term is up. No matter what is found out in your case, it will take money and a lot of time to get the truth before the right people. But if you ain't in prison, and we can get a line on this case and dig up even a part of the truth, then you've got a fighting chance in the open. If we can get just enough to make 'em afraid to put you onto the witness-stand, that much may make 'em quit their barking. You're a sailor, boy! You know a sailor can't do much when his hands are tied. Stay outside the penitentiary and help me fight this thing.?

?I don't know what to do,? mourned the young man. ?I'm all in a whirl. I'm no coward, Captain Wass. I'm willing to face the music. But I'm so helpless.?

‘Stay outside jail till the fog lifts a bit in this case,’ adjured his mentor. ‘Are you going to lie down and stick up your legs to have ‘em tied, like a calf bound for market? Here are a few things you can do if you duck out of sight for a little while. I’ll go ahead and--’

Suddenly he checked himself. He was facing the window, which commanded a considerable section of street. He wasted no further breath on good advice.

‘I know those men coming down there,’ he cried. ‘They’re bailiffs. I saw them around the court-house. They’re after you, Mayo! You run! Get away! There must be a back door here. Scoot!’ He pulled the unresisting scapegoat out of his chair and hustled him to the rear of the office.

A young man may have the best intentions. He may resolve to be a martyr, to bow to the law’s majesty. But at that moment Mayo was receiving imperious command from the shipmaster whose orders he had obeyed for so long that obedience was second nature. And panic seized him! Men were at hand to arrest him. There was no time to reason the thing out. Flight is the first impulse of innocence persecuted. Manly resolve melted. He ran.

‘I’ll stay behind and bluff ‘em off! I’ll say you’re just out for a minute, that I’m waiting here for you,’ cried Captain Wass. ‘That will give you a start. Try the docks. You may find one of the boys who will help.’

Mayo escaped into a yard, dodged down an alley, planning his movements as he hurried, having a mariner’s quickness of thought in an emergency.

He made directly for the pier where steam-vessels took water. A huge ocean-going tug was just getting ready to leave her berth under the water-hose. Her gruff whistle-call had ordered hawsers cast off. Mayo’s ‘longcoast acquaintance was fairly extensive. This was a coal-barge tug, and he waved quick greeting to the familiar face in her pilot-house and leaped aboard. He climbed the forward ladder nimbly.

‘I reckon you’ll have to make it hello and good-by in one breath, mate,’ advised the skipper. ‘I’m off to take a light tow down-coast. Norfolk next stop.’

‘Let her go--sooner the better,’ gasped the fugitive. ‘I’ll explain why as soon as you are out of the dock.’

‘You don’t say that you want to take the trip??

‘I’ve got to take it.’

The skipper cocked an eyebrow and pulled his bell. ‘Make yourself to home, mate,’ he advised. ‘I hope you ain’t in so much of a hurry to get there as you seem to be, for I’ve got three barges to tow.’

Mayo sat down on the rear transom and was hidden from all eyes on the pier.

There was no opportunity for an explanation until the barges had been picked up, for there was much manouver-ing and much tooting. But he found ready sympathy after he had explained.

“The law sharps are always hankering to catch a poor cuss who is trying to navigate these waters and suit the inspectors and the owners at the same time,” admitted the master of the tug. “I have read everything the papers had to say about your case, and I figured they didn't give you a fair show. Newspapers and lawyers and owners don't understand what a fellow is up against. I'm glad you're aboard, mate, because I want to hear your side, with all the details.”

The threshing over of the matter occupied many hours of the long wallow down the Jersey coast, and the tug captain weighed all features of the case with the care of a man who has plenty of time on his hands and with the zest a mariner displays in considering the affairs of his kind of folk.

“If I didn't know you pretty well, Mayo, and know what kind of a man you got your training with, I might think--just as those law sharps will probably say--that you were criminally careless or didn't know your business. But that dodge she made on you! Two points off her course! You've got to put your finger right on there and hold it! Let me tell you something. It was a queer thing in my own case. That was a queer thing in your case. Stand two queer things in our business up beside each other and squint at 'em and you may learn something.”

“She was on her course--I put her there with my own hands,” persisted Mayo.

“Sure! You know your business. If this thing was going to be left to the bunch that know you, you'd go clear. But here's what happened in my case: I had a new man in the wheel-house, here, and he almost rammed me into Cuttyhunk, gave me a touch and go with the Pollock Rip Lightship, and had me headed toward Nauset when the fog lifted. And he was steering my courses to the thinness of a hair, at that! Say, I took a sudden tumble and frisked that chap and dragged a toad-stabber knife out of his pocket--one of those regular foot-long knives. It had been yawing off that compass all the way from a point to a point and a half. When did you shift wheel-watch??

“Before we made Vineyard Sound.”

“And no trouble coming up the sound??

“Made Nobska and West Chop to the dot.”

“Then perhaps your general manager, who was in that pilot-house, had an iron gizzard inside him. Most of them Wall Street fellows do have!” said the skipper, with sarcasm.

“There's something going on in the steamboat business that I can't understand,” declared Mayo. “It's high up; it hasn't to do with us

chaps, who have to take the kicks. Fogg brought a man aboard the old _Nequasset_, and he didn't bring along a good explanation to go with that man. I have been wondering ever since how it happened that Fogg got to be general manager of the Vose line so almighty sudden.?

?Them high financiers play a big game, mate. And if you happened to be a marked card in it, they'd tear you up and toss you under the table without thinking twice. If you'll take a tip from me, you lay low and do a lot of thinking while Uncle Zoradus does his scouting. What are you going to do when you get to Norfolk??

?I haven't thought.?

?Well, the both of us better think, and think hard, mate. If the United States is really after you there'll be a sharp eye at every knot-hole. I can't afford to let 'em get in a crack at me for what I've done.?

?I'll jump overboard outside the capes before I'll put you in wrong,? asserted Mayo, with deep feeling.

That night the captain of the tug took a trick at the wheel in person.

His guest lay on the transom, smoking the skipper's spare pipe, and racking his mind for ways and means. After a time he was conscious that the captain was growling a bit of a song to relieve the tedium of his task. He sang the same words over and over--a tried and true Chesapeake shanty:

?Oh, I sailed aboard a lugger, and I shipped aboard a scow,
And I sailed aboard a peanut-shell that had a razor bow.
Needle in a haystack, brick into a wall!
A nigger man in Norfolk, he ain't no 'count at all!?

Mayo rolled off the transom and went to the captain's side. ?There's more truth than poetry in that song of yours, sir,? he said. ?You have given me an idea. A nigger in Norfolk doesn't attract much attention. And I haven't got to be one of the black ones, either. Don't you suppose there's something aboard here I can use to stain my face with??

?My cook is a great operator as a tattoo artist.?

?I don't think I want to make the disguise permanent, sir,? stated the young man, with a smile.

?What I mean is, he may have something in his kit that he can use to paint you with. What's your idea--stay there? I'm afraid they'll nail you.?? >

?I'll stay there just long enough to ship before the mast on a schooner. There isn't time to think up any better plan just now. Anything to keep out of sight until I can make up my mind about what's really best to be done.?

?We'll have that cook up here,? offered the captain. ?He's safe.?

The cook took prompt and professional interest in the matter. 'Sure!' he said. 'I've got a stain that will sink in and stay put for a long time, if no grease paint is used. Only you mustn't wash your face.'

'There's no danger of a fellow having any inducement to do that when he's before the mast on a schooner in these days,' declared the tug captain, dryly.

An hour later, Captain Boyd Mayo, late of the crack liner _Montana_, was a very passable mulatto, his crisply curling hair adding to the disguise. He swapped his neat suit of brown with a deck-hand, and received some particularly unkempt garments.

The next night, when the tug was berthed at the water station, he slipped off into the darkness, as homeless and as disconsolate as an abandoned dog.

XXII ~ SPECIAL BUSINESS OF A PASSENGER

O Ranzo was no sailor,
He shipped on board a whaler.
O pity Reuben Ran-zo, Ran-zo, boys!
O poor old Reuben Ranzo, Ranzo, boys!
--Reuben Ranzo.

Captain Mayo kept out of the region of the white lights for some time. He had a pretty wide acquaintance in the Virginia port, and he knew the beaten paths of the steamboating transients, ashore for a bit of a blow.

He lurked in alleys, feeling especially disreputable. He was not at all sure that his make-up was effective. His own self-consciousness convinced him that he was a glaring fraud, whose identity would be revealed promptly to any person who knew him. But while he sneaked in the purlieu of the city several of his 'longshore friends passed him without a second look. One, a second engineer on a Union line freighter, whirled after passing, and came back to him.

'Got a job, boy?'

'No, sir.'

'We need coal-passers on the _Drummond_. She's in the stream. Come aboard in the morning.'

But it was not according to Mayo's calculation, messing with steamboat men. 'Ah doan' conclude ah wants no sech job,' he drawled.

'No, of course you don't want to work, you blasted yaller mutt!' snapped the engineer. He marched on, cursing, and Mayo was encouraged, for the man had given him a thorough looking-over.

He went out onto the wider streets. He was looking for a roving schooner captain, reckoning he would know one of that gentry by the cut of his jib.

A ponderous man came stumping down the sidewalk, swinging his shoulders.

‘He’s one of ‘em,’ decided Mayo. The round-crowned soft hat, undented, the flapping trouser legs, the gait recognized readily by one who has ever seen a master mariner patrol his quarter-deck--all these marked him as a safe man to tackle. He stopped, dragged a match against the brick side of a building, and relighted his cigar. But before Mayo could reach him a colored man hurried up and accosted the big gentleman, whipping off his hat and bowing with smug humility. Mayo hung up at a little distance. He recognized the colored man; he was one of the numerous Norfolk runners who furnish crews for vessels. He wore pearl-gray trousers, a tailed coat, and had a pink in his buttonhole.

‘Ah done have to say that ah doan’ get that number seven man up to now, Cap’n Downs, though I have squitulate for him all up and down. But ah done expect--’

Captain Downs scowled over his scooped hands, puffing hard at his cigar. He threw away the match.

‘Look-a-here! you’ve been chasing me two days with new stories about that seventh man. Haven’t you known me long enough to know that you can’t trim me for another fee??

‘Cap’n Downs, you done know yo’self the present lucidateness of the sailorman supply.?’

‘I know that if you don’t get that man aboard my schooner to-night or the first thing to-morrow morning you’ll never put another one aboard for me. You go hustle! And look here! I see you making up your mouth! Not another cent!?’

The colored man backed off and went away.

Mayo accosted the captain when that fuming gentleman came lunging along the sidewalk. ‘Ah done lak to have that job, cap’n,’ he pleaded.

‘You a sailor??

‘Yas, sir.?’

‘How is it you ain’t hiring through the regular runners??

‘Ah doan’ lak to give all my money to a dude nigger to go spotein’ on.?’

‘Well, there’s something in that,’ acknowledged Captain Downs, softening a bit. ‘I haven’t got much use for that kind myself. You come along. But if you ain’t A-1, shipshape, and seamanlike and come aboard my vessel to loaf on your job you’ll wish you were in tophet with the torches

lighted. Got any dunnage laying around anywhere??

?No, sir.?

?Well, then, I guess you're a regular sailor, all right, the way the breed runs nowadays. That sounds perfectly natural.? The captain led the way down to a public landing, where a power-yawl, with engineer and a mate, was in waiting. ?Will she go into the stream to-night, Mr. Dodge?? asked Captain Downs, curtly.

?No, sir! About four hundred tons still to come.?

Schooner captains keep religiously away from their vessels as long as the crafts lie at the coal-docks.

?Come up for me in the morning as soon as she is in the stream. Here's a man to fill the crew. If that coon shows up with another man kick the two of 'em up the wharf.?

?Will the passenger come aboard with you, sir??

?He called me up at the hotel about supper-time and said something about wanting to come aboard at the dock. I tried to tell him it was foolish, but it's safe to reckon that a man who wants to sail as passenger from here to Boston on a coal-schooner is a fool, anyway. If he shows up, let him come aboard.? Captain Downs swung away and the night closed in behind him.

Mayo took his place in the yawl and preserved meek and proper silence during the trip down the harbor.

When they swung under the counter of the schooner which was their destination, the young man noted that she was the _Drusilla M. Alden_, a five-master, of no very enviable record along the coast, so far as the methods and manners of her master went; Mayo had heard of her master, whose nickname was ?Old Mull.? He had not recognized him under the name of Captain Downs when the runner had addressed him.

The new member of the crew followed the mate up the ladder--only a few steps, for the huge schooner, with most of her cargo aboard, showed less than ten feet of freeboard amidships.

?Sleepy, George?? asked the mate, when they were on deck.

?No, sir.?

?Then you may as well go on this watch.?

?Yass'r!?

?We'll call it now eight bells, midnight. You'll go off watch eight bells, morning.?

Mayo knew that the hour was not much later than eleven, but he did

not protest; he knew something about the procedure aboard coastwise coal-schooners.

Search-lights bent steady glare upon the chutes down which rushed the streams of coal, black dust swirling in the white radiance. The great pockets at Lambert Point are never idle. High above, on the railway, trains of coal-cars racketed. Under his feet the fabric of the vessel trembled as the chutes fed her through the three hatches. Sweating, coal-blackened men toiled in the depths of her, revealed below hatches by the electric lights, pecking at the avalanche with their shovels, trimming cargo.

The young man exchanged a few listless words with the two negroes who were on deck, his mates of the watch.

They were plainly not interested in him, and he avoided them.

The hours dragged. He helped to close and batten the fore-hatch, and later performed similar service on the hatch aft. The main-hatch continued to gulp the black food which the chute fed to it.

Suddenly a tall young man appeared to Mayo. The stranger was smartly dressed, and his spick-and-span garb contrasted strangely with the general riot of dirt aboard the schooner. He trod gingerly over the dust-coated planks and carried two suit-cases.

"Here, George," he commanded. "Take these to my stateroom."

Mayo hesitated.

"I'm going as passenger," said the young man, impatiently, and Mayo remembered what the captain had told the mate.

Passengers on coal-schooners, sailing as friends of the master, were not unknown on the coast, but Mayo judged, from what he had heard, that this person was not a friend, and had wondered a bit.

"I am not allowed to go aft, sir, without orders from the mate."

"Where is the mate?"

"I think he is below, sir."

"Asleep?"

"I wouldn't wonder."

Mayo did not trouble to use his dialect on this stranger, a mere passenger, who spoke as if he were addressing a car-porter. The tone produced instant irritation, resentment in the man who had so recently been master of his ship.

The passenger set down his baggage and pondered a moment. He looked Mayo over in calculating fashion; he stared up the wharf. Then he picked

up his bags and hurried along the port alley and disappeared down the companionway.

He returned in a few moments, came into the waist of the vessel, and made careful survey of all about him. There were two sailors far forward, merely dim shadows. For some reason general conditions on the schooner seemed to satisfy the stranger.

"The thing is breaking about right--about as I reckoned it would," he said aloud. "Look here, George, how much talking do you do about things you see?"

"Talking to who, sir?"

"Why, to your boss--the captain--the mate."

"A sailor before the mast is pretty careful not to say anything to a captain or the mates unless they speak to him first, sir."

"George, I'm not going to do anything but what is perfectly all right, you understand. You'll not get into any trouble over it. But what you don't see you can't tell, no matter if questions are asked later on. Here, take this!" He crowded two silver dollars into Mayo's hands and gave him a push. "You trot forward and stay there about five minutes, that's the boy! It's all right. It's a little of my own private business. Go ahead!"

Mayo went. He reflected that it was none of his affair what a passenger did aboard the vessel. It was precious little interest he took in the craft, anyway, except as a temporary refuge. He turned away and put the money in his pocket, the darkness hiding his smile.

He did not look toward the wharf. He strolled on past the forward house, where the engineer was stoking his boiler, getting up steam for the schooner's windlass engine. When he patrolled aft again, after a conscientious wait, he found the passenger leaning against the coachhouse door, smoking a cigarette. The electric light showed his face, and it wore a look of peculiar satisfaction.

Just then some one fumbled inside the coach-house door at the stranger's back, and when the latter stepped away the first mate appeared, yawning.

"I'm the passenger--Mr. Bradish," the young man explained, promptly. "I just made myself at home, put my stuff in a stateroom, and locked the door and took the key. Is that all right?"

"May be just as well to lock it while we're at dock and stevedores are aboard," agreed the mate.

"How soon do we pull out of here?"

The mate yawned again and peered up into the sky, where the first gray of the summer dawn was showing over the cranes of the coal-pockets. "In about a half-hour, I should say. Just as soon as the tug can use

daylight to put us into the stream.?

The roar of the coal in the main-hatch chute had ceased. The schooner was loaded.

?Go strike eight bells, Jeff, and turn in!? ordered the mate, speaking to Mayo.

?Well, I'll stay outside, here, and watch the sun rise,? said Bradish.
?It will be a new experience.?

?It's an almighty dirty place for loafing till we get into the stream and clean ship, sir. I should think taking an excursion on a coal-lugger would be another new experience!? There was just a hint of grim sarcasm in his tone.

?The doctor ordered me to get out and away where I wouldn't hear of business or see business, and a friend of mine told me there were plenty of room and comfort aboard one of these big schooners. That cabin and the staterooms, they're fine!?

?Oh, they have to give a master a good home these days. That's a Winton carpet in the saloon,? declared the mate, with pride. ?And we've got a one-eyed cook who can certainly sling grub together. Yes, for a cheap vacation I dun'no' but a schooner is all right!?

The two were getting on most amicably when Mayo went forward. He was dog-tired and turned in on tie bare boards of his fo'cas'le berth.

No bedding is furnished men before the mast on the coal-carriers.

If a man wants anything between himself and the boards he must bring it with him, and few do so. At the end of each trip a crew is discharged and new men are hired, in order to save paying wages while a vessel is in port loading or discharging. Therefore, a coastwise schooner harbors only transients, for whom the fo'cas'le is merely a shelter between watches.

But Mayo was a sailor, and the bare boards served him better than bedding in which some dusky and dirty son of Ham had nestled. He laid himself down and slept soundly.

The second mate turned out the watch below at four bells--six in the morning. The schooner was in the stream and all hands were needed to work hose and brooms and clear off the coal-dust. Mayo toiled in the wallow of black water till his muscles ached.

There was one happy respite--they knocked off long enough to eat breakfast. It was sent out to them from the cook-house in one huge, metal pan without dishes or knives or forks.

A white cook wash dishes for negroes?

Mayo knew the custom which prevailed on board the schooners between the

coal ports and the New England cities, and he fished for food with his fingers and cut meat with his jack-knife with proper meekness.

When he was back at his scrubbing again the cook passed aft, bearing the zinc-lined hamper which contained the breakfast for the cabin table. That this cook had the complete vocabulary of others of his ilk was revealed when the man with the hose narrowly missed drenching the hamper.

‘That’s right, cook!’ roared Captain Downs, climbing ponderously on board from his yawl. ‘Talk up to the loafing, cock-eyed, pot-colored sons of a coal-scuttle when I ain’t here to do it. Turn away that hose, you mule-eared Fiji!’ He turned on Mayo, who stood at one side and was poising his scrubbing-broom to allow the master to pass. ‘Get to work, there, yellow pup! Get to work!’

Ordinarily the skipper addresses one of his sailors only through the mate. But there was no mate handy just then.

‘One hand for the owners and one hand for yourself when you’re aloft, but on deck it’s both hands for the owners,’ he stated, as he plodded aft, giving forth the aphorism for the benefit of all within hearing.

The passenger was still on deck, and Mayo heard Captain Downs greet him rather brusquely.

Then the cook’s hand-bell announced breakfast, and before the captain and his guest reappeared on deck a tug had the ‘Alden’s’ hawser and was towing her down the dredged channel on the way to Hampton Roads and to sea.

Mayo went at his new tasks so handily that he passed muster as an able seaman. If a sailor aboard a big schooner of these days is quick, willing, and strong he does not need the qualities and the knowledge which made a man an ‘A. B.’ in the old times.

While the schooner was on her way behind the tug they hoisted her sails, a long cable called ‘the messenger’ enabling the steam-winch forward to do all the work. Mayo was assigned to the jigger-mast, and went aloft to shake out the topsail. It was a dizzy height, and the task tried his spirit, for the sail was heavy, and he found it difficult to keep his balance while he was tugging at the folds of the canvas. He was obliged to work alone--there was only one man to a mast, and very tiny insects did his mates appear when Mayo glanced forward along the range of the masts.

The tug dropped them off the Tail of the Horseshoe; a smashing sou’wester was serving them.

With all her washing set, the schooner went plowing out past the capes, and Mayo was given his welcome watch below; he was so sleepy that his head swam.

When he turned out he was ordered to take his trick at the wheel. The

schooner had made her offing and was headed for her northward run along the coast, which showed as a thin thread of white along the flashing blue of the sea.

Mayo took the course from the gaunt, sooty Jamaican who stepped away from the wheel; he set his gaze on the compass and had plenty to occupy his hands and his mind, for a big schooner which is logging off six or eight knots in a following sea is somewhat of a proposition for a steersman. Occasionally he was obliged to climb bodily upon the wheel in order to hold the vessel up to her course.

Captain Downs was pacing steadily from rail to rail between the wheel and the house. At each turn he glanced up for a squint at the sails. It was the regular patrol of a schooner captain.

In spite of his absorption in his task, Mayo could not resist taking an occasional swift peep at the passenger. The young man's demeanor had become so peculiar that it attracted attention. He looked worried, ill at ease, smoked his cigarettes nervously, flung over the rail one which he had just lighted, and started for the captain, his mouth open. Then he turned away, shielded a match under the hood of the companionway, and touched off another cigarette. He was plainly wrestling with a problem that distressed him very much.

At last he hurried below. He came up almost immediately. He had the air of a man who had made up his mind to have a disagreeable matter over with.

"Captain Downs," he blurted, stepping in front of Old Mull and halting that astonished skipper, "will you please step down into the cabin with me for a few moments? I've something to tell you."

"Well, tell it--tell it here!" barked the captain.

"It's very private, sir!"

"I don't know of any privater place than this quarterdeck, fifteen miles offshore."

"But the--the man at the wheel!"

"Good Josephus! That ain't a man! That's a nigger sailor steering my schooner. Tell your tale, Mr. Bradish. Tell it right here. That fellow don't count any more 'n that rudder-head counts."

"If you could step down into the cabin, I--?"

"My place is on this quarter-deck, sir. If you've got anything to say to me, say it!" He began to pace again.

Bradish caught step, after a scuff or two.

"I hope you're going to take this thing right, Captain Downs. It may sound queer to you at first," he stammered.

?Well, well, well, tell it to me--tell it! Then I will let you know whether it sounds queer or not.?

?I brought another passenger on board with me. She is locked in a stateroom.?

Old Mull stopped his patrol with a jerk. ?She?? he demanded. ?You mean to tell me you've got a woman aboard here??

?We're engaged--we want to get married. So she came along--?

?Then why in tophet didn't ye go get married? You don't think this is a parsonage, do you??

?There were reasons why we couldn't get married ashore. You have to have licenses, and questions are asked, and we were afraid it would be found out before we could arrange it.?

?So this is an elopement, hey??

?Well, the young lady's father has foolish ideas about a husband for his daughter, and she doesn't agree with him.?

?Who is her father??

?I don't intend to tell you, sir. That hasn't anything to do with the matter.?

Captain Downs looked his passenger up and down with great disfavor. ?And what's your general idea in loading yourselves onto me in this fashion??

?You have the right, as captain of a ship outside the three-mile limit, to marry folks in an emergency.?

?I ain't sure that I've got any such right, and I ain't at all certain about the emergency, Mr. Bradish. I ain't going to stick my head into a scrape.?

?But there can't be any scrape for you. You simply exercise your right and marry us and enter it in your log and give us a paper. It will be enough of a marriage so that we can't be separated.?

?Want to hold a hand you can bluff her father with, hey? I don't approve of any such tactics in matrimony.?

?I wouldn't be doing this if there were any other safe way for us,? protested Bradish, earnestly. ?I'm no cheap fellow. I hold down a good job, sir. But the trouble is I work for her father--and you know how it always is in a case like that. He can't see me!?

?Rich, eh??

?Yes, sir!? Bradish made the admission rather sullenly.

?It's usually the case when there's eloping done!?

?But this will not seem like eloping when it's reported right in the newspapers. Marriage at sea--it will seem like a romantic way of getting rid of the fuss of a church wedding. We'll put out a statement of that sort. It will give her father a chance to stop all the gossip. He'll be glad if you perform the ceremony.?

?Say, young fellow, you're not rehearsing the stuff on me that you used on the girl, are you? Well, it doesn't go!

?Captain Downs, you must understand how bull-headed some rich men are in matters of this kind. I am active and enterprising. I'll be a handy man for him. He likes me in a business way--he has said so. He'll be all right after he gets cooled down.?

?More rehearsal! But I ain't in love with you like that girl is.?

?We're in a terrible position, captain! Perhaps it wasn't a wise thing to do. But it will come out all right if you marry us.?

?What's her name??

?I can't tell you.?

?How in the devil can I marry you and her if I don't know her name??

?But you haven't promised that you will do your part! I don't want to expose this whole thing and then be turned down.?

?I ain't making any rash promises,? stated Captain Downs, walking to the rail and taking a squint at the top-hamper. ?Besides,? he added, on his tramp past to the other rail, ?he may be an owner into this schooner property, for all I know. Sixteenths of her are scattered from tophet to Tar Hollow!?

?You needn't worry about his owning schooner property! He is doing quite a little job at putting you fellows out of business!?

Curiosity and something else gleamed in Captain Downs's eyes. ?Chance for me to rasp him, hey, by wishing you onto the family??

This new idea in the situation appealed instantly to Bradish as a possibility to be worked. ?Promise man to man that you'll perform the marriage, and I'll tell you his name; then you'll be glad that you have promised,? he said, eagerly.

?I don't reckon I'd try to get even with Judas I-scarrot himself by stealing his daughter away from him, sir. There's the girl to be considered in all such cases!?

?But this isn't stealing! We're in love.?

?Maybe, but you ain't fooling me very much, young fellow. I don't say but what you like her all right, but you're after something else, too.?

?A man has to make his way in the world as best he can.?

?That plan seems to be pretty fashionable among you financing fellows nowadays. But I'm a pretty good judge of men and you can't fool me, I say. Now how did you fool the girl??

It was blunt and insulting query, but Bradish did not have the courage to resent it; he had too much need of placating this despot. The lover hesitated and glanced apprehensively at the man at the wheel.

?Don't mind that nigger!? yelled Captain Downs, ?How did you ever get nigh enough to that girl to horn-swoggle her into this foolishness??

?We met at dances. We were attracted to each other,? explained Bradish, meekly.

?Huh! Yes, they tell me that girls are crazy over hoof-shaking these days, and I suppose it's easy to go on from there into a general state of plumb lunacy,? commented Old Mull, with disgust. ?You show you ain't really in love with her, young man. You'd never allow her to cut up this caper if you were!?

He stuck an unlighted cigar in his mouth and continued to patrol his quarter-deck, muttering.

Bradish lighted a cigarette, tossed it away after two puffs, and leaned against the house, studying his fingertips, scowling and sullen.

Mayo had heard all the conversation, but his interest in the identity of these persons was limited; New York was full of rich men, and there were many silly daughters.

?Look here,? suggested the captain, unamiably, ?whatever is done later, there's something to be done now. It's cruelty to animals to keep that girl shut up in that stateroom any longer.?

?She didn't want to come out and show herself till I had had a talk with you, sir. I have spoken to her through the door a few times.? He straightened himself and assumed dignity. ?Captain Downs, I call it to your attention--I want you to remember that I have observed all the proprieties since I have been on board.?

Captain Downs snorted. ?Proprieties--poosh! You have got her into a nice scrape! And she's down there locked in like a cat, and probably starving!?

?She doesn't care to eat. I think she isn't feeling very well.?

?I shouldn't think she would! Go bring her up here, where she can get some fresh air. I'll talk to her.?

After a moment's hesitation Bradish went below. He returned in a little while.

In spite of his efforts to pretend obliviousness Mayo stared hard at the companionway, eager to look on the face of the girl. But she did not follow her lover.

'She doesn't feel well enough to come on deck,' reported Bradish. 'But she is in the saloon. Captain Downs, won't you go and talk to her and say something to make her feel easy in her mind? She is very nervous. She is frightened.'

'I'm not much of a ladies' man,' stated Old Mull. But he pulled off his cap and smoothed his grizzled hair.

'And if you could only say that you're going to help us!' pleaded the lover. 'We throw ourselves on your mercy, sir.'

'I ain't much good as a life-raft in this love business.' He started for the companionway.

'But don't tell her that you will not marry us--not just now. Wait till she is calmer.'

'Oh, I sha'n't tell her! Don't worry!' said Captain Downs, with a grim set to his mouth. 'All she, or you, gets out of me can be put in a flea's eye.'

He disappeared down the steps, and Bradish followed. A mate had come aft, obeying the master's hand-flourish, and he took up the watch. In a little while Mayo was relieved. He went forward, conscious that he was a bit irritated and disappointed because he had not seen the heroine of this love adventure, and wondering just a bit at his interest in that young lady.

An hour later Mayo, coiling down lines in the alley outside the engine-room, overheard a bulletin delivered by the one-eyed cook to the engineer.

The cook had trotted forward, his sound eye bulging out and thus mutely expressing much astonishment. 'There's a dame aft. I've been making tea and toast for her.'

'Well, you act as if it was the first woman you'd ever seen. What's the special excitement about a skirt going along as passenger?'

'She wa'n't expected to be aboard. I heard the old man talking with her. The flash gent that's passenger has rung her in somehow. I didn't get all the drift be-cause the old man only sort of purred while I was in hearing distance. But I caught enough to know that it ain't according to schedule.'

'Good looker?' The engineer was showing a bit of interest.

?She sure is!? declared the cook, demonstrating that one eye is as handy, sometimes, as two. ?Peaches and cream, molasses-candy hair, hands as white as pastry flour. Looks good enough to eat.?

?Nobody would ever guess you are a cook, hearing you describe a girl,? sneered the engineer.

?There's a mystery about her. I heard her kind of taking on before the dude hushed her up. She was saying something about being sorry that she had come, and that she wished she was back, and that she had always done things on the impulse, and didn't stop to think, and so forth, and couldn't the ship be turned around.?

Mayo forgot himself. He stopped coiling ropes and stood there and listened eagerly until the cook's indignant eye chanced to take a swing in his direction.

?Do you see who's standing there butting in on the private talk of two gents?? he asked the engineer. ?Hand me that grate-poker--the hot one. I'll show that nigger where he belongs.?

But Mayo retreated in a hurry, knowing that he was not permitted to protest either by word or by look. However, the cook had given him something else besides an insult--he had retailed gossip which kept the young man's thoughts busy.

In spite of his rather contemptuous opinion of the wit of a girl who would hazard such a silly adventure, he found himself pitying her plight, guessing that she was really sorry. But as to what was going on in the master's cabin he had no way of ascertaining. He wondered whether Captain Downs would marry the couple in such equivocal fashion.

At any rate, pondered Mayo, how did it happen to be any affair of his? He had troubles enough of his own to occupy his sole attention.

Their spanking wind from the sou'west let go just as dusk shut down. A yellowish scud dimmed the stars. Mayo heard one of the mates say that the glass had dropped. He smelled nasty weather himself, having the sailor's keen instinct. The topsails were ordered in, and he climbed aloft and had a long, lone struggle before he got the heavy canvas folded and lashed.

When he reached the deck a mate commanded him to fasten the canvas covers over the skylights of the house. The work brought him within range of the conversation which Captain Downs and Bradish were carrying on, pacing the deck together.

?Of course I don't want to throw down anybody, captain,? Bradish was saying. There was an obsequious note in his voice; it was the tone of a man who was affecting confidential cordiality in order to get on--to win a favor. ?But I have a lot of sympathy for you and for the rest of the schooner people. I have been right there in the office, and have had a finger in the pie, and I've seen what has been done in a good many cases. Of course, you understand, this is all between us! I'm not giving

away any of the office secrets to be used against the big fellows. But I'm willing to show that I'm a friend of yours. And I know you'll be a friend of mine, and keep mum. All is, you can get wise from what I tell you and can keep your eyes peeled from now on.?

Mayo heard fragmentary explanation of how the combination of steamboat and barge interests had operated to leave only pickings to the schooners. The two men were tramping the deck together, and at the turns were too far away from him to be heard distinctly.

?But they're putting over the biggest job of all just now,? proceeded Bradish. ?Confound it, Captain Downs, I'm not to be blamed for running away with a man's daughter after watching him operate as long as I have. His motto is, 'Go after it when you see a thing you want in this world.' I've been trained to that system. I've got just as much right to go after a thing as he. I'm treasurer of the Paramount--that's the trust with which they intend to smash the opposition. My job is to ask no questions and to sign checks when they tell me to, and Heaven only knows what kind of a goat it will make of me if they ever have a show-down in the courts! They worked some kind of a shenanigan to grab off the Vose line; I wired a pot of money to Fletcher Fogg, who was doing the dirty work, and it was paid to a clerk to work proxies at the annual meeting. And then Fogg put up some kind of a job on a greenhorn captain--worked a flip trick on the fellow and made him shove the Montana onto the sands. I suppose they'll have the Vose line at their price before I get back.?

Mayo sat there in the shadow, squatting on legs which trembled.

This babblers--tongue loosened by his new liberty and by the antagonism his small nature was developing, anticipating his employer's enmity--had dropped a word of what Mayo knew must be the truth. It had been a trick--and Fletcher Fogg had worked it! Mayo did not know who Fletcher Fogg's employer might be. From what office this tattler came he did not know; but it was evident that Bradish was cognizant of the trick. As a result of that trick, an honest man had been ruined and blacklisted, deprived of opportunity to work in his profession, was a fugitive, a despised sailor, kicked to the Very bottom of the ladder he had climbed so patiently and honorably.

Furious passion bowled over Mayo's prudence. He leaped down from the top of the house and presented himself in front of the two men.

?I heard it--I couldn't help hearing it!? he stuttered.

?Here's a nigger gone crazy!? yelled Captain Downs. ?Ahoy, there, for'ard! Tumble aft with a rope!?

?I'm no nigger, and I'm not crazy!? shouted Mayo.

The swinging lantern in the companionway lighted him dimly. But in the gloom his dusky hue was only the more accentuated. His excitement seemed that of a man whose wits had been touched.

?I knew it was a trick. But what was the trick?? he demanded, starting toward Bradish, his clutching hands outspread.

Captain Downs kicked at this obstreperous sailor, and at the same time fanned a blow at his head with open palm.

Mayo avoided both the foot and the hand. ?What does the law say about striking a sailor, captain? Hold on, there! I'm just as good a man as you are. Don't you tell those men to lay hands on me.? He backed away from the sailors who came running aft, with the second mate marshaling them. He stripped up his sleeve and held his arm across the radiance of the binnacle light. ?That's a white man's skin, isn't it?? he demanded.

?What kind of play-acting is all this?? asked Old Mull, with astonished indignation.

In that crisis Mayo controlled his tongue after a mighty effort to steady himself. He was prompted to obey his mood and announce his identity with all the fury that was in him. But here stood the man who had served as one of the tools of his enemies, whoever they were. For his weapon against this man Mayo had only a few words of gossip which had been dropped in an unwary moment; he realized his position; he regretted his passionate haste. He was not ready to put himself into the power of his enemies by telling this man who he was; he remembered that he was running away from the law.

Bradish gaped at this intruder without seeming to understand what it all meant.

?Passengers better get below out of the muss,? advised Captain Downs. ?Here's a crazy nigger, mate. Grab him and tie him up.?

Mayo backed to the rack at the rail and pulled out two belaying-pins, mighty weapons, one for each hand.

Bradish hurried away into the depths of the house, manifestly glad to get out from underfoot.

?Don't you allow those niggers to lay their hands on me,? repeated the man at bay. ?Captain Downs, let me have a word to you in private.? He had desperately decided on making a confidant of one of his kind. He bitterly needed the help a master mariner could give him.

?Get at him!? roared the skipper. ?Go in, you niggers!?

?By the gods! you'll be short-handed, sir. I'll kill 'em!?

That threat was more effective than mere bluster. Captain Downs instinctively squinted aloft at the scud which was dimming the stars; he sniffed at the volleying wind.

?One word to you, and you'll understand, sir!? pleaded Mayo. He put the pins back into the rack and walked straight to the captain.

There was no menace in his action, and the mate did not interfere.

‘Just a word or two to you, sir, to show you that I have done more than throw my hat into the door of the Masters and Mates Association.’ He leaned close and whispered. ‘Now let me tell you something else--in private?’ he urged in low tones.

Captain Downs glanced again at the bared arm and surveyed this sailor with more careful scrutiny. ‘You go around and come into the foreward cabin through the coach-house door,’ he commanded, after a little hesitation.

Mayo bowed and hurried away down the lee alley.

That cabin designated as the place of conference was the dining-saloon of the schooner. He waited there until Captain Downs, moving his bulk more deliberately, trudged down the main companionway and came into the apartment through its after-door which no sailor was allowed to profane.

‘Can anybody--in there--hear?’ asked Mayo, cautiously. He pointed to the main saloon.

‘She’s in her stateroom and he’s talking through the door,’ grunted the skipper. ‘Now what’s on your mind?’

Mayo reached his hand into an inside pocket of his shirt and drew forth a document. He laid it in Captain Downs’s hand. The skipper sat down at the table, pulled out his spectacles, and adjusted them on his bulging nose in leisurely fashion, spread the paper on the red damask cloth, and studied it. He tipped down his head and stared at Mayo over the edge of his glasses with true astonishment.

‘This your name in these master’s papers?’ he demanded.

‘Yes, sir.’

‘You’re--you claim to be the Captain Mayo who smashed the _Montana?’

‘I’m the man, sir. I hung on to my papers, even though they have been canceled.’

‘How do I know about these papers? How do I know your name is Mayo? You might have stolen ‘em--though, for that matter, you might just as well carry a dynamite bomb around in your pocket, for all the good they’ll do you.’

‘That’s the point, sir. They merely prove my identity. Nobody else would want them. Captain Downs, I’m running away from the law. I own up to you. Let me tell you how it happened.’

‘Make it short,’ snapped the captain, showing no great amiability toward this plucked and discredited master. ‘The wind is breezing up.’

He told his story concisely and in manly fashion, standing up while

Captain Downs sat and stared over his spectacles, drumming his stubby fingers on the red damask.

‘There, sir, that’s why I am here and how I happened to get here,’ Mayo concluded.

‘I ain’t prepared to say it isn’t so,’ admitted Old Mull at last, ‘no matter how foolish it sounds. And I’m wondering if next I’ll find the King of Peruvia or the Queen of Sheba aboard this schooner. New folks are piling in fast! I know Captain Wass pretty well, though I never laid eye on you to know you. Where’s that wart on his face?’

‘Starboard side of his nose, sir.’

‘What does he do, whittle off his chaw or bite the plug?’

‘Neither. Chews fine cut.’

‘What’s his favorite line of talk?’

‘Reciting the pilot rules and jawing because the big fellows slam along without observing them.’

‘Last remark showing that you have been in the pilothouse along with Captain Wass! Examination is over and you rank one hundred and the board stands adjourned!’ He rose and shook hands with Mayo. ‘Now what can I do for you?’

‘I don’t suppose you can do much of anything, Captain Downs. But I’m going to ask you this, master to masted. Don’t let a soul aboard this schooner know who I am--especially those two back there!’ He pointed to the door of the main saloon.

‘Seems to be more or less of a masked-ball party aboard here!’ growled the skipper.

‘That man you call Bradish, whoever he is, knows what kind of a game they played on me. I want to get it out of him. If he knows who I am he won’t loosen! I was a fool to break in as I did. He was coming across to you.’

‘Seemed to be pretty gossipy,’ admitted the captain. ‘Is trying to be my special chum so as to work me!’

‘Don’t you suppose you can get some more out of him?’

‘Might be done.’

‘I feel that it’s sailors against the shore pirates this time, sir. Won’t you call that man out here and ask him some questions and allow me to listen?’

‘Under the circumstances I’ll do it. Sailors first is my motto. You step into the mate’s stateroom, there, and put ear to the crack o’ the door.’

But when Bradish appeared, answering the captain's summons, all his chattiness had left him. He declared that he knew nothing about the trouble in the _Montana_ case.

?But you said something about a scheme to fool a green captain??

?It was only gossip--I probably got it wrong. I have thought it over and really can't remember where I heard it or much about it. Might have been just newspaper faking.?

He kept peering about the dimly lighted room.

?You needn't worry, young man. That nigger isn't here.?

?But he said he was a white man. And how does he come to be interested??

?It's a nigger gone crazy about that case--he has probably been reading fake stories in the papers, too,? stated Captain Downs, grimly. ?I must remind you again, Bradish, that you were talking to me in pretty lively style.?

?Oh, a man lets out a lot of guesswork when he is nervous about his own business.?

?Well, I might fix it so that you'd be a little less nervous, providing you'll show a more willing disposition when I ask you a few questions,? probed the skipper. But this insistence alarmed Bradish and his blinking eyes revealed his fears and suspicions.

?I don't know anything about the _Montana_ case. I don't intend to do any talking about it.?

Captain Downs tapped harder on the table, scowled, and was silent.

?Anything else, sir?? inquired Bradish, after a pause.

?Guess not, if that's the way you feel about it!? snapped Captain Downs.

Bradish went back into the main saloon, and the eavesdropper ventured forth.

?I don't know just what the dickens to do about you, now that I know who you are,? confessed the master, looking Mayo up and down.

?There isn't anything to do except let me go back to my work, sir.?

?I'm in a devil of a position. You're a captain.?

?I shipped on board here before the mast, Captain Downs, and knew exactly what I was doing. I'll take my medicine.?

?I don't like to have you go for'ard there among those cattle, Mayo.?

?Captain Downs, it was wrong for me to make the break I did on your quarter-deck. I ought to have kept still; but the thing came to me so sudden that I went all to pieces. I'd like to step back into the crew and have you forget that I'm Boyd Mayo. I'll sneak ashore in Boston and lose myself.?

The captain tipped up his cap and scratched the side of his head. ?Seems as if I remember you being at the wheel, Mayo, when that fellow was unloading some pretty important information on to me.?

?I couldn't help hearing, sir.?

?So you know he's eloping with a girl?? The old skipper lowered his voice.

?Yes, sir.?

?Did you ever hear of such a cussed, infernal performance? And I have talked with the girl, and she really doesn't seem to be that sort at all. She's flighty, you can see that. She has been left to run loose too much, like a lot of girls in society are running loose nowadays. They think of a thing that's different, and, biff! they go do it. She is wishing she hadn't done this. That shows some sense.? He studied the young man. ?Do you know anything about this right a captain has to perform marriage ceremonies??

?Nothing special.?

?It will probably be a good thing for that girl to be married and settled down. She seems to have picked out Bradish. Mayo, you're one of my kind, and I want to help you. I'll take a chance on my right to perform the ceremony. What say if we get Bradish back in here and swap a marriage for what he can tell us about the _Montana_ business??

?Captain Downs, a fellow who will put up a job of this kind on a girl, no matter if she has encouraged him, is a cheap pup,? declared Mayo, promptly and firmly. ?I don't want to buy back my papers in any such fashion.?

?Then you don't approve of my marrying them??

?I haven't any right to tell you what you shall do, sir. I'm talking merely for myself.?

Captain Downs pondered. ?If he's her father's right-hand man, he's probably just as good as most of the land pirates who have been courting her. If she goes home married, even if it is only marriage on the high seas, contract between willing persons with witnesses and the master of the vessel officiating, as I believe it's allowed, she'll have her good name protected, and that means a lot. I don't know as I have any right to stand out and block their way, seeing how far it has gone. What do you think, Mayo??

?I don't believe I want to make any suggestions, sir.?

At that moment the door aft opened. Mayo was near the door of the mate's stateroom in the shadows, and he dodged back into his retreat. He heard Bradish's voice.

?Captain Downs, this young lady has something to say to you and I hope you'll listen!?

Then the girl's voice! It was impetuous outburst. She hurried her words as if she feared to wait for second and saner reflection.

?Captain Downs, I cannot wait any longer. You must act. I beg of you. I have made up my mind. I am ready!?

?Ready to get married, you mean??

?Yes! Now that my mind is made up, please hurry!?

Her tone was high-pitched, tears were close behind her desperation, her words rushed almost incoherently. But Mayo, staring sightlessly in the black darkness of the little stateroom, his hearing keen, knew that voice. He could not restrain himself. He pulled the door wide open.

The girl was Alma Marston.

Her eyes were bright, her cheeks were flushed, and it was plain that her impulsive nature was flaming with determination. The shadows were deep in the corners of the saloon, and the man in the stateroom door was not noticed by the three who stood there in the patch of light cast by the swinging lamp.

?I ask you--I beg you--I have made up my mind! I must have it over with.?

?Don't have hysterics! This is no thing to be rushed.?

?You must.?

?You're talking to a captain aboard his own vessel, ma'am!?

From Mayo's choking throat came some sort of sound and the girl glanced in his direction, but it was a hasty and indifferent gaze. Her own affairs were engrossing her. He reeled back into the little room, and the swing of the schooner shut the door.

?You are captain! You have the power! That's why I am talking to you, sir!?

?But when you talked with me a little while ago you were crawfishing!? was Captain Downs's blunt objection.

?I am sorry I have been so imprudent. I ought not to be here. I have said so. I do too many things on impulse. Now I want to be married!?

?More impulse, eh??

?I must be able to face my father.?

There was silence in the saloon.

Mayo shoved trembling fingers into his mouth and bit upon them to keep back what his horrified reason warned him would be a scream of protest. In spite of what his eyes and ears told him, it all seemed to be some sort of hideous unreality.

?It's a big responsibility,? proceeded Captain Downs, mumbling his words and talking half to himself in his uncertainty. ?I've been trying to get some light on it from another--from a man who ought to understand more about it than what I do. It's too much of a problem for a man to wrassle with all alone.?

He turned his back on them, gazed at the stateroom door, tipped his cap awry, and scratched his head more vigorously than he had in his past ponderings.

?Say, you in there! Mate!? he called, clumsily preserving Mayo's incognito. ?I'm in a pinch. Say what you really think!?

There was no word from the stateroom.

?You're an unprejudiced party,? insisted the skipper. ?You have good judgment. Now what??

?Who is that, in there?? demanded Bradish.

?Why should this person, whoever he is, have any-thing to say about my affairs?? asked the girl.

?Because I'm asking him to say!? yelled the skipper, showing anger. ?I'm running this! Don't try to tell me my own business!? He walked toward the door. ?Speak up, mate!?

?It's an insult to me--asking strangers about my private affairs!? The protest of the girl was a furious outburst.

?I resent it, captain! Most bitterly resent it,? stated Bradish.

The old skipper walked back toward them. ?Resent it as much as you condemned like, sir! You're here asking favors of me. I want to do what is right for all concerned. You ought to be married--I admit that. But what sort of a position does it leave me in? Are you going to tell me this girl's name??

?I'm Alma Marston!? She volleyed the name at him with hysterical violence, but he did not seem to be impressed. ?I am Julius Marston's daughter!?

The skipper looked her up and down.

"Now you will be so good as to proceed about your duty!" she commanded, haughtily.

"Well, you can't expect me to show any special neighborly kindness to the Wall Street gouger who kept me tied up without a charter two months last spring with his steamboat combinations and his dicker deals!"

"How are we to take that, sir?" asked Bradish.

The girl was staring with frank wonder at this hard-shelled mariner whom she had not been able to impress by her name or her manner.

"Just as you want to?"

"I demand an explanation."

"Well, I'll give it to you, seeing that I'm perfectly willing to. Take it one way, and I'm willing to wallop Julius Marston by handing him the kind of a son-in-law you'd make; take it the other way, and I ain't particular about doing anything to accommodate anybody in the Marston family." He eyed them sardonically.

"So, you see, I'm betwixt and between in the matter! It's like settling a question by flipping a cent. And I'll tell you what I'm going to do!"

He smacked his palm on the table. He strode back toward the stateroom door. "Mate, ahoy, there! Sailor to sailor, now, and remember that you have asked something of _me!_ If you were captain of this schooner would you marry off these two?"

They waited in silence, in which they heard the whummle and screech of the wind outside and the angry squalling of the sheathing of the plunging schooner's cabin walls.

The voice which replied to Captain Downs's query did not sound human. It was a sort of muffled wail, but there was no mistaking its positiveness.

"No!" said the man behind the door.

Back to the table lurched Captain Downs. He pounded down his fist. "That settles it with me!" Then he poised his big hand on the edge of the table-cover. "I was ready to tip one way or the other and it needed only a little push. I have tipped." Down came the palm flat on the table-cloth with final and decisive firmness. "Young man," he informed Bradish, "there's an extra stateroom, there, off this dining-saloon. You take it!"

"What can I tell my father?" wailed the girl, the fire of her determination suddenly quenched by sobbing helplessness.

"You can tell him that I temporarily adopted you as my daughter at three bells on this particular evening, and I'll go to him and back you up if it becomes necessary." He opened the door leading aft and bowed. "Now, you trot along to your stateroom, sissy!"

After hesitating a few moments she hurried away. The skipper locked the door and slipped the key into his pocket.

‘Do you think I’m going to--?’ began Bradish, angrily.

‘I ain’t wasting any thoughts on you, sir. I’m saving ‘em all for the _Drusilla M. Alden_ just now.’

The craft’s plunging roll gave evidence that the sea was making. At that instant the first mate came down a few steps of the forward companionway, entering through the coach-house door.

‘She’s breezing up fresh from east’ard, sir!’ he reported.

‘So I’ve judged from the way this sheathing is talking up. I’ll be on deck at once, Mr. Dodge.’

That report was a summons to a sailor; Mayo came staggering out of the stateroom. He looked neither to right nor left nor at either of the men in the saloon. He stumbled toward the companionway, reaching his hands in front of him after the fashion in which a man gropes in the dark.

‘Are you letting a nigger--and a crazy one at that--decide the biggest thing in my life??’ raged Bradish.

‘I know what I’m doing,’ Captain Downs assured him. But the skipper was manifestly amazed by the expression he saw on Mayo’s face.

‘I won’t stand for it! Here, you!’ Bradish rushed across the room and intercepted Mayo.

‘Come away from that man!’ commanded the skipper.

But Bradish was not in a mood to obey authority. ‘There’s something behind this and I propose to be let in on it! Stop, you!’ He pushed Mayo back, but the latter’s face did not change its expression of dull, blank, utter despair which saw not and heard not. Mayo recovered himself and came on again, looking into vacancy.

‘If you have a grudge against me, by the gods, I’ll wake you up and make you explain it!’ shouted Bradish. He drew back his arm and drove a quick punch squarely against the expressionless face. The blow came with a lurch of the vessel and Mayo fell flat on his back. He went down as stiffly as he had walked, with as little effort to save himself as a store dummy would have made.

But he was another man when he came upon his feet.

Bradish had awakened him!

The master of the _Alden_ hurried around the table, roaring oaths, and tried to get between them, but he was an unwieldy man on his short legs. Before he was in arm’s-length they were at each other, dodging here and

there.

Bradish was no shrimp of an adversary; he was taller than his antagonist, and handled his fists like a man who had been trained as an amateur boxer.

They fought up and down the cabin, battering each other's face.

The indignant master threatened them with an upraised chair, tried to strike down their hands with it, but they were in no mood to mind a mediator. They fought like maddened cats, banging against the cabin walls, whirling in a crazy rigadoon to find an opening for their fists; Captain Downs was not nimble enough to catch them. Uttering awful profanity, he threatened to shoot both of them and rushed into the main saloon, unlocking the door.

?I'm coming back with a gun!? he promised. But the fight ended suddenly in a wrestling trick.

Mayo closed in, got Bradish's right hand in a grip, and doubled the arm behind his adversary's back. Then he tripped the city man and laid him backward over the table and against its edge with a violence that brought a yell of pain and made Bradish limp and passive. Mayo held him there.

?My grudge, eh? My grudge!? the victor panted. ?Because you wouldn't tell me how the sneaks ruined me? No! The girl isn't here now. I'll tell you! It's because you stole her self-respect and her good name, and it makes you too dirty a dog to be her husband!?

He picked up Bradish and threw him on the floor. When he turned he saw the girl's white, agonized, frightened face at the crack of the saloon door.

?Captain Downs!? she shrieked, ?that negro is killing him. He's killing Ralph!?

The victor turned his back on her and lurched around the table on his way out. He stroked blood from his face with his palm, and was glad that she had not recognized him; and yet, her failure to do so, even though he was such a pitiable figure of the man she had known, was one more slash of the whip of anguish across his raw soul. For a moment they had stood there, face to face, and only blank unrecognition greeted him; it made this horrible contretemps seem all the more unreal.

Mayo did not pause to listen to the ravings of Captain Downs, who came thrusting past her. Dizzy, bleeding, half blind, he rushed up the forward companionway and went into the black night on deck.

The mate was bawling for all hands to shorten sail, and Mayo took his place with the toilers, who were manning sheets and downhauls.

XXIII ~ THE MONSTER THAT SLIPPED ITS LEASH

And there Captain Kirby proved a coward at last,
And he played at bo-peep behind the mainmast,
And there they did stand, boys, and shiver and shake,
For fear that that terror their lives it would take.

--Admiral Benbow.

Rain came with the wind, and the weather settled into a sullen, driving, summer easterly.

Late summer regularly furnishes one of those storms to the Atlantic coast, a recrudescence of the wintry gales, a trial run of the elements, a sort of inter-equinoctial testing out so that Eurys may be sure that his bellows is in working condition.

Such a storm rarely gives warning ahead that it is to be severe. It seems to be a meteorological prank in order to catch mariners napping.

At midnight the Alden was plunging into creaming seas, her five masts thrummed by the blast. With five thousand tons of coal weighting her, she wallowed like a water-soaked log.

Mayo, who was roused from his hideous agony of soul at four bells, morning, to go on deck for his watch, ventured as near the engine-room door as he dared, for the rain was soaking his meager garments and the red glow from within was grateful. The ship's pump was clanking, a circumstance in no way alarming, because the huge schooners of the coal trade are racked and wrenched in rough water.

The second mate came to the engine-room, lugging the sounding-rod to the light in order to examine the smear on its freshly chalked length.

He tossed it out on deck with a grunt of satisfaction. "Nothing to hurt!" he said to the engineer. "However, I'd rather be inside the capes in this blow. The old skimmer ain't what she used to be. Johnson, do you know that this schooner is all of two feet longer when she is loaded than when she is light?"

"I knew she was hogged, but I didn't know it was as bad as that."

"I put the lead-line on her before she went into the coal-dock this trip, and I measured her again in the stream yesterday. With a cargo she just humps right up like a monkey bound for war. That's the way with these five-masters! They get such a racking they go wrong before the owners realize."

"They'll never build any more, and I don't suppose they want to spend much money on the old ones," suggested the engineer.

"Naturally not, when they ain't paying dividends as it is." He stepped to the weather rail and sniffed. "I reckon the old man will be dropping the killick before long," he said.

Mayo knew something of the methods of schooner masters and was not surprised by the last remark.

In the gallant old days, when it was the custom to thrash out a blow, the later plan of anchoring a big craft in the high seas off the Delaware coast, with Europe for a lee, would have been viewed with a certain amount of horror by a captain.

But the modern skipper figures that there's less wear and tear if he anchors and rides it out. To be sure, it's no sort of a place for a squeamish person, aboard a loaded schooner whose mudhook clutches bottom while the sea flings her about, but the masters and crews of coal-luggers are not squeamish.

Mayo, glancing aft, saw two men coming forward slowly, stopping at regular intervals. The light of a lantern played upon their dripping oilskins. When they arrived at the break of the main-deck, near the forward house, he recognized Captain Downs and the first mate. The second mate stepped out and replied to the captain's hail.

"Bring a maul and some more wedges!" commanded the master.

"_Drusilla_ is getting her back up some more," commented the second mate, starting for the storeroom. "I don't blame her much. This is no place for an old lady, out here to-night." He ordered Mayo to accompany him.

In a few moments they reported to the captain, the mate carrying the two-headed maul and the young man bearing an armful of wedges.

Captain Downs bestowed on Mayo about the same attention he would have allowed to a galley cockroach. He pointed to a gap in the rail.

"There--drive one in there," he told the mate. "Let that nigger hold the wedge." There was rancor in his voice--baleful hostility shone in his snapping eyes; no captain tolerates disobedience at sea, and Mayo had disregarded all discipline in the cabin.

The young man kneeled and performed the service and followed the party dutifully when they moved on to the next gap.

The pitching schooner groaned and grunted and squalled in all her fabric.

Every angle joint was working--yawing open and closing with dull grindings as the vessel rolled and plunged.

"By goofer, she's gritting her teeth in good shape!" commented the first mate.

"She ought to have been stiffened a year ago, when she first began to loosen and work!" declared Captain Downs. His anxiety stirred both his temper and his tongue. "I was willing to have my sixteenth into her

assessed for repairs, but a stockholder don't have to go to sea! I wish I had an excursion party of owners aboard here now.?

?When these old critters once get loose enough to play they rattle to pieces mighty fast,? said the mate. ?But this is nothing specially bad.?

?Find out what we've got under us,? snapped Captain Downs. The wedges had been driven. ?Let this nigger carry the lead for'ard!?

It was a difficult task in the night, because the leadline had to be passed from the quarter-deck to the cathead outside the shrouds; the rails and deck were slippery. Plainly, Captain Downs was proposing to show Mayo ?a thing or two.?

He let go the lead at command, and heard the man on the quarter-deck, catching the line when it swung into a perpendicular position, report twenty-five fathoms.

Again, answering the mate's bawled orders, Mayo carried the lead forward and dropped it, after a period of waiting, during which the schooner had been eased off. He was soaked to the skin, and was miserable in both body and mind. He had betrayed himself, he had made an enemy of the man who knew something which could help him; he felt a queer sense of shame and despair when he remembered the girl and the expression of her face. He tried to convince himself that he did not care what her opinion of him was. What happened to that love she had professed on board the _Olenia?_ What manner of maiden was this? He did not understand!

Five times he made his precarious trip with the lead, fumbling his way outside the rigging.

In twenty fathoms Captain Downs decided to anchor, after the mate, ?arming? the lead by filling its cup with grease, found that they were over good holding ground.

When the _Alden_ came into the wind and slowed down, slapping wet sails, the second mate hammered out the holding-pin of the gigantic port anchor, and the hawse-hole belched fathom after fathom of chain.

All hands were on deck letting sails go on the run into the lazy-jacks, and the big schooner swung broadside to the trough of the sea. She made a mighty pendulum, rolling rails under, sawing the black skies with her towering masts.

There are many things which can happen aboard a schooner in that position when men are either slow or stupid. A big negro who was paying out the mizzen-peak halyards allowed his line to foul. Into the triangle of sail the wind volleyed, and the thirty-foot mizzen-boom, the roll of the ship helping, swung as far as its loosened sheets allowed. The ?traveler,? an iron hoop encircling a long bar of iron fastened at both ends to the deck, struck sparks as a trolley pulley produces fire from a sleety wire.

With splintering of wood and clanging of metal, the iron bar was

wrenched from its deck-fastenings and began to fly to and fro across the deck at the end of its tether, like a giant's slung-shot. It circled, it spun, it flung itself afar and returned in unexpected arcs.

Men fled from the area which this terror dominated.

The boom swung until it banged the mizzen shrouds to port, and then came swooping back across the deck, to slam against the starboard shrouds. The clanging, tethered missile it bore on its end seemed to be searching for a victim. When the boom met the starboard shrouds in its headlong rush, the schooner shivered.

‘Free that halyard and douse the peak!’ roared the first mate.

A sailor started, ducking low, but he ran back when the boom came across the deck with such a vicious swing that the iron bar fairly screamed through the air.

‘Gawd-a-mighty! She’ll bang the mast out of her!’ clamored Captain Downs. ‘Get some men to those halyards, Mr. Dodge! Catch that boom!’

The mate ran and kicked at a sailor, shouting profane orders. He seized the fellow and thrust him toward the pins where the halyards were belayed. But at that instant the rushing boom came hurtling overhead with its slung-shot, and the iron banged the rail almost exactly where the fouled line was secured. The mate and the sailor fell flat on their faces and crawled back from the zone of danger.

‘Get some rope and noose that boom! Lasso it!’ commanded the master, touching up his orders with some lurid sea oaths.

But the men who stepped forward did so timidly and slowly, and dodged back when the boom threatened. The flying bar was a terrible weapon. Now it swung in toward the mast--now swept in wider radius. Just where it would next sweep the deck between the masts depended on the vagary of wave and wind. It was perfectly apparent that anybody who got in its path would meet death as instantly as a fly under a housewife’s spanker.

Life is sweet, even if a man is black and is toiling for a dollar-a-day wage.

And even if a man is a mate, at a higher wage and with more responsibility, he is inclined to think of himself before he figures on saving a mast and gear for a schooner’s owners.

‘What kind of a gor-rammed crew have I got aboard here?’ shrieked the master.

‘About the kind that all wind-jammers carry these days,’ said a voice at his elbow.

Captain Downs whirled and found Mayo there. ‘How do you dare to speak to me, you tin-kettle sailor?’ demanded the master. In his passion he went on: ‘You’re aboard here under false pretenses. You can’t even do your

work. You have made this vessel liable by assaulting a passenger. You're no good! With you aboard here I'm just the same as one man short.? But he had no time to devote to this person.

He turned away and began to revile his mates and his sailors, his voice rising higher each time the rampaging boom crashed from side to side. One or two of the backstays had parted, and it was plain that before long the mast would go by the board.

?If that mast comes out it's apt to smash us clear to the water-line,? lamented the captain.

?If you can make your herd of sheep give me a hand at the right time, I'll show you that a tin-kettle sailor is as good as a wind-jammer swab,? said Mayo, retaliating with some of the same sort of rancor that Captain Downs had been expending. In that crisis he was bold enough to presume on his identity as a master mariner. ?I'd hate to find this kind of a bunch on any steamboat I've ever had experience with.?

Then he ran away before the captain had time to retort. He made a slide across the danger zone on his back, like a runner in a ball game. This move brought him into a safe place between the mainmast and the mizzen. There was a coil of extra cable here, and he grabbed the loose end and deftly made a running bowline knot. He set the noose firmly upon his shoulders, leaped up, and caught at the hoops on the mizzenmast.

?See to it that the line runs free from that coil, and stand by for orders!? he shouted, and though his dyed skin was dark and he wore the garb of the common sailor, he spoke with the unmistakable tone of the master mariner. The second mate ran to the line and took charge.

?This is a bucking bronco, all right!? muttered Mayo. ?But it's for the honor of the steamboat men! I'll show this gang!?

He poised himself for a few moments on the crotch of the boom, clinging to the cringles of the luff--the short ropes with which the sail is reefed.

As he stood there, gathering himself for his desperate undertaking, waiting for opportunity, taking the measure of the lashing and insensate monster whom he had resolved to subdue, he heard Captain Downs bawl an impatient command:

?Passengers go below!?

Mayo looked aft and saw Alma Marston clinging to the spike-rack of the spanker mast. The coach-house lantern shone upon her white face.

?Go below!? repeated the master.

She shook her head.

?This is no place for a woman.?

?The vessel is going to sink!? she quavered.

?The schooner is all right. You go below!?

How bitter her fear was Mayo could not determine. But even at his distance he could see stubborn resolution on her countenance.

?If I've got to die, I'll not die down there in a box,? she cried. ?I'm going to stay right here.?

Captain Downs swore and turned his back on her. Apparently he did not care to come to a real clinch with this feminine mutineer.

The great spar crashed out to the extent of its arc, and the sail volleyed with it, ballooning under the weight of the wind. The reef-points were no longer within Mayo's reach. He ran along the boom, arms outspread to steady himself, and was half-way to its end before the telltale surge under him gave warning. Then he fell upon the huge stick, rolled under it, and shoved arms and legs under the foot of the sail. Barely had he clutched the spar in fierce embrace before it began its return journey. It was a dizzy sweep across the deck, a breath-taking plunge.

When the spar collided with the stays he felt as if arms and legs would be wrenched from his body. He did not venture to move or to relax his hold. He clung with all his strength, and nerved himself for the return journey. He had watched carefully, and knew something of the vagaries of the giant flail. When it was flung to port the wind helped to hold it there until the resistless surge of the schooner sent it flying wild once more. He knew that no mere flesh and blood could endure many of those collisions with the stays. He resolved to act on the next oscillation to port, in order that his strength might not be gone.

?See that the cable runs free!? he screamed as he felt the stick lift for its swoop.

He swung himself upward over the spar the moment it struck, and the momentum helped him. He ran again, steadying himself like a tight-wire acrobat. He snatched the noose from his shoulders, slipped it over the end of the boom, and yelled an order, with all the strength of his lungs:

?Pull her taut!?

At that instant the boom started to swing again.

Standing on the end of the spar, he was outboard; the frothing sea was under him. He could not jump then; to leap when the boom was sweeping across the deck meant a skinful of broken bones; to wait till the boom brought up against the stays, so he realized, would invite certain disaster; he would either be crushed between the boom and shrouds or snapped far out into the ocean as a bean 'is filliped by a thumb. On the extreme end of the spar the leverage would be so great that he could not hope to cling there with arms and legs.

A queer flick of thought brought to Mayo the phrase, "Between the devil and the deep sea." That flying boom was certainly the devil, and the foaming sea looked mighty deep.

Her weather roll was more sluggish and Mayo had a moment to look about for some mode of escape.

He saw the sail of "number four" mast sprawling loose in its lazy-jacks, unfurled and showing a tumbled expanse of canvas. When he was inside the rail, and while the boom was gathering momentum, he took his life in his hands and his grit between his teeth and leaped toward the sail. He made the jump just at the moment when the boom would give him the most help.

He heard Captain Downs's astonished oath when he dove over that worthy mariner's head, a human comet in a twenty-foot parabola.

He landed in the sail on his hands and knees, yelling, even as he alighted: "Catch her, boys!"

They did it when the spar banged against the stays. They surged on the rope, tightened the noose, and before the vessel rolled again had made half a dozen turns of the free end of the cable around the nearest cleats.

Mayo scrambled down from the sail and helped them complete the work of securing the spar. He passed near Captain Downs when the job had been finished.

"Well," growled the master of the "Alden," "what do you expect me to say to that?"

"I simply ask you to keep from saying something."

"What?"

"That a steamboat man can't earn his pay aboard a wind-jammer, sir. I don't like to feel that I am under obligations in any way."

The master grunted.

"And if the little thing I have done helps to square that break I made by licking your passenger I'll be glad of it," added Mayo.

"You needn't rub it in," said Captain Downs, carefully noting that there was nobody within hearing distance. "When a man has been in a nightmare for twenty-four hours, like I've been, you've got to make some allowances, Captain Mayo. This is a terrible mixed-up mess." He squinted at the mizzen rigging where the lanterns revealed the damage. "And by the way those backstays are ripped out, and seeing how that mast is wabbling, this schooner is liable to be about as badly mixed up as the people are on board of her."

Mayo turned away and went back to his work. They were rigging

extra stays for the mizzenmast. And he noted that the girl near the coach-house door was staring at him with a great deal of interest. But in that gloom he was only a moving figure among toiling men.

An hour later the mate ordered the oil-bags to be tied to the catheads. The bags were huge gunny sacks stuffed with cotton waste which was saturated with oil.

In spite of the fact that her spanker, double-reefed, was set in order to hold her up to the wind, weather-vane fashion, the schooner seemed determined to keep her broadside to the tumbling seas. The oil slick helped only a little; every few moments a wave with spoondrift flying from it would smash across the deck, volleying tons of water between rails, with a sound like thunder. At these times the swirling torrent in the waist would reach to a man's knees.

Mayo did not take his watch below. The excitement of his recent experience had driven away all desire for sleep, and the sheathing in the fo'c'sle was squawking with such infernal din that only a deaf man could have remained there in comfort.

However, he was not uneasy in regard to the safety of the schooner. In a winter gale, with ice caking on her, he would have viewed their situation in different light. But he had frequently seen the seas breaking over the wallowing coal-luggers when he had passed them at anchor on the coast.

He made a trip of his own along the main-deck, scrambling upon the spars to avoid the occasional deluge which swept her amidship. The battened hatches were apparently withstanding the onslaughts of the waves. He could feel less weight in the wind. It was apparent that the crisis of the blow had passed. The waves were not so savage; their crests were not breaking. But just then the second mate rushed past, and Mayo overheard the report he gave the captain, who was pacing the lee alley:

"The mizzenmast is getting more play, sir. I'm afraid it's raising the devil with the step and keelson."

"Rig extra stays and try her again for water," ordered the master.

Mayo, returning to the mizzen, found the entire crew grouped there. The mast was writhing and groaning in its deck collar, twisting its coat--the canvas covering at its foot where it entered the deck.

The dusky faces were exhibiting much concern. They had flocked where the ship was dealing herself a wound; the sailor sixth sense of impending trouble had drawn them there.

"Four of you hustle aloft and stand ready to make fast those stays!" commanded the first mate.

"Rest of you make ready tackle!" shouted the second mate, following close on Mayo's heels.

The negroes did not stir. They mumbled among themselves.

'Step lively!' insisted the mate.

'Scuse us, but dat mast done goin' to tumble down,' ventured a man.

'Aloft with you, I say!'

Just then the schooner slatted herself on a great roller, and the starboard stays snapped, one after the other, like mammoth fiddle-strings. The mast reeled and there was an ominous sound below the deck.

'She done put a hole into herself!' squealed a sailor.

In the gloom their eyes were gleaming with the fires one beholds in the eyes of frightened cats.

'Dere she comes!' shouted one of them. He pointed trembling finger.

Over the coamings of the fore-hatch black water was bubbling.

Yelping like animals, the sailors stampeded aft in a bunch, bowling over Mayo and the mates in their rush.

'Stop 'em, captain!' bellowed the first mate, guessing their intent. He rose and ran after them. But fright gave them wings for their heels. They scampered over the roof of the after-house, and were on the quarter-deck before the skipper was out of the alley. They leaped into the yawl which was swung at the stern davits.

'You renegades!' roared the master. 'Come out of that boat!'

With the two mates at his heels he rushed at them. They grabbed three struggling men by the legs and dragged them back. But the negroes wriggled loose, driven to frantic efforts by their panic. They threw themselves into the boat again.

'Be men!' clamored Mayo, joining the forces of discipline. 'There's a woman aboard here!'

But the plea which might have affected an Anglo-Saxon did not prevail. Their knives were out--not for attack on their superiors, but to slash away the davit tackle.

'Come on, boys! Throw 'em out!' shouted the master, leading the way into the yawl over the rail.

His two mates and Mayo followed, and the engineer, freshly arrived from forward, leaped after them. But as fast as they tossed a man upon the quarter-deck he was up and in the boat again fighting for a place.

'Throw 'em overboard!' roared the master, venting a terrible oath. He knocked one of the maddened wretches into the sea. The next moment the

captain was flat on his back, and the sailors were trampling on him.

Most of the surges came riding rail-high; sometimes an especially violent wave washed the deck aft.

Following it, a chasm regularly opened under the vessel's counter, a swirling pit in the ocean twenty feet deep.

There was good fortune as well as misfortune in the affair of the yawl. When at last it dropped it avoided the period of the chasm.

In spite of the efforts of the captain and his helpers the sailors succeeded in slashing away the davit tackle. A swelling roller came up to meet the boat as the last strand gave way and swept it, with its freight, out into the night. But as it went Mayo clutched a davit pulley and swung in midair.

The dizzy depths of the sea opened under him as he dangled there and gazed down.

An instant later all his attention was focused on Alma Marston, who stood in the companionway clutching its sides and shrieking out her fears. The lantern showed her to him plainly. Its radiance lighted him also. He called to her several times, angrily at last.

"Where is that man, Bradish?" he demanded, fiercely.

It seemed as if his arms would be pulled out. He could not reach the davit iron from where he hung; the schooner's rail was too far away, though he kicked his feet in that direction.

"Don't be a fool! Stop that screaming," he told her. "Can Bradish?"

"He is sick--he--he--is frightened," she faltered.

"Come out here! Pull on that rope! Swing me in, I can't hold on here much longer. Do you want to see me drown?"

She came along the rail, clinging to it.

"No, not that rope! The other one! Pull hard!"

She obeyed, fighting back her fear. The davit swung inward slowly, and he managed to slide his legs up over the rail and gain the deck.

"Thank you!" he gasped. "You're quite a sailor!"

He had been wondering what his first words to her would be. Even while he swung over the yawning depths of the sea the problem of his love was so much more engrossing than his fear of death that his thoughts were busy with her. He tried to speak to her with careless tone; it had been in his mind that he would speak and bow and walk away. But he could not move when she opened her eyes on him. She was as motionless as he--a silent, staring pallid statue of astounded fright. The rope slipped

slowly from her relaxing fingers.

‘Yes! It’s just the man you think it is,’ he informed her, curtly. ‘But there’s nothing to be said!’

‘I must say something--’

But he checked her savagely. ‘This is no place to talk over folly! It’s no place to talk anything! There’s something else to do besides talk!’

‘We are going to die, aren’t we?’ She leaned close to him, and the question was hardly more than a whisper framed by her quivering lips.

‘I think so,’ he answered, brutally.

‘Then let me tell you--’

‘You can tell me nothing! Keep still!’ he shouted, and drew away from her.

‘Why doesn’t Captain Downs come back after us?’

‘Don’t be a fool! The sea has taken them away.’

They exchanged looks and were silent for a little while, and the pride in both of them set up mutual barriers. It was an attitude which conspired for relief on both sides. Because there was so much to say there was nothing to say in that riot of the sea and of their emotions.

‘I won’t be a fool--not any more,’ she told him. There was so distinctly a new note in her voice that he stared at her. ‘I am no coward,’ she said. She seemed to have mastered herself suddenly and singularly.

Mayo’s eyes expressed frank astonishment; he was telling himself again that he did not understand women.

‘I don’t blame you for thinking that I am a fool, but I am not a coward,’ she repeated.

‘I’m sorry,’ stammered the young man. ‘I forgot myself.’

‘There is danger, isn’t there?’

‘I’m afraid the mast has pounded a bad hole in her. I must run forward. I must see if something can’t be done.’

‘I am going with you.’ She followed him when he started away.

‘You must stay aft. You can’t get forward along that deck. Look at the waves breaking over her!’

‘I am going with you,’ she insisted. ‘Perhaps there is something that can be done. Perhaps I can help.’

The girl was stubborn, and he knew there was no time for argument.

Three times on their way forward he was obliged to hold her in the hook of his arm while he fought with the torrent that a wave launched upon the deck.

There was no doubt regarding the desperate plight of the schooner. She was noticeably down by the head, and black water was swashing forward of the break of the main-deck. The door of the galley was open, and the one-eyed cook was revealed sitting within beneath a swinging lantern. He held a cat under his arm.

"Bear a hand here, cook!" called Mayo.

But the man did not get off his stool.

"Bear a hand, I say! We've got to rig tackle and get this long-boat over."

The schooner's spare boat was in chocks between the foremast and the main. Mayo noted that it was heaped full of spare cable and held the usual odds and ends of a clutter-box. He climbed in hastily and gave a hand to the girl to assist her over the rail.

"It will keep you out of the swash," he advised her. "Sit there in the stern while I toss out this truck."

But she did not sit down. She began to throw out such articles as her strength could manage.

Again Mayo hailed the cook, cursing him heartily.

"Oh, it ain't any use," declared the man, with resignation. "We're goners."

"We aren't gone till we go, you infernal turtle! Come here and pitch in."

"I hain't got no heart left for anything. I never would have believed it. The Old Man going off and saving a lot of nigger sailors instead of me--after all the vittles I've fixed up for him. If that's the kind of gratitude there is in the world, I'm glad I'm going out of it. Me and the cat will go together. The cat's a friend, anyway."

Mayo lost his temper then in earnest. All his nature was on edge in that crisis, and this supine surrender of an able-bodied man whose two hands were needed so desperately was peculiarly exasperating. He leaped out of the boat, ran into the galley, and gave the cook an invigorating beating up with the flat of his hands. The cook clutched his cat more firmly, braced himself on the stool, and took his punishment.

"Kill me if you want to," he invited. "I've got to die, and it don't make a mite of difference how. Murder me if you're so inclined."

?Man--man--man, what's the matter with you?? gasped Mayo. ?We've got a chance! Here's a girl to save!?

?She hain't got no business being here. Was sneaked aboard. It's no use to pound me. I won't lift a finger. My mind is made up. I've been deserted by the Old Man.?

?You old lunatic, Captain Downs got carried away by those cowards. Wake up! Help me! For the love of the Lord, help me!?

?Rushing around will only take my mind off'n thoughts of the hereafter, and I need to do some right thinking before my end. It ain't any use to threaten and jaw; nothing makes any difference to me now.?

Mayo saw the uselessness of further appeal, and the fellow dangled as limply as a stuffed dummy when the young man shook him. Therefore Mayo gave over his efforts and hurried back to the long-boat. The spectacle of the girl struggling with the stuff she was jettisoning put new determination into him. Her amazing fortitude at the time when he had looked for hysterics and collapse gave him new light on the enigma of femininity.

?Did you tell me that Bradish is ill?? he asked, hurriedly.

?He is in the cabin. He would not talk to me. I could not induce him to come on deck.?

?I must have help with the tackle,? he told her, and started aft on the run.

He found Bradish sprawled in a morris-chair which was lashed to a radiator. He expected hot words and more insults, but Bradish turned to him a face that was gray with evident terror. His jaw sagged; his eyes appealed.

?This is awful!? he mourned. ?What has happened on deck? I heard the fighting. Where is Miss Mar-ston??

?She is forward. There has been an accident--a bad one. We have lost the captain and crew. Come on. I need help.?

?I can't help. I'm all in!? groaned Bradish.

?I say you must. It's the only way to save our lives.?

Bradish rolled his head on the back of the chair, refusing. His manner, his sudden change from the fighting mood, astonished Mayo. The thought came to him that this man had been pricked to conflict by bitter grudge instead of by his courage.

?Look here, Bradish, aren't you going to help me save that girl??

?I'm not a sailor. There's nothing I can do.?

‘But you’ve got two hands, man. I want to get a boat overboard. Hurry!’

‘No, no! I wouldn’t get into a small boat with these waves so high. It wouldn’t be safe.’

‘This schooner is sinking!’ shouted Mayo. He fastened a heavy clutch upon Bradish’s shoulders. ‘There’s no time to argue this thing. You come along!’

He hauled Bradish to his feet and propelled him to the companionway, and the man went without resistance. It was evident that real danger and fear of death had nearly paralyzed him.

‘There’s nothing I can do!’ he kept bleating.

But Mayo hurried him forward.

‘Ralph!’ cried the girl, fairly lashing him with the tone in which she delivered the word. ‘What is the matter with you?’

‘There’s nothing I can do. It isn’t safe out here.’

‘You must do what this man tells you to do. He knows.’

But Bradish clung to the gunwale of the long-boat and stared out at the yeasty waves, blinking his eyes.

‘If I only had a couple of men instead of these two infernal tapeworms,’ raged Mayo, ‘I could reeve tackle and get this boat over. Wake up! Wake up!’ he clamored, beating his fist on Bradish’s back.

‘Ralph! Be a man!’ There were anger, protest, shocked wonder in her tones.

Suddenly Mayo saw an ominous sight and heard a boding sound. The fore-hatch burst open with a mighty report, forced up by the air compressed by the inflowing water. He wasted no more breath in argument and appeals. He realized that even an able crew would not have time to launch the boat. The schooner was near her doom.

In all haste he pulled his clasp-knife and cut the lashings which held the boat in its chocks. That the craft would be driven free from the entangling wreckage and go afloat when the schooner went under he could hardly hope. But there was only this desperate chance to rely upon in the emergency.

In his agony of despair and his fury of resentment he was tempted to climb into the boat and leave the two cowards to their fate. But he stooped, caught Bradish by the legs and boosted him over the gunwale into the yawl. A sailor’s impulse is to save life even at the risk of his own. Mayo ran to the galley and kicked the cook off the stool and then drove him headlong to the longboat. The man went along, hugging his cat.

?What will happen to us?? asked the girl when Mayo climbed in.

?I don't know,? he panted. ?I reckon the devil is pitching coppers for us just now--and the penny is just hopping off his thumb nail!?

His tone was reckless. The excitement of the past few hours was having its effect on him at last. He was no longer normal. Something that was almost delirium affected him.

?Aren't you frightened?? she asked.

?Yes,? he admitted. ?But I'm going to keep hustling just the same.?

Bradish and the cook were squatting amidships in the yawl.

?You lie down under those thwarts, the two of you, and hang on,? cried Mayo. Then he quickly passed a rope about the girl's waist and made the ends of the line fast to the cleats. ?I don't know what will happen when the old tub dives,? he told her. ?Those five thousand tons of coal will take her with a rush when she starts. All I can say is, hold tight and pray hard!?

?Thank you,? she said, quietly.

?By gad, she's got grit!? muttered the young man, scrambling forward over the prostrate forms of the other passengers. ?I wonder if all the women in the world are this way?? He was remembering the bravery of Polly Candage.

There was a huge coil of rope in the bow, spare cable stored there. Mayo made fast the free end, working as rapidly as he was able, and bundled about half the coil into a compact mass--a knob at the end of some ten fathoms of line. And to this knob he lashed oars and the mast he found stowed in the boat. He knew that if they did get free from the schooner only an efficient sea-anchor or drag would keep the yawl right side up. When this task was finished he crouched low in the bow and looked at the girl.

?We're about ready to start on our journey,? he called to her. ?If I don't see you again, good-by!?

?I shall not say good-by to you, Captain Mayo--not yet!?

XXIV ~ DOWN A GALLOPING SEA

I saddled me an Arab steed and saddled her another,
And off we rode together just like sister and like brother,
Singing, ?Blow ye winds in the morning!
Blow ye winds, hi ho! Brush away the morning dew,
Blow ye winds, hi ho!?
--Blew Ye Winds.

With anxiety that was almost despairing Mayo looked up at the shrouds, stays, and halyards, which were set like nets to right and left and overhead.

A big roller tumbled inboard and filled the space forward of the break of the main-deck. The swirling water touched the sides of the long-boat and then receded when the stricken schooner struggled up from the welter. A scuttle-butt was torn from its lashings and went by the board, and other flotsam followed it.

Mayo found that spectacle encouraging. But the longboat sat high in its chocks; when it did float it might be too late.

Another wave roared past, and the long-boat quivered. Then Mayo took a chance without reckoning on consequences. He made a double turn of the cable around his forearm and leaped out of the boat and stood on deck, his shoulder against the stem. The next wave washed him to his waist, tore at him, beat him against the long-boat's shoe, but he clung fast and lifted and pushed with all his strength.

That push did it!

The boat needed just that impetus to free her from the chocks. She lifted and rushed stern foremost to lee, and the young man dragged after her.

When the boat dipped and halted in a hollow of the sea he clutched the bow and clambered in. Tugging mightily, he managed to dump the sea-anchor over.

The next wave caught her on the quarter and slopped a barrel of water into her. But she kept right side up, and in a few moments the cable straightened and she rode head into the tumult of the ocean; the sea-anchor was dragging and performing its service.

Mayo was obliged to kick the two men with considerable heartiness before he could stir them to bailing with the buckets. The bedraggled cat fled to the shelter of the girl's arms. Mayo struggled aft, in order to take his weight from the bow of the boat, and when he sat down beside the girl she was "mothering" the animal.

"It's coming in faster than I can throw it out!" wailed Bradish.

"Bail faster, then! Bail or drown!"

"She's leaking," announced the cook. "She has been on deck so long she has got all dried out."

"Bail or drown!" repeated Mayo. To the girl he said: "This seems to be the only way of getting work out of cowards. They'll have to do it. I'm about done for."

The waves were lifting and dropping them in dizzying fashion. There was

suddenly a more violent tossing of the water.

'That's the old packet! She went under then!' Mayo explained. 'Thank the Lord we are out of her clutches! I was afraid we were stuck there.'

'Is there any hope for us now?' she inquired.

'I don't know. If the boat stays afloat and the wind doesn't haul and knock this sea crossways, if somebody sees us in the morning, if we don't get rolled onto the coast in the breakers and--' He did not finish.

'It seems that a lot of things can happen at sea,' she suggested.

'That fact has been proved to me in the past few weeks.'

'You mean in the past few hours, don't you?'

'Miss Marston, what has happened on that schooner is a part of the business, and a sailor must take it as it comes along. I wish nothing worse had happened to me than what's happening now.'

She made no reply.

'But no matter about it,' he said, curtly.

The two men, kneeling amidships, clutching a thwart and bailing with their free hands, toiled away; even Bradish had wakened to the fact that he was working for his own salvation.

In the obscurity the waves which rose ahead seemed like mountains topped with snow. Hollows and hills of water swept past on their right and left. But the crests of the waves were not breaking, and this fact meant respite from immediate danger.

'I'm sorry it was all left to you to do,' ventured the girl, breaking a long silence. 'I thought Ralph had more man in him,' she added, bitterly. 'I feel that he ought to apologize to you for--for several things.'

He, on his part, did not reply to that. He was afraid that she intended to draw him into argument or explanation. Just what he would be able to say to her on that topic was not clear to him.

'It seems as if years had gone by instead of hours. It seems as if I had lived half a life since I left home. It seems as if I had changed my nature and had grown up to see things in a different light. It is all very strange to me.'

He did not know whether she were talking to herself or to him. He did not offer comment.

There was a long period of silence. The sound of rushing waters filled, that silence and made their conversation audible only to themselves when

they talked.

‘I don’t understand how you happened to be on that schooner--as--as you were,’ she said, hesitating.

‘I didn’t rig myself out this way to play any practical jokes, Miss Marston,’ he returned, bitterly.

‘I would like to know how it all happened--your side of it.’

‘I have talked too much already.’

There was no more conversation for a long time. He wondered how she had mustered courage to talk at all. They were in a predicament to try the courage of even a seasoned seaman. In the night, tossed by that wild sea, drifting they knew not where, she had apparently disregarded danger. He asked himself if she had not merely exhibited feminine ignorance of what their situation meant. He had often seen cases where apparent bravado was based on such ignorance.

‘I must say that you told me at least one truth a while ago--you are not a coward,’ he said at last.

She was comforting the wretched cat. ‘But I am miserably frightened,’ she admitted. ‘I don’t dare to think about the thing. I don’t dare to look at the waves. I talked to you so as to take my mind off my troubles. I didn’t mean to be prying.’

‘I’ll tell you what has been done to me,’ he blurted. ‘Hearing somebody’s troubles may take your mind off your own.’

While the two men amidships bailed doggedly and weariedly, he told his story as briefly as he could. The gray dawn showed her face to him after a time, and he was peculiarly comforted by the sympathy he saw there. He did not communicate to her any suspicions he may have entertained. With sailor directness he related how he had hoped, and how all had been snatched away from him. But on one topic the mouths of both seemed to be sealed!

After a time Bradish and the cook were enabled to rest from the work of bailing. The planks of the boat swelled and the leak was stopped.

‘You’d better crawl aft here and sit beside Miss Marston,’ advised Mayo. ‘Be careful how you move.’

He passed Bradish and took the latter’s place with the cook, and felt a sense of relief; he had feared that the one, the dreaded topic would force itself upon him.

‘I don’t see no sense in prolonging all this agony,’ averred his despondent companion. ‘We ain’t ever going to get out of this alive. We’re drifting in on the coast, and you know what that means.’

‘You may jump overboard any time you see fit,’ said the skipper of the

craft. ?I don't need you any longer for bailing!?

?If that's the way you feel about it, you won't get rid of me so easy,?
declared the cook, malevolence in his single eye.

Mayo noticed, with some surprise, that after the two had exchanged a few words there was silence between Bradish and the girl. The New-Yorker was pale and trembling, and his jaw still sagged, and he threw glances to right and left as the surges galloped under them. He was plainly and wholly occupied with his fears.

When day came at last without rain, but with heavy skies, in which masses of vapor dragged, Mayo began eager search of the sea. He had no way of determining their whereabouts; he hoped they were far enough off-shore to be in the track of traffic. However, he could see no sail, no encouraging trail of smoke. But after a time he did behold something which was not encouraging. He stood up and balanced himself and gazed westward, in the direction in which they were drifting; every now and then a lifting wave enabled him to command a wide expanse of the sea.

He saw a white ribbon of foam that stretched its way north and south into the obscurity of the mists. He did not report this finding at once. He looked at his companions and pondered.

?I think you have something to say to me,? suggested the girl.

?I suppose I ought to say it. I've been wondering just how it ought to be said. It's not pleasant news.?

?I am prepared to hear anything, Captain Mayo. Nothing matters a great deal just now.?

?We are being driven on to the coast. I don't know whether it's the Delaware or the New Jersey coast. It doesn't make much difference. The breakers are just as bad in one place as in the other.?

?Why don't you anchor this boat? Are you going to let it go ashore and be wrecked?? asked Bradish, with anger that was childish.

?The anchor seems to have been overlooked when we started on this little excursion. As I remember it, there was some hurry and bustle,? returned Mayo, dryly.

?Why didn't you remember it? You got us into this scrape. You slammed and bossed everybody around. You didn't give anybody else a chance to think. You call yourself a sailor! You're a devil of a sailor to come off without an anchor.?

?I suppose so,? admitted Mayo.

?And there wasn't any sense, in coming off in this little boat. We ought to have stayed on the schooner.?

?Ralph!? protested the girl. ?Have you completely lost your mind? Don't

you know that the schooner sank almost the minute we left it??

“Mr. Bradish's mind was very much occupied at the time,” said Captain Mayo.

“I don't believe the schooner sank. What does a girl know about such things? That fellow got scared, that's the trouble. There isn't any sense in leaving a big boat in a storm. We would have been taken off before this. We would have been all right. This is what comes of letting a fool boss you around when he is scared,” he raved.

“You are the fool!” she cried, with passion. “Captain Mayo saved us.”

“Saved us from what? Here we are going into the breakers--and he says so--and there's no anchor on here. He took everything out of my hands. Now why doesn't he do something??

“Don't pay any attention to him,” she pleaded.

“We are going to be drowned! You can't deny it, can you? We're going to die!” He pulled a trembling hand from between his knees, where he had held both hands pinched in order to steady them. He shook his fist at Mayo. “Own up, now. We're going to die, aren't we??

“I think it's right to tell the truth at this stage,” said Mayo, in steady tones. “We're not children. Yonder is a beach with sand-reefs and breakers, and when we strike the sand this boat will go over and over and we shall be tossed out. The waves will throw us up and haul us back like a cat playing with mice. And we stand about the same chance as mice.”

“And that's the best you can do for us--and you call yourself a sailor!” whined Bradish.

“I'm only a poor chap who has done his best as it came to his hand to do,” said the young man, seeking the girl's eyes with his.

She gazed at him for a moment and then put both hands to her face and began to sob.

“It's a hard thing to face, but we'd better understand the truth and be as brave as we can,” said Mayo, gently.

“For myself I ain't a mite surprised,” averred the cook. “I had my hunch! I was resigned. But my plans was interfered with. I wanted to go down in good, deep, green, clean water like a sailor ought to. And now I'm going to get mauled into the sand and have a painful death.”

“Shut up!” barked Mayo.

The girl was trembling, and he feared collapse.

Bradish began to blubber. “I'm not prepared to die,” he protested.

Mayo studied his passenger for some time, wrinkling his brows. "Bradish, listen to me a moment!"

The New-Yorker gave him as much attention as terror and grief permitted.

"There isn't much we can do just now to fix up our general earthly affairs. But we may as well clean the slate between us two. That will help our consciences a little. I haven't any quarrel with you any more. We won't be mushy about it. But let's cross it off."

"It's all over," mourned Bradish. "So what's the use of bearing grudges?"

"I suppose it's true that the court has indicted me for manslaughter. Bradish, tell me, man to man, whether I've got to go into those breakers with that on my conscience!"

"I don't know what you mean."

"Yes, you do! You know whether those men of the schooner _Warren_ were drowned by any criminal mistake of mine or not!"

Bradish did not speak.

"You wouldn't have said as much to Captain Downs if you hadn't known something," insisted the victim of the plot.

"It was only what Burkett let drop when he came after some money. I suppose he thought it was safe to talk to me. But what's the good of my giving you guesswork? I don't know anything definite. I don't understand sailor matters."

"Bradish, what Burkett said--was it something about the compass--about putting a job over on me by monkeying with the compass?"

"It was something like that." His tone exhibited indifference; it was evident that he was more occupied with his terror than with his confession.

"Didn't Burkett say something about a magnet?"

"He got off some kind of a joke about Fogg in the pilot-house and fog outside--but that the Fogg inside did the business. And he said something about Fogg's iron wishbone."

"So that was the way it was done--and done by the general manager of the line!" cried Mayo. "The general manager himself! It's no wonder I have smashed that suspicion between the eyes every time it bobbed up! I suspected--but I didn't dare to suspect! Is that some of your high finance, Bradish?"

"No, it isn't," declared the New-Yorker, with heat. "It's an understrapper like Fogg going ahead and producing results, so he calls it. The big men never bother with the details."

"The details! Taking away from me all I have worked for--my reputation as a master, my papers, my standing--my liberty. By the gods, I'm going to live! I'm going through those breakers! I'll face that gang like a man who has fought his way back from hell," raged the victim.

"This--this was none of my father's business! It could not have been," expostulated Miss Marston.

"Your father never knows anything about the details of Fogg's operations," declared Bradish.

"He ought to know," insisted the maddened scapegoat. "He gives off his orders, doesn't he? He sits in the middle of the web. What if he did know how Fogg was operating?"

"Probably wouldn't stand for it! But he doesn't know. And the Angel Gabriel himself wouldn't get a chance to tell him!" declared the clerk.

"A put-up job, then, is it--and all called high finance!" jeered Mayo.

"High finance isn't to blame for tricks the field-workers put out so that they can earn their money quick and easy. What's the good of pestering me with questions at this awful time? I'm going to die! I'm going to die!" he wailed.

Miss Marston slid from the seat to her knees, in order that she might be able to reach her hand to Mayo. "Will you let this handclasp tell you all I feel about it--all your trouble, all your brave work in this terrible time? I am so frightened, Captain Mayo! But I'm going to keep my eyes on you--and I'll be ashamed to show you how frightened I am."

He returned the fervent clasp of her fingers with gentle pressure and reassuring smile. "Honestly, I feel too ugly to die just now. Let's keep on hoping."

But when he stood up and beheld the white mountains of water between their little boat and the shore, and realized what would happen when they were in that savage tumult, with the undertow dragging and the surges lashing, he felt no hope within himself.

From the appearance of the coast he could not determine their probable location. The land was barren and sandy. There seemed to be no inlet. As far as he could see the line of frothing white was unbroken. The sea foamed across broad shallows, where no boat could possibly remain upright and no human being could hope to live.

Nevertheless, he remained standing and peered under his hand, resolved to be alert till the last, determined to grasp any opportunity.

All at once he beheld certain black lines in perpendicular silhouette against the foam. At first he was not certain just what they could be, and he observed them narrowly as the boat tossed on its way.

At last their identity was revealed. They were weir-stakes. The weir itself was evidently dismantled. Such stakes as remained were set some distance from one another, like fence-posts located irregularly.

He made hasty observation of bearings as the boat drifted, and was certain that the sea would carry them down past the stakes. How near they would pass depended on the vagary of the waves and the tide. He realized that three men, even if they were able seamen, could do little in the way of rowing or guiding the longboat in the welter of that sea, now surging madly over the shoals. He knew that there was not much water under the keel, for the ocean was turbid with swirling sand, and the waves were more mountainous, heaped high by the friction of the water on the bottom. Every now and then the crest of a roller flaunted a banner of bursting spray, showing breakers near at hand.

Mayo hurried to the bow of the boat and pulled free a long stretch of cable. He made a bowline slip-knot, opened a noose as large as he could handle, coiled the rest of the cable carefully, and poised himself on a thwart.

"What now?" asked the cook.

"No matter," returned Mayo. His project was such a gamble that he did not care to canvass it in advance.

The nearer they drove to the stakes the more unattainable those objects seemed. They projected high above the water.

The cook perceived them and got up on his knees and squinted. "Huh!" he sniffed. "You'll never make it. It can't be done!"

In his fierce anxiety Mayo heaved his noose too soon, and it fell short. He dragged in the cable with all his quickness and strength and threw the noose again. The rope hit the stake three-quarters of the way up and fell into the sea.

"It needs a cowboy for that work," muttered the cook.

Mayo recovered his noose and poised himself again.

In the shallows where they were the boat which bore him became a veritable bucking bronco. It was flung high, it swooped down into the hollows. He made a desperate try for the next stake in line. The noose caught, and he snubbed quickly. The top of the stake came away with a dull crack of rotten wood when the next wave lifted the boat.

Mayo pulled in his rope hand over hand with frantic haste. He was obliged to free the broken stake from the noose and pull his extemporized lasso into position again. He made a wider noose. His failure had taught a point or two. He waited till the boat was on the top of a wave. He curbed his desperate impatience, set his teeth, and whirled the noose about his head in a widening circle. Then he cast just as the boat began to drop. The rope encircled the stake, dropped to the water, and he paid out all his free cable so that a good length of the

heavy rope might lie in the water and form a makeshift bridle. When he snubbed carefully the noose drew close around the stake, and the latter held. The waves which rode under them were terrific, and Mayo's heart came into his mouth every time a tug and shock indicated that the rope had come taut.

However, after five minutes of anxious waiting, kneeling in the bow, his eyes on the cable, he found his courage rising and his hopes glowing.

"Does it mean--?" gasped the girl, when he turned and looked at her.

"I don't know just what it will mean in the end, Miss Marston," he said, with emotion. "But it's a reprieve while that rope holds."

Bradish sat clutching the gunwale with both hands, staring over his shoulder at the waters frothing and roaring on the shore. The girl glanced at him occasionally with a certain wonderment in her expression. It seemed to Mayo that she was trying to assure herself that Bradish was some person whom she knew. But she did not appear to have much success in making him seem real. She spoke to him once or twice in an undertone, but he did not answer. Then she turned her back on him.

Suddenly Mayo leaped up and shouted.

A man was running along the sandy crest of a low hill near the beach. He disappeared in a little structure that was no larger than a sentry-box.

"There's a coast-guard patrol from the life-saving station. There must be one somewhere along here!"

The man rushed out and flourished his arms.

"He has telephoned," explained Mayo. "Those are the boys! There's hope for us!"

There was more than hope--there was rescue after some hours of dreary and anxious waiting.

The life-boat came frothing down the sea from the distant inlet, and they were lifted on board by strong arms.

And then Alma Marston gave Mayo the strangest look he had ever received from a woman's eyes. But her lips grew white and her eyes closed, and she lapsed into unconsciousness while he folded a blanket about her.

"You must have had quite a job of it, managing a woman through this scrape," suggested the captain of the crew.

"It's just the other way," declared Mayo. "I'm giving her credit for saving the whole of us."

"How's that?"

"I might find it a little hard to make you understand, captain. Let it

stand as I have said it.?

XXV ~ A GIRL AND HER DEBT OF HONOR

Says she, ?You lime-juice sailor,
Now see me home you may.?
But when we reached her cottage door
She unto me did say--
And a-way, you santee,
My dear Annie!
O you New York girls,
Can't you dance the polka!
--Walking Down the Broadway.

Mayo was promptly informed that Captain Downs and the crew of the _Alden_ were safe.

?He caught our flare, got his motor to working, and made the inlet by a lucky stab,? explained the coast-station captain. ?But he didn't reckon he'd ever see you folks again. How did it happen he didn't tell me there was a woman aboard??

?You'll have to ask him.?

?Who is she??

?You'll have to ask him that, too. I'm only a sailor.?

The captain looked him over with considerable suspicion: His shirt was torn and his white skin was revealed. The drenching by rain and spray had played havoc with his disguise; most of the coloring had been washed away.

?Have you got anything special to say about yourself??

?No, sir.?

The captain turned his back on his men and leaned close to Mayo. ?They have had your picture in the paper this week,? he said. ?You're the captain they are wanting in that _Montana_ case. They're after you. I've got to report on this thing, you understand!?

?Very well, captain.?

?But I reckon we'll talk it all over after we get to the station,? said the master, kindly. ?There may be something in it that I don't understand.?

?There's considerable in it that I don't understand myself, just now, but I'm going to find out,? declared Captain Mayo.

They placed Ahpa Marston in the care of the station captain's wife as soon as they were safely on shore in the inlet. Fortunate chance had sent the woman to the station that day on a visit to her husband.

Captain Downs, fed and warmed, watched the new arrivals eat beside the kitchen stove and listened to the story Mayo had for him.

The bedraggled cat lapped milk, protected from the resentful jealousy of the station's regular feline attaché by the one-eyed cook.

And afterward, closeted with Captain Downs and the station captain, Mayo went over his case.

'I must say you seem to be pretty hard and fast ashore in mighty sloppy water,' commented the coastguard captain. 'It isn't my especial business--but what do you propose to do?'

'Go to New York and take what they're going to hand me, I suppose. I ought to have stayed there and faced the music. I have put myself in bad by running away. But I was rattled.'

'The best of us get rattled,' said the host, consolingly. 'I'm not a policeman, sheriff, or detective, mate. I'll report this case as Captain Downs and so many souls saved from the schooner _Alden_. You'd better trot along up to the city and face 'em as a man should. I'll rig you out in some of my clothes. Your old friend, Wass, meant well by rushing you away, but I've always found that in a man's fight you can't do much unless you're close enough to t'other fellow to hit him when he reaches for you.'

A half-hour later, made presentable in the coast-guard captain's liberty suit, Mayo walked through the kitchen. Bradish and the cook were still in front of the stove.

The captain's wife, standing in a door which admitted to an inner room, put up a finger to signal the young man and then nodded her head in invitation. 'The young lady wants to see you, sir,' she informed him in a whisper, when he stepped to her side. 'Go in!' She closed the door behind him and remained in the kitchen.

He stood in the middle of the room and gazed at the girl for some time, and neither of them spoke. She was swathed in blankets and was huddled in a big chair; her face was wan and her eyes showed her weariness. But her voice was firm and earnest when she addressed him.

'Captain Mayo, what I am going to say to you will sound very strange. Tell me that you'll listen to me as you would listen to a man.'

'I'm afraid--' he stammered.

'It's too bad that man and woman can seldom meet on the plane where man and man meet. But I don't want to be considered a girl just now. I'm one human being, and you're another, and I owe something to you which must be paid, or I shall be disgraced by a debt which will worry me all my

life.? She put out her hands and knotted the fingers together in appeal.
?Understand me--help me!?

He was ill at ease. He feared with all his soul to meet the one great subject.

?When we thought we were going to die I told you it seemed as if I had lived a life in a few hours--that I did not seem like the same person as I looked into my thoughts. Captain Mayo, that is true. It is more apparent to me now when I have had time to search my soul. Oh, I am not the Alma Marston who has been spoiled and indulged--a fool leaping here and there with every impulse--watching a girl in my set do a silly thing and then doing a sillier thing in order to astonish her. That has been our life in the city. I never knew what it meant to be a mere human being, near death. You know you saved me from that death!?

?I only did what a man ought to do, Miss Marston.?

?Perhaps. But you did it, that's the point. There are other men--? She hesitated. ?I have had a talk with Mr. Bradish,? she told him. ?It was a mistake. You saved me from that mistake. You did it in the cabin of the schooner. He has told me. It was better for me than saving my life.?

?But because a man isn't a sailor--isn't used to danger--? he expostulated.

?That is not it. I say I have just had a talk with Mr. Bradish! I have found out exactly what he is. I did not find it out when I danced with him. But now that I have come near to dying with him I have found him out.? The red banners in her cheeks signaled both shame and indignation. ?A coward will show all his nature before he gets himself in hand again, and Mr. Bradish has shown me that he is willing to ruin and disgrace me in order to make profit for himself. And there is no more to be said about him!?

She paused.

?Captain Mayo, I know what idea you must have of me--of a girl who would do what I have done! But you don't have half the scorn for me I have for myself--for the girl I was. But I have my self-respect now! I respect the woman that I am at this moment after that experience! Perhaps you don't understand. I do! I'm glad I have that self-respect. I shall face what is ahead of me. I shall do right from now on.? She spoke quickly and passionately, and he wanted to say something, but his sailor tongue halted. ?I am not going to bring up a certain matter--not now! It's too sacred. I am too miserably ashamed! Again, Captain Mayo, I say that I want to stand with you as man to man! I want to render service for what you have done for me. You have lost everything out of your life that you value. I want you to have it back. Will you listen to me now??

?Yes, Miss Marston.?

?You go to my father with a letter from me. I do not believe he knows what kind of methods have been practised by his understrappers, but he can find out. You tell him that he must find out--that he must make them confess. You tell him that this is a man's fight, and that you are

fighting back with all the strength that you can command. You tell him that you have me hidden, and that I cannot get away--as my own letter will tell him. You tell him that he must make a fair exchange with you--give you back what is yours before he can have what is his.?

Mayo walked backward limply, feeling for the wall with his hands behind him, and leaned against it.

?You are single-handed--it's a big game they play up in the city when they are after money--and you must take what cards are offered,? she insisted, displaying the shrewdness of the Marston nature.

?You mean to say that I'm going to your father as if I were holding you for ransom?? he gasped.

?Something like that,? she returned, eagerly. ?The only way you'll get what you want--and get it quickly--is by a good bluff. I have had some good samples of your courage, Captain Mayo. You can do it beautifully.?

?But I'm not going to do it!?

?I say you are!?

?Not by a--? His feelings were carrying him away. He was forgetting that these dealings were with an impulsive girl. His anger was mounting. She was putting him on the plane of a blackleg.

?Go ahead and talk as strongly as you like, Captain Mayo. It will make it seem like man's business between us.?

?Those tricks may be all right in Wall Street, but they don't do for me. And you've got a pretty poor opinion of me if you think I'll do it.?

?Don't be quixotic,? she protested, impatiently. ?We are living in up-to-date times, Captain Mayo. Some of those underlings have played a nasty trick on you. They must be exposed.?

?This is a girl's crazy notion!?

?Captain Mayo, is this the way you help me pay my debt??

?You don't owe me anything.?

?And now you pay me an insult! Are my honor as a girl and my life worth nothing? You have saved both.?

?I don't know how to talk to you. I haven't had any experience in talking with women. I simply say that I'm not going to your father in any such manner. Certainly not!?

?Don't you realize what I have offered you?? she pleaded. ?You are throwing my sacrifice in my face. As the case stands now, I can hurry off to the home of some girl friend and make up a little story of a foolish lark, and my father will never know what has been happening. He

expects me to do a lot of silly things.?

?That's your business--and his,? he returned, dryly.

?Captain Mayo, I have been trying to show you that I am fit to be considered something besides a silly girl. I wanted you to know that I have a sense of obligation. The plan may seem like a girl's romantic notion. But it isn't. It's bold, and your case heeds boldness. I was trying to show you that I'm not a coward. I was going to confess to my father what I have done and start on the level with him. You throw it all in my face--you insult my plan by calling it crazy.?

?It is,? he insisted, doggedly. ?And I'm in bad enough as it is!?

?Oh, you're afraid, then??

He frowned. Her sneer seemed gratuitous injury.

He did not understand that variety of feminine guile which seeks to goad to action one who refuses to be led.

?I admire boldness in a man when his case is desperate and he is trying to save himself. I have lived among men who are bold in going after what they want.?

?I have had a little experience with that kind of land pirates, and I don't like the system.?

?I shall not make any unnecessary sacrifices,? she de-clared, tartly, but there were tears in her eyes. ?I did what I could to help you when you were trying to save me. Why are you so ungenerous as to refuse to help me now??

?It's taking advantage of you--of your position.?

?But I offer it--I beg of you to do it.?

?I will not do it.?

?You absolutely refuse??

?Yes, Miss Marston.?

?Then I shall leave you to your own fate, Captain Mayo. You don't expect me to go to my father with the story, do you??

?Certainly not'.?

?I shall go ahead now and protect myself the best I can. I am sure that Captain Downs will keep my secret. I shall forget that I ever sailed on that schooner. I suppose you will black yourself up and run away again!?

?I am going to New York.?

?To be put in jail??

?Probably.?

?You make me very angry. After you have shown that you can fight, just when you ought to fight the hardest you sink bade to be whipped.?

?Yes, Miss Marston, if you care to put it that way.?

?Then, good-by!?

?Good-by!?

Perhaps each expected that the other would break the wall of reserve at this moment of parting. He hesitated a moment--an awkward instant--then he bowed and left the room.

Captain Downs walked with Mayo for a distance across the sand-dunes when the latter started to make his way to the nearest railroad station. The captain intended to remain at the inlet until a representative of the _Alden's_ owners arrived.

They left Bradish still huddled behind the stove in the kitchen.

?Unless my eyes have gone back on me, Captain Mayo, my notion is that the dude is wasting his time hanging around that girl any more,? suggested Captain Downs. ?She has had him out on the marine railway of love, has made proper survey, and has decided that she would hate to sail the sea of matrimony with him. Don't you think that's so??

?I think you're a good judge of what you see, Captain Downs.?

?I reckon that you and I as gents and master mariners are going to keep mum about her being aboard the _Alden?_?

?Certainly, sir.?

?The coast-guard crew don't know who she is, and they can't find out. So she can go home and mind her business from this time out. 'Most every woman does one infernal fool thing in her life--and then is all right ever after. But now a word on some subject that's sensible! What are you going to do??

?Stick my head into the noose. It's about the only thing I can do.?

?But you'll talk up to 'em, of course??

?I'll play what few cards I hold as best I know, sir. The most I can hope for is to make 'em drop that manslaughter case. Perhaps I can say enough so that they'll be afraid to bring me to trial. As to getting my papers back, I'm afraid that's out of the question. I'll have to start life over in something else.?

?Mayo, why don't you go to the captain's office?? He promptly answered

the young man's glance of inquiry. "Julius Marston himself is the supreme boss of that steamship-consolidation business. Bradish gave all that part away, telling about those checks; though, of course, we all knew about Marston before. It is probably likely that Marston gives true courses to his understrappers. If they take fisherman's cuts between buoys in order to get there quick, I'll bet he doesn't know about it. Go to him and tell him, man to man, what has happened to you."

"There are two reasons why I shall probably never see Mr. Marston," returned Mayo, grimly. "First, I'll be arrested before I can get across New York to his office; second, I'll never get farther than the outer office. He's guarded like the Czar of Russia, so they tell me."

"Does his girl know anything about your case?"

"I blabbed it to her--like a fool--when we were in the boat. Why is it that when a man is drunk or excited or in trouble, he'll blow the whole story of his life to a woman?" growled Mayo.

"I've thought that over some, myself," admitted Captain Downs. "Especially on occasions when I've come to and realized what I've let out. I suppose it's this--more or less: A man don't tell his troubles to another man, for he knows that the other man is usually in'ardly glad of it because any friend is in trouble. But a woman's sympathy is like a flaxseed poultice--it soothes the ache and draws at the same time."

Mayo trudged on in silence, kicking the sand.

"Seems to me the smallest thing that girl could have done was to offer to get you a hearing with her old man. It was some chore you did for her, mate!"

"I had to save myself. A few more in the party didn't matter."

"These society girls think of themselves first, of course! I don't suppose you give a hoot for my advice, Captain Mayo, but I'm talking to you in the best spirit in the world."

"I know you are, Captain Downs," declared the young man, his sullenness departing. "I didn't mean to show bristles to you! I'll try to see Marston. It'll be a hard stunt. But I'm in the mood to try anything. By gad! if they lug me to jail, I'll go kicking!"

"That's the spirit, boy. And if you can get in a few kicks where Julius Marston can see 'em they may count. He's the boss! I don't think I'll go any farther with you. This is too hard footing for an old waddler like me. Good luck!"

They shook hands and turned their backs on each other with sailor repression in the matter of the emotions.

The young man went on his way, wondering in numbed despair how he could have left Alma Marston with merely a curt word of farewell.

Mayo lurked that evening in the purlieu of Jersey City, and entered the metropolis after midnight on a ferryboat which had few passengers and afforded him a dark corner where he was alone. He found lodgings in humble quarters on the East Side.

In the morning he nerved himself to the ordeal of appearing in the streets. His belief in his own innocence made his suffering greater as he waited for the clap of a heavy hand on his shoulder and the summons of an officer's voice. He knew that the eyes of Uncle Sam are sharp and his reach a long one. He had firm belief in the almost uncanny vigilance of government officers. He was rather surprised to find himself at last in the outer office of Marston & Waller.

He sat down on a bench and waited for a time in order to regain his self-possession. He wanted to control features and voice before accosting one of the guardians of the magnate. But the espionage of the attendants did not permit loiterers to remain long in that place without explanation. A man tiptoed to him and asked his name and his business.

"My name doesn't matter," said Mayo. "But I have important business with Mr. Marston. If you will tell him that the business is most important--that it is something he ought to know, and that--?"

"You haven't any appointment, then?"

"No."

"Do you think for one moment that you can get in to see Mr. Marston without giving your name and explaining beforehand the nature of your business?"

"I hoped so, for it is important."

"What is it?"

"It's private--it's something for Mr. Marston."

"Impossible!" was the man's curt rejoinder. He went back to his post. In a few moments he returned to Mayo. "You mustn't remain here. You cannot see Mr. Marston."

"Won't you take in a message from me? I'll explain--?"

"Explain to me. That's what I'm here for."

Telling that cold-blooded person that this visitor was the broken master of the _Montana_ was out of the question. To mention the case of the _Montana_ to this watchdog was dangerous. But Mayo dreaded to go back to the street again.

"I'll stay here a little while and perhaps I can--?" he began.

"If you stay here without explaining your business I'll have you escorted down to the street by an officer, my friend."

Mayo rose and hurried out.

?An officer!? Even in his despairing and innocent quest of a hearing he was threatened with arrest! He sneaked back to his lodgings and hid himself in the squalid apartment and nursed the misery of his soul.

That night Mayo sat till late, toiling over a letter addressed to Julius Marston.

He despatched it by messenger at an early hour, and mustered his courage in the middle of the forenoon and followed in person. He assumed a boldness he did not feel in his quaking heart when he approached the guardian of the outer office.

?Will you ask Mr. Marston if he will see the man who sent him a letter by messenger this morning?? ?What letter? Signed by what name?? ?He will understand what letter I refer to.? ?He will, will he?? The attendant gave this applicant sharp scrutiny. The coast-guard captain's liberty garments were not impressive, nor did they fit very well. Mayo displayed the embarrassment of the man who knew he was hunted. ?Do you think Mr. Marston receives only one letter by messenger in a morning? Look here, my man, you were in here yesterday, and I look on you as a suspicious character. You cannot see Mr. Marston on any such excuse. Get out of that door inside of one minute or I'll send in a police call!?

And once more Mayo fled from the danger which threatened him. He bought a stock of newspapers at a sidewalk news-stand; his hours of loneliness in his little room the day before had tortured him mentally. He sat himself down and read them. The news that the Vose line had gone into the steamship combination was interesting and significant. Evidently the _Montana's_ lay-up had discouraged the mass of stockholders. He had time to kill and thoughts to stifle; he went on reading scrupulously, lingering over matters in which he had no interest, striving to occupy his mind and drive the bitter memories and his fears away from him. Never in his life before had he read the society tattle in the newspapers. However, dragging along the columns, he found a paragraph on which he dwelt for a long time. It stated that Miss Marston of Fifth Avenue had returned by motor from a house-party in the Catskills, accompanied by Miss Lana Vanadistine, who would be a house guest of Miss Marston's for a few days.

That bit of news was significant. She had established her alibi; she had reinstated herself and had turned a smooth front to the world.

Mayo was certain in his soul that he knew her kind. His illusions were departing. Now that her tragic experience was behind her, now that she was back among her own, now that the fervor of romance was cool, she was thanking God, so he told himself, that she had not sacrificed herself for anybody. He was honestly glad that she was at home, glad of the hint which the paragraph gave--that her secret was still her own, so far as family and the social world were concerned.

That night Mayo took further counsel with himself. In the morning his

final decision was made. He would endeavor once more to see Julius Maxston. He determined that he would march into the outer office, boldly announce his name, assert that he was there to expose a crime, and tell them that if Mr. Marston refused to hear him he should tell what he knew to the public through the newspapers; then he would ask them to send for the police, if the door of Marston's office remained closed to him. He would call attention to himself and to his case by all the uproar he could make. When he went to jail he would go with plenty of folks looking on. Let Marston and his fellow-financiers see how they liked that!

It was a desperate and a crude plan, but Mayo was not a diplomat--he was a sailor.

He marched forth on his errand with his chin up and resolve flaming within him.

Other men, prosperous-looking and rotund men, rode up in the elevator with him and went into Marston & Waller's office ahead of him, for he had modestly stepped to one side to allow them to pass.

He heard some talk of a ?board meeting.? It was plain that Mr. Marston was to be occupied for a time. This was not a favorable moment in which to project himself upon the attention of the financier; he needed a clear field. Therefore he tramped up and down the corridor of the office building, watching the elevator door, waiting to see the rotund gentlemen go on their way. And with attention thus focused he saw Miss Alma Marston arrive.

She waited until the elevator had passed on, and then she came directly to him. Her expression did not reveal her mood except to hint that she was self-possessed.

?I am not especially surprised to find you here,? she told him. ?I believe you said to Captain Downs--so he informed me--that you were going to try to see my father. And men who try to see my father, without proper introduction, usually kick their heels outside his office for some days.?

There was a bit of hauteur in her voice. She preserved much of the acerbity which had marked her demeanor when they had said good-by to each other. He would not acknowledge to himself that he hoped she would meet him on another plane; he meekly accepted her attitude as the proper one. He was a sailor, and she was the daughter of Julius Marston.

?Do you blame me for being suspicious in regard to what you intend to say to my father?? she demanded. ?I tell you frankly that I came here looking for you. We must settle our affair.?

?I am trying to get word with him about my own business--simply my own business, Miss Marston.?

?But as to me! What are you going to say to him about me? You remember I told you that I intended to protect myself,? she declared, with some

insolence.

‘I thought you had a better opinion of me,’ he protested. ‘Miss Marston, as far as I am concerned, you never were on that schooner. I know nothing about you. I do not even know you. Do you understand?’

He started away hastily. ‘Don’t stay here. Don’t speak to me. Somebody may see you.’

‘Come back here!’

He stopped.

‘I demand an explicit promise from you that if you are able to talk with my father you will never mention my name to him or try to take advantage of the dreadful mistake I made.’

‘I promise, on my honor,’ he said, straightening.

‘Thank you, sir.’

‘And now that I have promised,’ he added, red in his tanned cheeks, ‘I want to say to you, Miss Marston, that you have insulted me gratuitously. I suppose I’m not much in the way of a gentleman as you meet them in society. I’m only a sailor. But I’m neither a tattler nor a blackmailer. I know the square thing to do where a woman is concerned, and I would have done it without being put under a pledge.’ He bowed and walked away.

She gazed after him, a queer sparkle in her eyes. ‘We’ll see about you, you big child!’ she murmured.

She entered the waiting-room of the Marston & Waller suite, and was informed that her father was busy with a board meeting.

‘But it’s merely a bit of routine business. It will soon be over, Miss Marston--if you will be so good as to wait.’

After a time the gentlemen filed out, but she waited on.

‘Tell my father that I’m here and will be in presently,’ she commanded the guardian.

Before the messenger returned Mayo came in, rather apprehensively. He tried to avoid her, but she met him face to face and accosted him with spirit.

‘Now that I have put you on your honor, I’m not afraid to have you talk your business over with my father. Come with me. I will take you to him. Then we will call accounts square between us.’

‘Very well,’ he consented. ‘After what I have been through here, I feel that one service matches the other.’ Mayo followed her and came into The Presence.

Julius Marston was alone, intrenched behind his desk, on his throne of business; the dark back of the chair, towering over his head, set off in contrast his gray garb and his cold face; to Mayo, who halted respectfully just inside the door, he appeared a sort of bas-relief against that background--something insensate, without ears to listen or heart to bestow compassion.

The girl, hurrying to him, engaged his attention until she had seated herself on the arm of his chair. Then he saw Mayo, recognized him, and tried to rise, but she pushed him back, urging him with eager appeal.

"You must listen to me, father! It is serious! It is important!"

He groped for the row of desk buttons, but she held his hand from them.

Captain Mayo strode forward, determined to speak for himself, rendered bold by the courageous sacrifice the girl was making.

"Not a word! Not a word! The supreme impudence of it!" Marston repeated the last phrase several times with increasing violence. He pushed his daughter off the arm of the chair and struggled up. Only heroic measures could save that situation--and the girl knew her father! She forced herself between him and his desk.

"You'd better listen!" she warned him, hysterically. "A few days ago I ran away to be married!"

He stood there, stricken motionless, and she put her hands against his breast and pressed him back into his chair.

"But this is not the man, father!"

Marston had been gathering his voice for wild invective, but that last statement took away all his power of speech.

"I warned you that you'd better listen!"

In that moment she dominated the situation as completely as if she stood between the two men with a lighted bomb in her hand.

Mayo was overwhelmed even more completely than the financier. He realized that her extortion of a pledge from him had been subterfuge; her triumphant eyes flashed complete information on that point. Both anger and bewilderment made him incapable of any sane attempt to press his case with Marston at that time. He turned and started for the door.

"Stop that man, father. You'll be sorry if you do not! He must stay!"

"Come back here!" shouted Marston.

Mayo looked behind.

The magnate stood with finger on the push-button. "Come back, I say!"

?I protest. This is none of my business. I am here for something else than to listen to your daughter's private affairs.?

?You come back!? commanded the father in low tones of menace, ?or I'll have you held for the United States marshals the minute you step foot outside that door.?

Raging within himself at the tactics of this incomprehensible girl, Captain Mayo walked slowly to the desk; it occurred to him that it was as hard to get out of Julius Marston's office as it was to get in.

?I would never have come in here if I had dreamed that your daughter would tell you what she has. I am in a false position. I insist that you allow me to leave.?

?You'll leave when I get to the bottom of this thing! Now, Alma, what new craziness is all this??

?I am not resenting the word you apply to it,? she replied, facing him resolutely. ?I did it--and I don't know why I did it!?

?Did what??

?I ran away. I did it because the girls dared me to do it. I promised a man I would marry him.?

?This man, eh??

?No. I have told you this is not the man.?

?Well, who, then?? Incredulity was mingled with her father's wrath.

?One of your trusted young gentlemen. Mr. Ralph Bradish.?

?Where did you meet him??

?At the dances.?

?Not at our house??

?I do not know how you are so sure of that, father,? she returned, a touch of rather wistful reproach in her tones. ?You have left me alone in that house ever since mother went away. But it was not at our house--it was in the public ball-rooms.?

?Hell set to music!? he rasped. ?I ought to have realized that you are still an infant!?

?No; I am a woman to-day. I lived a whole lifetime in one night on the ocean. I know you have reason to be ashamed of me. But I'll never give you cause for shame again. Now what are you going to say to this man who saved my life--who did more than that? He saved me from myself!?

Marston narrowed his eyes and scrutinized Mayo. "I don't understand this thing yet! The story doesn't ring right." He turned on his daughter. "How did this man save your life? Be quick and be short!"

He interrupted her in the middle of her eager recital. He had been scowling while she talked, staring into vacancy in meditation.

"A story-book tale!" he declared, impatiently, and yet there was a shade of insincerity in that impatience. "I would be bitterly ashamed of you, Alma, if you had run away as you are trying to make me believe. But--"

"Don't you believe me?"

"Silence! But this trumped-up story is too transparent. You are still acting the fool in the matter of this person, here. Now see here, my man, you are here to-day on the _Montana_ affair. Isn't that so?"

"It is, sir."

"I was sure of it. How did you dare to sneak into that job after I had discharged you from the _Olenia_?"

"There was no sneaking to it! I was hired by Mr. Fogg and I--"

"You may be sure that I did not know you were on board the _Montana_. But I cannot attend to all the details of my business. You realize, don't you, that you are a fugitive from justice?"

"I am a scapegoat for the dirty dogs who operate for you!"

"That's enough! I am investigating this matter now. Sit down in that chair!"

Mayo obeyed, lulled by the assurance.

"Alma, you go home!"

"I am going to stay here, father, until Captain Mayo--"

"I have listened to all the falsehoods I propose to hear! This rejoinder astounded his two listeners. "I see into this matter clear to the bottom. I am amazed that you should think such a silly yarn would deceive me for a moment." He had pressed one of the buttons. To the man who opened the door he said: "Tell Mr. Bradish that I want to see him here at once. He is in the office, isn't he?"

"Yes, sir! I will inform him."

Mayo and the girl exchanged eloquent looks; they had been leaving Mr. Bradish out of their calculations; they had discarded him from their thoughts; that he had had the effrontery to reappear in the Marston & Waller offices was news indeed.

Marston took the girl by the arm and led her toward a door. "I tell

you to go home!?" he cried, angrily, stopping her protests. "No, you are going by this side door. I do not believe one word you have told me. It's all a transparent attempt to continue your folly. I'll know how to look after you from now on!" He closed the door behind her and locked it.

"I swear this is all true, sir," pleaded Mayo. "I'm not trying to deceive you through your daughter. I did not understand what she intended to say. I want my rights as a man who has been tricked, abused--"

Mr. Bradish appeared, bowing respectfully. He was once more part of the smooth machinery of the Marston & Waller offices. He was pale, calm, cool, subdued master of his emotions as the employees of Julius Marston were trained to be.

"Did you ever see this man before? Of course you never did!" prompted the financier.

"I never saw him before, sir."

"Certainly not! What have you to say to the ridiculous, nonsensical story that you attempted to elope with my daughter?"

Not by a flicker of the eyelids did the imperturbable maker of million-dollar checks show confusion.

"If such a lie needs denial from me I most firmly do deny it, sir."

"You cheap renegade!" roared the captain.

"That will do, Mr. Bradish!"

The clerk obeyed the wave of his master's hand and retired quickly.

"Mr. Marston," raved Mayo, "I'm fighting for all that's worth while to me in life. My reputation as a master mariner, my chance to make a living in my work. I was a fool on board your yacht! With all my soul I am penitent. I will--"

"Enough! Don't you dare to discuss my own daughter with me!"

"I don't intend to, sir. I'm going to believe that you don't know what your understrappers have done to me. You only see results. But find out what is being done in your name, Mr. Marston. Some day it will be bad for you if you don't stop 'em."

"Is that a threat?"

"It's only my appeal for justice. My God, sir--"

"There's justice waiting for you."

"Then send out for your marshals. Let them drag me into court! Your man

Bradigh's mouth is closed now, but it has been open. I know what has been done to me. Let them put me on the stand. You don't dare to have me stand up in court and tell what I know.?

?Do you suppose I am running the Federal courts??

?You'd better find out whether you have power or not. There are men in this world who will believe an honest man's true story!?

?Good day!? said Mr. Marston, significantly.

Mayo hesitated, gazed into the impassive countenance of the magnate, and then conviction of the uselessness of argument overwhelmed him. He started for the door.

?Certain sensible things can be done,? Marston called after him. ?You'd better get out of New York. If you know of a place to hide you'd better get into it.?

Mayo did not reply. He strode out through the offices, descended to the street, and went on his way.

He did not notice that an automobile pursued him through the roaring traffic of the streets, halting ahead of him when, he had turned into one of the quieter thoroughfares.

The car was close to the curb, and Alma Marston put out her hand and signaled to him. ?He gave-you no hope-nothing??

?Nothing!?

?I have waited. I thought of asking you to come for a talk with me.?

He shook his head.

?Perhaps it's better as it is! There isn't very much to be said-not now!? She leaned over the side of the tonneau and the clatter of traffic enabled her to talk without taking the eavesdropping chauffeur into their confidence. ?I am not worthy of your thoughts or your confidence after this, Boyd. What I was yesterday I am not to-day; I have told you that. No, do not say anything! I know, now, that I was only playing with love. I cannot name what I feel for you now; I have insulted the word 'love' too much in the past. I'm not going to say anything about it. Was it any excuse for me that you had sunk a ship, were going to prison for killing men, so the papers hinted? No, it was not! But I allowed myself to make it an excuse for folly.?

?You don't know what love is,? he declared. In the agony of his degradation he had no relish for softer sentiments. But he did not dare to look up at her.

?I did not know! But perhaps some day I can show you that I do now know,? she replied, humbly. ?That will be the day when I can give you the proofs against the men who have tried to ruin you. I am inside the

camp of your enemies, Boyd, and I'll give you those proofs--even against my own father, if he is guilty. That's all! Let's wait. But while you are working I hope it's going to give you a bit of courage to know that I am working for you!? She patted his cheek. ?Go on!? she called to her driver. The car jerked forward and was hidden among the chariots roaring down through the modern Babylon.

Without power for self-analysis, without being able to penetrate the inner recesses of his own soul in that crisis, he trudged on.

A little later, almost unconscious of volition in the matter, he found himself at a steamboat office buying a ticket. He was going back to the obscurity of Maquoit. But he was fully conscious that he was not obeying Julius Marston's injunction to go and hide. A deeper sentiment was drawing him. He knew where there existed simple faith in him and affection for him, and he craved that solace. There were humble folks in Maquoit who would welcome him.

?I'll go back--I'll go home,? he said. Once he would have smiled at the thought that he would ever call the Hue and Cry colony ?home.?

XXVI ~ THE FANGS OF OLD RAZEE

A dollar a day is a Hoosier's pay,
Lowlands, lowlands, a-way, my John!
Yes, a dollar a day is a Hoosier's pay,
My dollar and a half a day.
--Old Pumping Song.

Before leaving New York Mayo made inquiries at offices of shipping brokers and trailed Captain Zoradus Wass to his lair in the loafers' room of a towboat office. Their conference was a gloomy one; neither had any comfort for the other. Mayo was laconic in his recital of events: he said that he had run away--and had come back. Of Marston and Marston's daughter he made no mention.

?I have been to see that fat whelp of a Fogg,? stated the old master mariner. ?I ain't afraid of him. I had a good excuse; I said I wanted a job. I didn't let on to him that I advised you to slip your cable, but I might have curried favor with him by saying so. He seemed to be pretty well satisfied because you had skipped.?

?Captain Wass, that's the main thing I've come to talk over with you. Here's my ticket back home. But I feel that I ought to walk up to the United States marshal's office and surrender myself. And I want to ask you about the prospects of my getting bail. Can you help me??

?I reckon if I saw you behind bars I'd do my best to get you out, son. But you steer away from here on a straight tack and mind your own business! When the United States wants you they'll come and get you--you needn't worry!?

?But I do worry, sir! I am dodging about the streets. I expect to feel a hand on my shoulder every moment. I can't endure the strain of the thing! I don't want anybody to think I'm a sneak.?

?As near's I can find out by nosing around a little that indictment is a secret one--even if it really was returned. And I'm half inclined to think there wasn't any indictment! Perhaps those officers were only sent out to get you and hold you as a witness. Fogg has been doing most of the talking about there being an indictment. However it is, if they don't want you just yet I wouldn't go up to a cell door, son, and holler and pound and ask to be let in. Law has quite a way of giving a man what he hollers for. You go away and let me do the peeking and listening for you around these parts. I'm collecting a little line of stuff on this water-front. Haven't much else to do, these days!?

?I reckon my first hunch was the right one, sir!' I'll go along home. If you hear anybody with a badge on inquiring for me tell him I'm fishing on the _Ethel and May_.?

?That's a mean job for you, son. But I guess I'd better not say anything about it, seeing what I have shanghaied you into.?

?It has not been your fault or mine, what has happened, sir. I am not whining!?

?By gad! I know you ain't! But get ready to growl when the right time comes, and keep your teeth filed! When it's our turn to bite we'll make a bulldog grip of it! He emphasized the vigor of that grip in his farewell handshake.

But Mayo did not reflect with much enthusiasm on Captain Wass's metaphorical summons to combat.

Returning to Maquoit, the young man decided that he was more like a beaten dog slinking back with canine anxiety to nurse his wounds in secret.

His experiences had been too dreadful and too many in the last few days to be separated and assimilated. He had been like a man stunned by a fall--paralyzed by a blow. Now the agonizing tingle of memory and despair made his thoughts an exquisite torture. He tried to put Alma Marston out of those thoughts. He did not dare to try to find a place for her in the economy of his affairs. However, she and he had been down to the gates of death together, and he realized that the experience had had its effect on her nature; he believed that it had developed her character as well. Insistently the memory of her parting words was with him, and he knew, in spite of his brutal and furious efforts to condemn her, that love was not dead and that hope still lived.

He swung aboard the _Ethel and May_ one afternoon, after he had waited patiently for her arrival with her fare.

?I have come back to fish with you, Captain Candage, until my troubles

are straightened out--if they ever are.?

Captain Candage was silent, controlling some visible emotions.

?I have come back to be with folks who won't talk too much about those troubles,? he added, gloomily.

?Exactly,? agreed the skipper. ?Nothing is ever gained by stirring up trouble after it has been well cooked. Swing the pot back over the fire, I say, and let it simmer till it cools off of itself. I thought you would come back.?

?Why??

?Well, I knew they had taken away your papers. Furthermore, Polly has been saying that you would come back.?

?And why did she think so?? asked Mayo, in milder tones.

?She didn't say why,? admitted Captain Candage. ?Maybe women see into things deeper than men do.?

?It seems like coming home--coming home when a man is sick and tired of everything in the world, sir.?

?Reckon my Polly had something like that in mind. She dropped a few hints that she hoped you'd come and get rested up from your troubles.?

?And she has gone back to her work, I suppose??

?No, she is still on her job at Maquoit, sir--calls it her real job. She isn't a quitter, Polly isn't. She says they need her.?

?Like the song says, 'The flowers need the sunshine and the roses need the dew,' that's how they need her,? averred Oakum Otie. ?Though them Hue and Cry women and children can't be said to be much like roses and geraniums! But they're more like it than they ever was before, since Miss Polly has taken hold of 'em. It's wonderful what a good girl can do when she tries, Captain Mayo!?

Resuming his life on the fishing-schooner was like slipping on a pair of old shoes, and Mayo was grateful for that New England stoicism which had greeted him in such matter-of-fact fashion.

?What you want to tell me is all right and what you don't want to tell me is still better,? stated Captain Candage. ?Because when you ain't talking about it you ain't stirring it!?

So, in that fashion, he came back into the humble life of Maquoit. There had been no awkwardness in his meeting with Captain Candage; it had been man to man, and they understood how to dispense with words. But Mayo looked forward to his meeting with Polly Candage without feeling that equanimity which the father had inspired.

He felt an almost overmastering desire to confide to her his troubles of the heart. But he knew that he would not be able to do that. His little temple had been so cruelly profaned. His humiliation was too great.

He was conscious that some other reason was operating to hold him back from explaining to her; and because he did not understand just what it was he was ill at ease when he did come face to face with her. He was grateful for one circumstance--their first meeting was in the old fish-house at Maquoit, under the hundred curious eyes of the colony. He had rowed ashore in his dory and went to seek her in the midst of her activities. She put out both her hands and greeted him with frank pleasure and seemed to understand his constraint, to anticipate his own thoughts, to respect his reticence.

?I'm glad you have come back to wait till all your troubles are settled. The most consoling friends are those who know and who sympathize and who keep still! Now come with me and listen to the children and see what the women are doing. You will be proud and glad because you spoke up for them that day when we went over to Hue and Cry.?

After that there was no constraint between them; they kept their own affairs hidden from each other. The autumn passed and the long, chill evenings came, and when the fishing-schooner was in port at Maquoit, between trips, Mayo and the girl spent comfortable hours together, playing at cards under the widow's red-shaded lamp and under the widow's approving eyes.

?No, they ain't courting, either,? she informed the pestering neighbors. ?Do you suppose I have been twice married and twice a widder not to know courting when I see it? It's 'Boyd this' and 'Polly that,' to be sure, the whole continyal time; but she is engaged to somebody else, because she has been wearing an engagement ring that has come to her since she has been here. She showed it to me, and she showed it to him! And as for him, everybody 'longcoast knows how dead gone on him that millionaire girl is! Now everybody mind their own business!?

As the days passed the widow's counsel seemed to apply to all the affairs of Maquoit; folks went at their business in good earnest.

The winter wind nipped, the wharf piles were sheathed with ice, and only hardy men were abroad on the waterfront of the coast city, but the crew of the _Ethel and May_ were unusually cheerful that day.

The schooner had stayed on Cashes Banks and had ridden out a gale that had driven other fishermen to shelter. Then in the first lull she had sent her dories over the rail and had put down her trawls for a set, and a rousing set it was! It seemed as if the cod, hake, and haddock had been waiting for that gale to stop so that they might hunt for baited hooks and have a feast. Nearly every ganging-line had its prize. The bow pulley in each dory fairly chuckled with delight as the trawl line was pulled over it. Every three feet was a ganging-line. Each dory strung out a mile of trawl. And when the dories returned to the schooner and dumped the catch into the hold the little craft fairly wallowed under her load.

They caught the market bare; the gale had blown for nearly a week. Fish-houses bid spiritedly against one another, and when at last a trade was made and the schooner's crew began to pitchfork the fish into the winch buckets, and the buckets rose creaking out over the rail, the two captains went into the office of the fish-house to figure some mighty gratifying profits.

‘Nothing like luck in the fishing game, gents,’ observed the manager.

‘Well, grit counts for something,’ stated Captain Candage. ‘We’ve got a crew that ain’t afraid of a little weather.’

‘If that’s the case, there may be something for you off-coast about now that’s better than the fishing game.’

‘What’s that?’ asked the old skipper.

‘Wrecking. Seen the morning papers?’

‘We’ve had something to do besides fool with papers.’

‘That new Bee line steamer, _Conomo_, has been piled up on Razee Reef.’

‘One time--this last time--she hugged too close!’ snapped the young man. The others bent an inquiring gaze on him. But he did not explain. His thoughts were busy with the events of that day when the Bee line steamer started his troubles with Marston.

‘Paper says she’s considered a total loss,’ went on the manager. ‘If that’s so, and the underwriters give her up, there ought to be some fine picking for men with grit. The board of survey went out to her on a tug this morning.’ He gave them their check, and they went aboard their schooner.

The affair of the _Conomo_ was not mentioned between them until they were at sea on their way to the eastward again. The piece of news did not interest Mayo at first, except as a marine disaster that had no bearing on his own affairs.

Captain Candage was stumping the quarter-deck, puffing at his short, black pipe. ‘I don’t no’ as you feel anyways as I do about it, Captain Mayo, but it ain’t going to be no great outset to us if we make a leg out to Razee and see what’s going on there,’ he suggested.

‘I have no objections,’ returned Mayo. ‘But the way things are managed nowadays in case of wrecks, I don’t see much prospect of our getting in on the thing in any way.’

‘Mebbe not; but in case they’re going to abandon her there’ll be some grabbing, and we might as well grab with the rest of ‘em.’

‘If they can’t get her off some junk concern will gamble on her. But we’ll make an excursion of it to see the sights, sir. We can afford a

little trip after what we pulled down to-day.?

There was no hope of reaching the wreck before nightfall, so they jogged comfortably in the light westerly that had succeeded the gale.

Captain Candage took the first watch after the second dog-watch, and at two bells, or nine o'clock, in the evening, Mayo awoke and heard him give orders to ?pinch her.? He heard the sails flap, and knew that the men were shortening in readiness to lay to. He slipped on his outer clothing and went on deck.

?We're here,? stated the old skipper, ?and it looks like some other moskeeters had got here ahead of us, ready to stick in their little bills when they get a chance.?

It was a clear night, brilliant with stars. In contrast with the twinkling and pure lights of the heavens, there were dim reds and greens and yellow-white lights on the surface of the ocean. These lights rocked and oscillated and tossed as the giant surges swept past.

?I make out half a dozen sail--little fellers--and two tugs,? said Captain Candage. ?But get your eye on the main squeeze!?

Mayo looked in the direction of the extended mittened hand.

?Some iceberg, hey?? commented the skipper.

A short half-mile away, a veritable ghost ship, loomed the wrecked _Conomo_. Spray had beaten over her and had congealed until she seemed like a mass of ice that had been molded into the shape of a ship. She gleamed, a spectral figure, under the starry heavens.

A single red light, a baleful blob of color, showed from her main rigging.

They surveyed her for some time.

?I should say she was spoke for,? was Captain Candage's opinion. ?It's high tide now, and a spring tide at that, and them tugs is just loafing out there--ain't making a move to start her. We can tell more about the prospect in the morning.?

Then the two captains turned in, for the _Ethel and May_ lay to docilely with a single helmsman at the wheel.

The crisp light of morning did not reveal anything especially new or important. There were half a dozen small schooners, fishermen, loafing under shortened canvas in the vicinity of the wreck. One of the tugs departed shoreward after a time.

Mayo had assured himself, through the schooner's telescope, that the remaining tug was named _Seba J. Ransom_.

?The captain of that fellow went mate with me on a fishing-steamer

once,? he informed Captain Candage. ?Jockey me down in reaching distance and I'll go aboard him in a dory. He may have some news.?

Captain Dodge was immensely pleased to see his old chum, and called him up into the pilot-house and gave him a cigar.

?It's only a loafing job,? he said. ?I've got to stand by and take off her captain and crew in case of rough weather or anything breaks loose more'n what's already busted. They are still hanging by her so as to deliver her to the buyer.?

?Buyer??

?Yep! To whatever junkman is fool enough to bid her in. She's stuck fast. Underwriters have gone back on that tug, and are going to auction her. I'm here to help keep off pirates and take her men ashore after she has been handed over. You a pirate, Mayo?? he asked, with a grin.

?I'm almost anything nowadays, if there's a dollar to be made,? returned the young man.

The _Ransom's_ captain gave him a wink. ?I'm on to what happened on board the _Olenia_? he confided. ?Feller who was in the crew told me. You're good enough for old Marston's girl. Why haven't you gone up to New York and taken--?

?Cut that conversation, Dodge,? barked Mayo, his face hard and his jaw jutting threateningly. ?Good day!? added the young man, slamming the pilot-house door behind him.

His schooner, standing off and on, picked him up.

?There's no use hanging around here,? he informed the old skipper. ?They're going to junk her, if they can find anybody fool enough to bid. She'll be guarded till after the auction.?

Therefore the _Ethel and May_ shook out all her canvas and headed full and by for Maquoit to secure her fresh supply of bait.

?It's a shame,? mourned Captain Candage, staring over the taffrail at the ice-sheathed steamer. ?'Most new, and cost two hundred and fifty thousand dollars to build, if I remember right what the paper said when she was launched.?

?If she was making money they'll have another one in her place,? said Mayo.

?Don't 'no' about that, sir. The Bee line wasn't none too strong financially, I'm told--a lot of little fellers who put in what they could scrape and borrowed the rest. Depends on insurance and their courage what they do after this.? He offered another observation after he had tamped down a load in his black pipe. ?Men will do 'most anything for money--enough money.?

?Seems as if I'd heard that statement before,? was Mayo's curt rejoinder.

?Oh, I know it ain't in any ways new. But the more I think over what has happened to the _Conomo_, the pickeder seems the point to that remark. And whilst I was standing off and on, waiting for you, I run close enough to that steamer to make out a few faces aboard her.?

Mayo glanced at him without comment.

?F'r instance, I saw Art Simpson. You know him, don't you??

?He was captain of Mr. Marston's yacht once.?

?Why did he leave her??

?I heard he had been discharged. That was what the broker said when he hired me.?

?Yes, that's what Simpson said. He made a business of going around and swearing about it. Seemed to want to have everybody 'longcoast hear him swear about it. When I see a man make too much of a business of swearing about another man I get suspicious. After Art Simpson worked his cards so as to get the job of second officer on board the new _Conomo_ I got _more_ suspicious. Now that I have seen how that steamer has been plunked fair and square on Razee, I'm _almighty_ suspicious. I'm suspicious enough to believe that she banged during Art Simpson's watch.?

?What are you driving at, Captain Candage? Are you hinting that anybody would plant a man for a job of that kind??

?Exactly what I'm hinting,? drawled the skipper.

?But putting a steamer on the rocks at this time of year!?

?No passengers--and plenty of life-boats for the crew, sir. I have been hearing a lot of talk about steamboat conditions since I have been carrying in fish.?

?I've found out a little something in that line myself,? admitted Mayo.

?There's one thing to be said about Blackbeard and Cap'n Teach and old Cap Kidd--they went out on the sea and tended to their own pirating; they didn't stay behind a desk and send out understrappers.?

Mayo, in spite of his bitter memories of Julius Mar-ston's attitude, felt impelled to palliate in some degree the apparent enormities of the steamboat magnates.

?I don't believe the big fellows know all that's done, Captain Candage. As responsible parties they wouldn't dare to have those things done. The understrappers, as you say, are anxious to make good and to earn their money, and when the word is passed on down to 'em they go at the job

recklessly. I think it will be pretty hard to fix anything on the real principals. That's why I am out in the cold with my hands tied, just now.?

?I wish we were going to get into the _Conomo_ matter a little, so that we could do some first-hand scouting. It looks to me like the rankest job to date, and it may be the opening for a general overhauling. When deviltry gets to running too hard it generally stubs its toes, sir.?

Captain Candage found a responsive gleam in Mayo's eyes and he went on. ?Of course, I didn't hear the talk, nor see the money pass, nor I wa'n't in the pilot-house when Art Simpson shut his eyes and let her slam. But having been a sailorman all my life, I smell nasty weather a long ways off. That steamer was wrecked a-purpose, and she was wrecked at a time o' year when she can't be salvaged. You don't have to advise the devil how to build a bonfire.?

Mayo did not offer any comment. He seemed to be much occupied by his thoughts.

Two days later a newspaper came into Mayo's hands at Maquoit, and he read that the wrecked steamer had been put up at auction by the underwriters. It was plain that the bidders had shared the insurance folks' general feeling of pessimism--she had been knocked down for two thousand five hundred dollars. The newspapers explained that only this ridiculous sum had been realized because experts had decided that in the first blow the steamer would slip off the ledges on which she was impaled and would go down like a plummet in the deep water from which old Razee cropped. Even the most reckless of gambling junkmen could not be expected to dare much of an investment in such a peek-a-boo game as that.

?But I wonder what was the matter with the expert who predicted that,? mused Mayo. ?He doesn't know the old jaw teeth of Razee Reef as well as I do.?

When the _Ethel and May_ set forth from Maquoit on her next trip to Cashes Banks, Mayo suggested--and he was a bit shamefaced when he did so--that they might as well go out of their way a little and see what the junkers were doing at Razee.

Captain Candage eyed his associate with rather quizzical expression. ?Great minds travel, et cetry!? he chuckled. ?I was just going to say that same thing to you. On your mind a little, is it??

?Yes, and only a little. Of course, there can't be anything in it for us. Those junkers will stick to her till she ducks for deep water. But I've been wondering why they think she's going to duck. I seined around Razee for a while, and the old chap has teeth like a hyena--regular fangs.?

?Maybe they took Art Simpson's say-so,? remarked the old man, wrinkling his nose. ?Art would be very encouraging about the prospects of saving her--that is to say, he would be so in case losing that steamer has turned his brain.?

‘Guess there wasn't very much interest by the underwriters,’ suggested Mayo. ‘They weren't stuck very hard, so I've found out. She was mostly owned in sixty-fourths, and with marine risks up to where they are, small owners don't insure. It's a wicked thing all through, Candage! That great, new steamer piled up there by somebody's devilishness! I believe as you do about the affair! I've been to sea so long that a boat means something to me besides iron and wood. There's something about 'em--something--?’

‘Almost human,’ put in the old man. ‘I sorrowed over the _Polly_, but I didn't feel as bad as if she'd been new. It was sort of like when old folks die of natural causes--you know they have lived about as long as they can. It's sorrowful to have 'em go, but you have to feel reconciled. But I know just how it is with you in the case of that steamer, for I'm a sailor like you. It's just like getting a fine boy through college, seeing him start out full of life, and courage, and hopes, and prospects, and then seeing him drop dead at your feet.’

There was a quaver in the old man's tones. But Mayo, who knew the souls of mariners, understood. Under their hard shells there is imagination that has been nurtured in long, long thoughts. In the calms under starlit skies, in the black darkness when tossing surges swing beneath the keel, in the glimmering vistas of sun-lighted seas, sailors ponder while their more stolid brothers on land allow their souls to doze.

‘You are right, Captain Candage. That's why I almost hate to go out to the _Conomo_. Those infernal ghouls of junkmen will be tearing her into bits instead of trying to put the breath of life back into her.’

The helpless steamer seemed more lonely than when they had visited her before. The mosquito fleet that had surrounded her, hoping for some stray pickings, had dispersed. A tug and a couple of lighters were stuck against her icy sides, and, like leeches, were sucking from her what they could. They were prosecuting their work industriously, for the sea was calm in one of those lulls between storms, a wintry truce that Atlantic coastwise toilers understand and depend on.

Mayo, his curiosity prompting him, determined to go on board one of the lighters and discover to what extremes the junk jackals were proceeding.

Two of his dorymen ferried him after the schooner had been hove to near the wreck.

‘What's your business?’ inquired a man who was bundled in a fur coat and seemed to be bossing operations.

‘Nothing much,’ confessed the young man from his dory, which was tossing alongside the lighter. ‘I'm only a fisherman.’

The swinging cranes of the lighters, winches purring, the little lifting-engines puffing in breathless staccato, were hoisting and dropping cargo--potatoes in sacks, and huge rolls of print paper. Mayo was a bit astonished to note that they were not stripping the steamer;

not even her anchors and chains had been disturbed.

"Fend off!" commanded the boss.

Captain Dodge dropped one of the windows of his pilot-house and leaned on his elbows, thrusting his head out. The tug _Seba J. Ransom_ was still on the job. She was tied up alongside the wreck, chafing her fenders against the ice-sheathed hull.

"Hello, Captain Mayo!" he called, a welcoming grin splitting his features. "Come aboard and have a cigar, and this time I'll keep the conversation on fish-scales and gurry-butts."

The man in the fur coat glanced from one to the other, and was promptly placated. "Oh, this is a friend of yours, is he, Captain Dodge?"

"You bet he is. He's been my boss before now."

"If that's the case make yourself at home anywhere. But you know what some of these fellows alongcoast who call themselves fishermen will do around a wreck when your back is turned!"

Mayo nodded amicably.

"Step on board," invited the boss.

"I'm all right here in the dory, and I'm out from underfoot, sir. We're going along to the fishing-grounds in a jiffy. I'm only satisfying a sailor's curiosity. Wondered what you intended to do with this proposition."

"We're only grabbing what's handy just now. Some of the cargo forward is above water. I'm in on this thing in a sort of queer way myself." This keen-eyed young man who had been so heartily indorsed by the tugboat skipper afforded the man in the fur coat an opportunity for a little conversation about himself. "I'm the outside man for Todd & Simonton, of Boston, and bought on the jump after I'd swapped a wire or so with the house. Happened into that auction, and bought blind. I believe in a gamble myself. Then somebody wired to the concern that they had been stuck good and fine, and they gave me a sizzler of a call-down in a night message. A man can sit at desk in Boston and think up a whole lot of things that ain't so. Well, I've flown out here with what equipment I could scrape up in a hurry, and you can see what I'm doing! There's enough in sight in the way of loose cargo to square me with the concern. But, blast the luck! If Jake Simonton had a little grit and would back me I believe we'd make a killing."

"Of course, it all depends on how she's resting and what will happen when the next blow comes," said Mayo. "Have you been below?"

"I'm a hustler on a dicker, and a hellion on junk," snapped the boss. "I'm no sailor, prophet, or marine architect. I simply know that she's full of water aft and has got something serious the matter with her innards. I'm pulling enough out to make Simonton sorry he sassed me in a

night message. Only he will never let on that he's sorry. He never lets loose any boomerangs that will scale around and come back and hit him. He wants to be in a position to rasp me the next time I make a mistake in a gamble.?

?All the crew gone ashore--the Bee line men??

?Sure--bag and baggage. We own her as she stands. That second officer had 'em shivering every time a wave slapped her. I was glad when he got away. He pretty nigh stampeded _my_ men. Said she was liable to slide any minute.?

The drawling voice of Captain Dodge broke in above them. ?Here comes the tug _Resolute_? he stated. ?Mebbe it's another one of them night messages from your concern, Titus. May want you to put what you can carry of her in a paper bag and bring it to Boston.?

?You never can tell what they're going to do in Boston,? growled the outside man. ?I get discouraged, sometimes, trying to be enterprising.?

He began to pace, looking worried, and did not reply to several questions that Mayo put to him. So the young man accepted Captain Dodge's invitation and climbed to the tugboat's pilot-house. He had a very human hankering to know what the coming of that tug from the main signified, and decided to hang around a little while longer, even at the risk of making Captain Candage impatient.

The _Resolute_ brought a telegram, and the man in the fur coat slapped it open, took in its gist at one glance, and began to swear with great gusto.

He climbed into the _Ransom's_ pilot-house, with the air of a man seeking comfort from friends, and fanned the sheet of paper wrathfully.

?Orders to resell. Get out from under. Take what I can get. Don't want the gamble. And here I have cleaned a good profit already.?

?Why don't you fire back a message advising 'em to hold on?? asked Captain Dodge.

?And have a gale come up in a few hours and knock her off'n this rock? That's what would happen. It would be just my luck. I'm only a hired man, gents. If my firm won't gamble, it ain't up to me. If I disobey orders and hold on, I'll be scared to death the first time the wind begins to blow. There's no use in ruining a fine set of nerves for a firm that won't appreciate the sacrifice, and I need nerve to keep on working for 'em. I say it ain't up to me. Me for shore as soon as I load those lighters. Every dollar I get by reselling is velvet, so let 'ergo!?

?What do they tell you to do about price?? ventured Mayo.

?Take the first offer--and hurry about it. They seem to have an idea that this steamer is standing on her head on the point of a needle, and

that only a blind man will buy her.?

He went back to his crew, much disgusted, ordered the freshly arrived tug to wait for a tow, and spurred laggard toilers with sharp profanity.

?Somebody has been scaring his concern,? suggested Mayo, left alone with Captain Dodge.

?Perhaps so--but it may be good business to get scared, provided they can unload this onto somebody else for a little ready cash. This spell of weather can't last much longer. Look at that bank to s'uthard. I don't know just what is under her in the way of ledges--never knew much about old Razee. But my prediction is, she'll break in two as soon as the waves give her any motion.?

It was on the tip of Mayo's tongue to argue the matter with the tugboat man, but he took second thought and shut his mouth.

?You're probably right,? he admitted. ?I'd better be moving. I don't see any fish jumping aboard our schooner. We've got to go and catch 'em. Good-by, Dodge.?

When his associate came in over the rail of the _Ethel and May_ Captain Candage, from force of habit, having picked up his men, gave orders to let her off into the wind.

?Hold her all-aback!? commanded Mayo. ?Excuse me, Captain Candage, for a cross-order, but I've got a bit of news I want you to hear before we leave. The junk crowd has got cold feet and are going to sell as she stands, as soon as they get cargoes for those lighters.?

?Well, she does lay in a bad way, and weather is making,? said the skipper, fiddling his forefinger under his nose dubiously.

?They haven't even skimmed the cream off her--probably will get all her cargo that's worth saving and some loose stuff in the rigging line. By gad! what a chance for a gamble!?

?It might be for a feller who had so much money he could kiss a slice of it good-by in case the Atlantic Ocean showed aces,? said the old man, revealing a sailor's familiarity with a popular game.

?There is such a thing as being desperate enough to stake your whole bundle,? declared Mayo. ?Captain, I'm young, and I suppose I have got a young man's folly. I can't expect you to feel the way I feel about a gamble.?

?I may look old, but I haven't gone to seed yet,? grumbled the skipper. ?What are you trying to get through you??

?That fat man on that lighter has a telegram in his pocket from his folks in Boston, ordering him to take the first offer that is made for the _Conomo_ as she stands. I'm fool enough to be willing to put in every dollar I've got, and take a chance.?

Captain Candage stared at his associate for a time, and then walked to the rail and took a long look at the steamer. "I never heard of a feller ever getting specially rich in the fishing game," he remarked.

Mayo, wild thoughts urging him to desperate ventures, snapped out corroboration of that dictum..

"And I've known a lot of fellers to go broke in the wrecking game," pursued Captain Candage. "How much have you got?" That question came unexpectedly.

"I've got rising six hundred dollars," He was carrying his little hoard in his pocket, for a man operating from the hamlet of Maquoit must needs be his own banker.

"I've got rising six hundred in my own pocket," said the skipper. "That fat man may have orders to take the first offer that's made, but we've got to make him one that's big enough so that he won't kick us overboard and then go hunt up a buyer on the main."

The two Hue and Cry fishermen who had ferried the young man were nesting their dory on top of other dories, and just forward of the house, and were within hearing. Neither captain noted with what interest these men were listening, exchanging glances with the man at the wheel.

"And after we waggle our wad under his nose--and less than a thousand will be an insult, so I figger--what have we got left to operate with? It won't do us any good to sail round that steamer for the rest of the winter and admire her. What was you thinking, Mayo, of trying to work him for a snap bargain, now that he's here on the spot and anxious to sell, and then grabbing off a little quick profit by peddling her to somebody else?"

"No, sir!" cried the young man, with decision. "I've got my own good reasons for wanting to make this job the whole hog or not a bristle! I won't go into it on any other plan."

"Well, we'll be into something, all right, after we invest our money--the whole lump. We'll most likely be in a scrape, not a dollar left to hire men or buy wrecking outfit."

The two men finished lashing the dories and went forward.

"It's a wild scheme, and I'm a fool to be thinking about it, Captain Candage. But wild schemes appeal to me just now. I can make some more money by working hard and saving it, a few dollars at a time, but I never expect to see another chance like this. Oh yes, I see that bank in the south!" His eyes followed the skipper's gloomy stare. "By to-morrow at this time she may be forty fathoms under. But here's the way I feel." He pulled out his wallet and slapped it down on the roof of the house. "All on the turn of one card! And there comes the blow that will turn it!" He pointed south into the slaty clouds.

Captain Candage paused in his patrol of the quarterdeck and gazed down on the wallet. Then he began to tug at his own. 'I'm no dead one, even if my hair is gray,' he grumbled.

The two captains looked at the two wallets, and then at each other. The next moment their attention was fully taken up by another matter. Their crew of fifteen men came marching aft and lined up forward of the house. A spokesman stepped out.

'Excuse us, captings, for meddling into something that p'raps ain't none of our business. We ain't meaning to peek nor pry, but some of us couldn't help overhearing. We've cleaned out our pockets. Here it is--three hundred and sixty-eight dollars and thirty-seven cents. Will you let me step onto the quarter-deck and lay it down 'side of them wallets?? He accepted their amazed silence as consent, and made his deposit solemnly.

'But this is all a gamble, and a mighty uncertain one,' protested Mayo.

'We 'ain't never had no chance to be sports before in all our lives,' pleaded the man. 'We wouldn't have had that money if you two heroes hadn't give us the chance you have. We wa'n't more'n half men before. Now we can hold up our heads. You'll make us feel mighty mean, as if we wasn't fit to be along with you, if you won't let us in.'

'You bet you can come in, boys!' shouted Captain Candage. 'I know how you feel.'

'And another thing,' went on the spokesman. 'We 'ain't had much time to talk this over; we rushed aft here as soon as we heard and had cleaned out our pockets. But we've said enough to each other so that we can tell you that all of us will turn to on that wreck with you and work for nothing till--till--well, whatever happens. Don't want wages! Don't need promises! And if she sinks, we'll sing a song and go back to fishing again.'

The man at the wheel let go the spokes and came forward and deposited a handful of money beside the rest. 'There's mine. I wisht it was a million; it would go just as free.'

'Boys, I'd make a speech to you--but my throat is too full,' choked Mayo. 'I know better, now, why something called me over to Hue and Cry last summer. Hard over with that wheel! Jockey her down toward the wreck!'

When they were within hailing distance of the lighter Mayo raised his megaphone. 'Will you take fifteen hundred dollars--cash--now--for that wreck, as you leave her when you've loaded those lighters?? he shouted.

There was a long period of silence. Then the man in the fur coat replied, through his hollowed hands: 'Yes--and blast the fools in Boston who are making me sell!'

XXVII ~ THE TEMPEST TURNS ITS CARD

And one thing which we have to crave,
Is that he may have a watery grave.
So well heave him down into some dark hole,
Where the sharks 'll have his body and the devil have his soul.
With a big bow wow!
Tow row row!
Pal de, rai de, ri do day!
--Boston.

After the man in the fur coat had placed a hastily executed bill of sale in Mayo's hands, he frankly declared that his interest in the fortune of the wrecked steamer had ceased.

?The Resolute reports that storm signals are displayed. I'll simply make sure of what I've got. I'll play the game as those quitters in Boston seem to want me to play it.?

The tugs, departing with their tows, squalled salutes to the little schooner hove to under the counter of the _Conomo_.

?Sounds like they was making fun of us,? growled Candage. He scowled into the gray skies and across the lonely sea.

Mayo, too, sensed a derisive note in the whistle-toots. Depression had promptly followed the excitement that had spurred him into this venture. The crackle of the legal paper in his reefer pocket only accentuated his gloom. That paper seemed to represent so little now. It was not merely his own gamble--he had drawn into a desperate undertaking men who could not afford to lose. They had put all their little prosperity in jeopardy. There were women and children ashore to consider. He and his fellows now owned that great steamer which loomed there under the brooding heavens. But it was a precarious possession. The loss of her now would mean not merely the loss of all their little hoards--it would mean the loss of hope, and the sacrifice of expectations, and the regret of men who have failed in a big task. He realized how stinging would be defeat, for he was building the prospects of his future upon winning in this thing.

Hope almost failed to reassure him as he gazed first at the departing lighters and then at the ice-panoplied hulk on Razee.

Surely no pauper ever had a more unwieldy elephant on his hands, without a wisp of hay in sight for food.. He had seen wrecking operations: money, men, and gigantic equipment often failed to win. Technical skill and expert knowledge were required. He did not know what an examination of her hull would reveal. He had bought as boys swap jack-knives--sight denied! He confessed to himself that even the pittance they had gambled on this hazard had been spent with the recklessness of folly, considering that they had spent their all. They had nothing left to operate with. It was like a man tying his hands behind him before he

jumped overboard.

Oh, that was a lonely sea! It was gray and surly and ominous.

Black smoke from the distant tugs waved dismal farewell. A chill wind had begun to harp through the cordage of the little schooner; the moan--far flung, mystic, a voice from nowhere--that presages the tempest crooned in his ears.

"I can smell something in this weather that's worse than scorched-on hasty pudding," stated Captain Candage. "I don't know just how you feel, sir, but if a feller should ride up here in a hearse about now and want my option on her for what I paid, I believe I'd dicker with him before we come to blows."

"I can't blame you," confessed the young man. "This seems to be another case of 'Now that we've got it, what the devil shall we do with it?'"

"Let's pile ashore on the trail of them lighters and dicker it, and be sensible," advised his associate. "I feel as if I owned a share in old Poppocatterpettul--or whatever that mountain is--and had been ordered to move it in a shawl-strap."

Mayo surveyed their newly acquired property through the advancing dusk.

"I believe I know a feller we can unload onto," persisted Candage. "He has done some wrecking, and is a reckless cuss."

"Look here," snapped his associate, "we'll settle one point right now, sir. I'm not hurrahing over this prospect--not at all. But I'm in it, and I'm going to stick on my original plan. I don't want anybody in with me who is going to keep looking back and whining. If everything goes by the board, you won't hear a whicker out of me. If you want to quit now, Captain Candage, go ahead, and I'll mortgage my future to pay back what you have risked. Now what do you say?"

"Why, I say you're talking just the way I like to hear a man talk," declared the skipper, stoutly. "I'll be cursed if I like to go into a thing with any half-hearted feller. You're my kind, and after this you'll find me your kind." He turned and shouted commands. "Get in mains'l, close reef fores'l, and let her ride with that and jumbo."

"That's the idea!" commended Mayo. "The Atlantic Ocean is getting ready to deal a hand in this game. We have got to stick close if we're going to see what cards we draw."

A fishing-schooner, if well handled, is a veritable stormy petrel in riding out a blow. Even the ominous signs of tempest did not daunt the two captains. They were there to guard their property and to have their hopes or their fears realized.

"If the Conomo has got her grit with her and lives through it," said Captain Candage, "we'll be here to give her three cheers when it's over. And if she goes down we'll be on deck to flap her a fare-ye-well."

In that spirit they snugged everything on board the schooner and prepared to defy the storm. It came in the night, with a howl of blast and a fusillade of sleet like bird-shot. It stamped upon the throbbing sea and made tumult in water and air. At midnight they were wallowing with only a forestays'l that was iced to the hardness of boiler plate. But though the vast surges flung their mighty arms in efforts to grasp the schooner, she dodged and danced on her nimble way and frustrated their malignity. Her men did not sleep; they thawed themselves in relays and swarmed on deck again. Each seemed to be animated by personal and vital interest.

"You can't buy crews like this one with wages," observed Captain Candage, iced beard close to Mayo's ear. "I reckon it was about as my Polly said--you cast bread on the waters when you took their part on Hue and Cry."

The young man, clinging to a cleat and watching the struggles of their craft, waved a mittened hand to signify that he agreed. In that riot of tempest and ruck of sea he was straining his eyes, trying to get a glimpse of the hulk on Razee. But the schooner had worked her way too far off to the west, pressed to leeward by the relentless palm of the storm.

Then at last came morning, an opaque dawn that was shrouded with swirling snow, and all was hidden from their eyes except the tumbling mountains of water which swept to them, threatened to engulf them, and then melted under their keel. The captains could only guess at the extent of their drift, but when the wind quieted after midday, and they were able to get sail on the schooner, they were in no doubt as to the direction in which the steamer must lie. They began their sloshing ratch back to east.

Mayo braved nipping wind and iced rigging and took the glass to the main crosstrees. He remained there though he was chilled through and through.

At last, near the horizon's rim, he spied a yeasty tumult of the sea, marking some obstruction at which the waves were tussling. In the midst of this white welter there was a shape that was almost spectral under the gray skies. The little schooner pitched so ferociously that only occasionally could he bring this object into the range of the glass. But he made sure at last. He clutched the glass and tobogganed to deck down the slippery shrouds.

"She's there, Captain Candage!" he shouted. "The teeth of old Razee are still biting."

They were back to her again before the early night descended. She was iced to the main truck, and the spray had deposited hillocks of ice on her deck, weighting her down upon the ledges which had pinioned her. But in spite of the battering she had received her position had not changed. They circled her--the midget of a schooner seeming pitifully inadequate to cope with this monster craft.

‘Well,’ sighed Captain Candage, ‘thank the Lord she’s still here. Our work is cut out for us now--whatever it is we can do with her. They say a mouse set a lion loose once by gnawing his ropes. It looks to me as if we’re going to have some blasted slow gnawing here.’

They lay by her that night in a quieting sea, and spent wakeful hours in the cabin, struggling rather helplessly with schemes.

‘Of course, it’s comforting to find her here and to know that the Atlantic Ocean will have to get more muscle to move her,’ said Candage. ‘And then again, it ain’t so darnation comforting. Looks to me as if she’s stuck there so solid that you couldn’t joggle her off if you hove the moon at her. I reckon my hope has been what yours has been, Mayo--salvage her whole instead of junking her.’

‘I’m a sailor, not a junkman. I’d almost rather let my money go, Captain Candage, than be a party to smashing up that new steamer into old iron. She has fooled the guessers by sticking where she is. It has been my hope from the first that she can be floated. She is not a rusted old iron rattletrap. Of course, she’s got a hole in her, and we can see now that she’s planted mighty solid. But she is sound and tight, I’ll wager, in all her parts except where that wound is. I suppose most men who came along here now would guess that she can’t be got off whole. I’m going into this thing and try to fool _those_ guessers, too.’

‘That’s the only real gamble,’ agreed the skipper. ‘We’d only make days’ wages by carving her into a junk-pile. A scrap-heap ain’t worth much except as old iron at half a cent a pound; but a new steamer like that is worth two hundred thousand dollars, by gorry! if she’s afloat.’

‘Well, we’ve got to do something besides lay to here and look at her lines. In the first place, I want to know what’s the matter with her--about how much of a hole she has got. Our eyes ought to tell us a little something.’

And on that errand Mayo departed the next morning after breakfast.

Only a sailor, young, alert, and bold, could have scaled the side of the steamer in that weather. Her ladder was in place, but nothing much except an exaggerated icicle. But it was on the lee side of her, and his dory was fairly well protected from the rush of the seas. With his hatchet he hacked foothold on the ladder, left his men in the dory, and notched his perilous way to the deck. The fore-hatch was open, just as the hastily departing salvagers had left it. He went below, down the frosted iron ladder. He was fronted with a cheerless aspect. Cargo and water hid what damage she had suffered. The fat man had secured most of the cargo that the water had not ruined.

He climbed back on deck and explored amidships and aft. Her engine-room was partially flooded, for her forepeak was propped on the higher part of the reef, and water had settled aft. Her crew’s quarters were above the main-deck, as is the case with most cargo-carriers of the newer type. He found plenty of tinned food in the steward’s domains, coal in tie galley bunker, and there was bedding in the officers’ staterooms.

Mayo scrambled back to his dory and went aboard the schooner. He reported his findings.

?And here's the only sensible plan for the present, Captain Candage: I'll take two men and a dory and go aboard and guard our property. Somebody must stay here--and I don't want you to take the chances on that wreck. You've got a daughter. You probably know more of the shipyard crowd in Limeport than I do. That's the nearest city, and I believe that when you report that the _Conomo_ is holding after this storm you can hire some equipment on credit and borrow some money.?

?I swear I'll do my best. I know a lot of water-front folks, and I've always paid my bills.?

?We need stuff for the whole wrecking game--engine, pumps, and all the rest. You go and scout on shore and capture a few men and bring 'em out here to look our prospect over.?

?Offer 'em a lay??

?No, sir. We'll make this a close corporation. I don't propose to let a lot of land sharks in here to manipulate us out of what's our own. It's our gamble, and we want what's coming out of it. Go ashore and see what you can do on prices and terms. Don't close anything till you and I have conferred. I'll have a schedule of needs made up by the time you're back.?

Half an hour later he was located on the wreck with the two men he had selected as his companions. They carried tackle with them, with which they hoisted after them their dory--their main bower in case of emergency.

And the sea which Mayo surveyed was more lonely than ever, for the _Ethel and May_ was standing off across the heaving surface toward the main and the hulk was left alone in the expanse of ocean. He felt very much of a pygmy and very helpless as he scrambled about over the icy decks. He remembered that faith can move mountains, but he was as yet unable to determine just what power would be able to move that steamer, into whose vitals the reef of Razee had poked its teeth.

At eight bells, midnight, Mayo turned out of his berth, for he heard something that interested him. It was a soft pattering, a gentle swishing. As a mariner, he knew how sudden can be meteorological changes on the coast in winter. When the north winds have raged and howled and have blown themselves out, spitting sleet and snow, the gentler south winds have their innings and bear balmy moisture from the Gulf Stream. He poked his head out and felt a soft air and warm rain. He had been hoping and half expecting that a change of weather would bring this condition--known as a January thaw. He went back to his bunk, much comforted.

A bright sun awoke him. Clear skies had succeeded the rain, All was dripping and melting. Chunks of ice were dropping from the steamer's

stubby masts, and her scuppers were beginning to discharge water from the softening mass on her deck.

He and his little crew ate breakfast with great good cheer, then secured axes from the steamer's tool-house and began to chop watercourses in the ice. A benignant sun in a cloudless sky had enlisted himself as a member of the wrecking crew on Razee Reef. That weather would soon clear the _Conomo_ of her sheathing.

This was a cheerful prospect, because rigging and deck equipment of various kinds would be released. The steamer began to look like a less discouraging proposition. She was no longer the icicle that had put a chill into underwriters and bidders. Mayo lost the somberness that had weighed upon him. The sea did not seem so lonely and so threatening. He felt that he could show something tangible and hopeful to the parties whom Captain Can-dage might be able to solicit.

When he saw a tug approaching in the afternoon his optimism suggested that it brought the skipper and his party; his own hopes were so high now that he felt that men with equipment and money would be eager to loan it to parties who possessed such excellent prospects. In this fashion he translated this apparent haste to get to the reef.

But it was not Captain Candage who hailed him when the tug eased herself against the ladder, her screw churning the sea in reverse. A stranger came out of the pilothouse of the _Resolute_, carrying a big leather suit-case. He was plainly the passenger who had chartered her. A deck-hand tossed a cast-line to the steamer's deck, and Mayo promptly threw it back.

?You can't come aboard.?

?Who says so??

?I say so. I have a bill of sale of her in my pocket.?

?I don't recognize it. The law will have something to say about that later.?

?I don't care what the law may say later. I'm talking right now. We own this steamer. What are you here for??

?I left quite a lot of little personal belongings on her. I went away in a hurry. I want to come aboard with this valise and get 'em.?

?They must be pretty valuable belongings, seeing that you've chartered a tug to come out here.?

?A fellow's own property means more to him than it does to anybody else. Now that I've gone to all this expense, you ain't mean enough are you, to keep me off? This is between sailors.?

?Who are you??

The man hesitated. "Well, if I've got to be introduced I'll say my name is Simpson--I have been second officer aboard there."

"You're not here with any legal papers--you're not trying any trick to get possession, are you?"

"Take all in hearing to witness that I ain't! I'll pick up my stuff and leave in ten minutes."

"Come aboard, then."

The man set down his suit-case and hitched a heave-line to the handle. He coiled the line and handed it to a deck-hand. "Throw that to me when I'm on deck," he ordered. Then he came up the ladder.

"Heave, and I'll hoist up the bag," suggested Mayo at the rail.

"Wait till I get there," barked the visitor, still climbing. He caught the line after he had reached the rail and pulled up the case with some effort and great care.

"Look here, that bag isn't empty," said Mayo.

"Who said it was? I'm carrying around in it all I own in the world. I'm starting for New York as soon as this tug sets me ashore."

He picked up the case and started for the officers' quarters. Mayo went along, too.

"You afraid I'm going to steal her engine out of her? The few little things of mine I'm after were hidden away, and that's how I forgot 'em. Now don't insult me by following me around as if I was a thief."

"I don't know just what you are," muttered the young man. "There's something that looks mighty phony about this, but I haven't got you sized up just yet."

"I'll go back--go back right now. I supposed I was asking a favor of a gentleman and a brother officer." He started on his return to the ladder.

"Go get your stuff," commanded Mayo. "If your business here is all your own, I don't want to spy on you."

He went back to question the captain of the tug for information in regard to the "Ethel and May".

"She's in Limeport," reported the captain, elbows on his window-sill. "Came past her in the inner harbor this morning. You've bit off quite a chunk here, haven't you? We all thought this storm had sluiced her. Made quite a stir up and down the water-front when old Can-dage blew along and reported that she had lived it out."

"Reckon some of the panic boys are talking in another key about the

prospects out here, about now, aren't they??

'Ain't so sure about that, sir,' stated the towboat man, loafing into an easier attitude.

'Isn't there a feeling on shore that we are likely to make good on this proposition?? There was solicitude in Mayo's voice. He was acutely anxious. On the sentiment ashore depended Captain Candage's success.

'Can't say that I hear of any!'

'But the talk must--'

'There ain't very much talk--not now. It's generally reckoned that this packet is a gone goose and folks are talking about something else.'

'But she is here--she is upright and fast! She is--'

The towboat man was not enough interested to listen to statements concerning the _Conomo's_ condition. 'Look-a-here, son,' he broke in, 'do you think for a minute that this thing wouldn't have been grabbed up by the real people if there had been any show of a make? I know there isn't a show!'

'How do you know??' demanded Mayo, with indignation.

'Haven't I been talking with the representative of one of the biggest salvaging companies on the Atlantic coast? He's there in Limeport now--was aboard my tug this morning.'

'How does he know??'

'Well, he does know. That's his business. And everybody in Limeport knows what he has said. He hasn't been bashful about expressing his opinion.'

Mayo leaned over the rail, a baleful light in his eyes indicating what his own opinions regarding this unknown detractor were, just then.

'I'd like to know who this Lord Guess-so is--barking behind honest men's backs!'

'Mr. Fogg! That's him! Seems to know his business!'

'Fogg??'

'Exactly!' That's his great word,' explained the other, grinning. 'Some chap, too, with cigars and language!'

'By the gods, now I know who chartered this tug!' he shouted. 'What kind of a fool am I getting to be??'

He turned and ran toward the officers' quarters. He leaped into the main passageway and explored headlong the staterooms. There was no sign of

his visitor.

At that moment, in the tumult of his thoughts, he had only a glimmering of an idea as to what might be the motive of the man's visit. But he was certain, now, that a wretch who had deliberately wrecked a rival steamer--if Candage's suspicions were correct--would do almost anything else for money.

A narrow companionway with brass rails led below to the crew's quarters. Mayo, coming to the head of it, saw the man hurrying to its foot. The captain grasped the rails and slid down with one swoop.

"What in the devil's name are you doing?" he gasped.

The intruder grabbed him and threw him to one side, and started up the companionway. He had dropped the suit-case to seize Mayo, and it bounced in a way to show that it was empty.

Mayo leaped and grasped the other's legs as he was mounting. The man kicked him ferociously in the breast before the attacker managed to pinion the legs in his arms. They went down together, rolling over and over.

The stranger was stocky and strong, his muscles toughened by a sailor's activities. Moreover, he seemed to be animated by something more than a mere grudge or desire to defend himself; he fought with frenzy, beating his fists into Mayo's face and sides as they rolled. Then he began to shout. He fairly screamed, struggling to release himself.

But his assailant was just as tough and just as desperate, and he had a younger man's superior agility. The other had forced the fight. Mayo proposed to hang to him until he discovered the meaning of this peculiar ferocity.

He flipped across his prisoner, clutched him by both ears, and rapped the man's head so smartly on the deck planks that his victim relaxed, half unconscious.

Then he opened staring eyes. "Let me go! Let me go! I quit. Run for it. Let me run. We're goners!" he squalled.

"Run? Why?" demanded the victor.

"Dynamite! I've planted it. The fuse is going."

"Where is it?"

"Below--somewhere. I've forgot. I, can't remember. My mind is gone. I'm too scared to think. Run!"

Mayo jumped up and yanked the man to his feet. "Take me to it!" he shouted.

"There ain't time. I guessed at the fuse--it may burn quicker than I

reckoned.?

The young man drove his fist into the other's face and knocked him down. Then he jerked him upright again.

?Take me where you've planted that dynamite or we'll stay here and go up together. And now you know I mean what I say.?

The last blow had cowed his man; he raised his fist again.

The visitor leaped away from him and ran along the lower deck, Mayo at his heels. He led the way aft. In the gloom of between-decks there gleamed a red spark. Mayo rushed to it, whipped off his cap, and snuffed the baleful glow. When he was sure that the fuse was dead he heard his man scrambling up the companion ladder. He pursued and caught the quarry as he gained the upper deck, and buffeted the man about the ears and forced him into a stateroom.

?This means state prison for you! You were guilty of barratry before, and you know it! How did you dare to try this last trick??

?I had my orders.?

?Orders from what man??

?No matter. You needn't ask. I won't tell.? The stranger was sullen, and had recovered some of his assurance, now that his fear of the dynamite was removed.

?You're a lunatic. You ought to have known you couldn't pull off a thing of this kind.?

?I don't know about that! It was working pretty slick. If she had split and gone off these ledges, you couldn't have proved anything special. I've got good backing. You better let me go.?

Mayo glared at him, deprived of speech by this effrontery.

?You'd better come over with the big fellows,? advised the man. ?I can tell you right now that every hole in Limeport has been plugged against you. You can't hire equipment there, or get a cent's credit. It has all been nicely attended to. You're here fooling with a dead duck. You'd be better off if that dynamite had been let alone to split her.?

The entire uselessness of words in a situation like this, the inadequacy of speech to meet such brazen boldness, checked Mayo's oath-peppered anathema. He pulled the key from the stateroom door and menaced the prisoner with his fist when the man started to follow him out.

?You don't dare to keep me aboard here! Take warning by what they have already done to you, Mayo! I'm sure of my backing.?

?You'll have a chance to use it!? retorted the young man. He dodged out and locked the stateroom door.

?Your passenger is not going back with you, sir,? he called down over the rail to the towboat captain.

?I take my orders from him.?

?You are taking them from me now. Cast off!?.

?Look here--?

?I mean what I say, sir. That man you brought out here is going to stay till I can put him into the hands of the police.?

?What has he done??

?The less you know about the matter the better it will be for yourself and your boat! You tell the man who chartered your tug--?

?You have him aboard, there!?

Mayo looked straight into the towboat man's eyes.

?You tell Mr. Fogg, who chartered your tug, that I have his man under lock and key and that the more riot he starts over the matter the better I will be satisfied. And don't bring any more passengers out here unless they are police officers.? Then he roared in his master-mariner tones: ?Cast off your lines, sir. You know what the admiralty law is!?

The captain nodded, closed his pilot-house window, and clanged his bell. Mayo knew by his mystified air that he was not wholly in the confidence of his passenger and his employer.

This bungling, barefaced attempt to destroy the steamer touched Mayo's pride as deeply as it stirred his wrath. Fogg evidently viewed the pretensions of the new ownership with contempt. He must have belief in his own power to ruin and to escape consequences, pondered the young man. He had put Mayo and his humble associates on the plane of the ordinary piratical wreckers of the coast-men who grabbed without law or right, who must be prepared to fight other pirates of the same ilk, and whose affairs could have no standing in a court of law.

Even more disquieting were the statements that the avenues of credit ashore had been closed. Malicious assertions could ruin the project more effectually than could dynamite. But now that the _Conomo_ had withstood the battering of a gale and bulked large on the reef, a visible pledge of value, it did seem that Captain Candage must be able to find somebody who would back them.

For two days Mayo waited with much impatience, he and his men doing such preliminary work as offered itself.

He expected that Fogg would send a relief expedition, but his apprehensions bore no fruit. His prisoner was sourly reticent and by the few words he did drop seemed to console himself with the certainty that

retribution awaited Mayo.

On the third day came the schooner. She came listlessly, under a light wind, and her limp sails seemed to express discouragement and disappointment. Mayo, gazing across to her as she approached, received that impression, in spite of his hopes. He got a glimpse of Captain Candage's face as he came to the steamer's side in his dory, and his fears were confirmed.

'Tain't no use,' was the skipper's laconic report as he swung up the ladder.

'You mean to say you didn't get a rise out of anybody?'

'Nothing doing nowhere. There's a fat man named Fogg in Limeport, and he is spreading talk that we 'ain't got law or prospects. Got a few men to listen to me, but they shoosed me off when they found that we wouldn't take 'em in and give 'em all the profits. Went to Maquoit and tried to get Deacon Rowley into the thing--and when I go and beg favors of Deacon Rowley, you can imagine how desperate I am. He's a cash-down fellow--you have found that out.'

'But couldn't you show him that this is the best gamble on the coast?'

'He ain't a gambler; he's a sure-thing operator. And when he knew that we had put in all our cash, he threatened to take the schooner away from us unless we go back to fishing and 'be sensible'--that's the way he put it. So then him and me had that postponed row.'

'But look at her,' pleaded Mayo, waving his hand, 'Ice off her, sound in all her rivets after her beating. If we could get the right men out here now--'

'I ain't confident, myself, no more,' stated Captain Candage, running an eye of disfavor over their property. 'If ye get out here away from level-headed business men and dream about what might happen, you can fool yourself. I can see how it is with you. But I've been ashore, and I've got it put to me good and plenty. I did think of one way of getting some money, but I come to my senses and give it up.'

'Getting money--how?'

'No matter. I'd cut off both hands before I'd let them hands take that money for a desp'rit thing like this. Let's sell her for scrap to the first man who'll take her--and then mind our own business and go fishing.'

'Will you take your turn aboard here and let me go ashore?'

'There ain't no sense in us wasting more time.'

'I've done my trick here, Captain Candage, and it has been a good one. I only ask you to take your trick, as a shipmate should. Keep a dozen of the men here with you. There's plenty of grub. Stand off all comers till

I get back.?

?What are you going to do??

?Make a man's try, sir, before I let 'em dump us. We can always go fishing. But there's only one_ Conomo_.?

?I'll stay. It's only fair to you to have your chance ashore. And I've got an almighty good rifle aboard that schooner,? stated the skipper.
?Send it to me by one of the men.?

?You may need it,? stated Captain Mayo, with grim set to his jaw. ?You come with me. I want to show you a bird that flew aboard here the other day.?

Outside the stateroom door he halted Captain Candage, who was following on his heels, taking Mayo's statement literally, and showing only mild interest.

?Captain Candage, your man, Art Simpson, is in this stateroom. He came out here on a tug with a bag of dynamite, and intended to blow up this wreck.?

?Gawd-a-mighty, ain't they going to stop at anything?? croaked the old skipper.

?It's about time for us to find out how much of this is reckless devilishness on the part of hired men and how much the big men really know of what is being done on this coast, sir. And that's why I'm holding this man Simpson.?

?Let me at him!? pleaded Candage. ?I'll crack his shell for him! I'll get at his meat!?

Mayo unlocked the door and walked in.

?Simpson, you--? bawled the old skipper, and then halted in confusion, his mouth wide open.

?This ain't Art Simpson!? he declared, after amazed survey of the glowering stranger. ?Who be ye??

?None of your infernal business! When you do know who I am you'll discover that you have a tough proposition on your hands.?

?We realize that already, without knowing your name,? retorted Mayo.

?I'm not worrying; it's for you to do the worrying! I have given you your warning! Now take what's coming to you from the men who are behind me.?

?What's your name--that's what I've asked you?? demanded Candage.

?None of your business--that's what I have told you.?

'We'll get some light on that subject after I have you on shore,' said Mayo. 'Come on! You're going!'

'Sooner the better!' agreed the stranger. 'I'll relish seeing you get yours!'

Mayo wasted no time. He sent his prisoner down the ladder to the dory ahead of him, and put out his hand to the old skipper.

'If I can't do better I'll take that devil, whoever he is, by the heels, and bat out the brains of the other pirates.'

'I reckon that they'll back down when they, see that you've caught him foul,' stated the skipper, consolingly. 'I've got a lot of confidence in your grit, sir. But I must say it's a terrible tricky gang we're up against, so it seems to me.'

'This may be just the right string for us to pull,' returned Mayo; 'there's no pleading with them, but we may be able to scare 'em.'

'I'm afraid I'm too much inclined to look on the dark side,' confessed Captain Candage. 'You're going to find 'em all agin' ye ashore, sir. But the last words my Polly tells me to say to you was to keep up your courage and not to mind my growling. She thinks We have got a sure thing here--and that shows how little a girl knows about men's work!'

And yet, that one little message of good cheer from the main so comforted Mayo that he went on his way with the whimsical thought that girls who knew just the right time to give a pat and bestow a smile did understand man's work mighty well.

XXVIII ~ GIRL'S HELP AND MAN'S WORK

We know the tricks of wind and tide
That make and mean disaster,
And balk 'em, too, the Wren and me,
Off on the Old Man's Pastur'.
Day out and in the blackfish there
Go wabbling out and under,
And nights we watch the coasters creep
From light to light in yonder.
--The Skipper.

It was the period of January calms--that lull between the tempest ravings of the equinoxes, and the _Ethel and May_ made slow time of it on her return to the main. In Mayo's mood of anxious impatience, hope in his affairs was as baffling as the winds in the little schooner's sails.

His passenger sat on the rail and gave the pacing captain occasional glances in which irony and sullenness were mingled.

‘So you’re going to put me into court, eh?’ he inquired, when at last they drifted past the end of the breakwater at Limeport. ‘Well, that will give you a good excuse for throwing up your work on that wreck.’

Mayo kept on walking and did not reply. He had been pondering on the question of what to do with this new ‘elephant’ on his hands. In a way, this stranger was an unwieldy proposition to handle in conjunction with the problem of the ‘Conomo’.

‘Just understand that I don’t give a hoot in a scuttlebutt if you do turn me over to the police,’ pursued the man. ‘I’m going to be taken care of. So will you! You’ll be tied up! Courts like to have chief witnesses attend strictly to the job.’

The young man had only a sailor’s vague knowledge of the procedure of courts of law; but that knowledge and considerable hearsay had convinced him that law was lagging, exacting, and overbearing.

All his time, his best efforts, his presence were needed in the gigantic task he had undertaken at Razee. To allow himself to be mired in a law scrape together with this person, even in criminal prosecution of the man, surely meant delay, along with repeated interruption of his work, if not its abandonment for a time.

‘Where’s your boss?’ he demanded, stopping in front of the prisoner.

‘Name, please?’

‘Don’t try to bluff me. Fogg, I mean!’

‘You’ll probably find Mr. Fogg at the Nicholas Hotel.’

‘I’m going to walk you up there. If you try to run away--’

‘Run your Aunt Huldah! Piff, son! Now you’re showing sense. Take me to Mr. Fogg. You’ll be shown a few things.’

They had no difficulty in finding Mr. Fogg. He was in front of the fire in the office of the Nicholas, toasting his back and warming his slowly fanning palms, and talking to a group of men.

He affected non-recognition of Mayo when the young man asked, brusquely, if he might see him in private.

‘Certainly, sir. And your friend?’

‘Yes.’

The stranger, following up the stairs with Mayo, nudged his companion.

‘He’s a wonder! ‘And your friend?’’ he quoted with a chuckle. ‘No coarse work about that!’

Mayo had firmly decided in his mind that his present business was the only matter he would discuss with Fletcher Fogg. Even though the just wrath of an innocent man, ruined and persecuted, prompted him to assail this smug trickster with tongue, and even with fists, he bound himself by mental promise to wait until he had proofs other than vague words and his own convictions.

“And now--” invited Fogg, when he had closed the door of his room, waiting until his callers had entered.

“Yes, _now!” blurted Captain Mayo. “Not _then_, Mr. Fogg! We'll have that settled later, when I make you pay for what you did to me. This man here, you know him, of course! He tried to dynamite the _Conomo_. I caught him in the act. He is your man. He has made his boasts that he would be protected.”

Mr. Fogg turned a cold stare upon the man's appreciative grin.

“I never saw this person before, sir.”

“I know better!” Mayo leaped to a conclusion, and bluffed. “I can prove by men here in this city that you have been talking with him.”

“He may have been one of the persons who came to me asking for work on the wreck, providing my concern decided to salvage. But we concluded not to undertake the work, and I paid no attention to him. As far as any memory of mine is concerned, I never saw him before, I say.”

“You don't represent any salvage company,” insisted Mayo. “You have come here to interfere with anybody who tries to salvage that steamer.”

“What is your business with me, sir? Get somewhere!”

“I have come to show you this man. If you'll keep your hands off my affairs, shut your mouth, and stop telling men here that the plan to salvage is hopeless, I'll turn this man over to you. You know what I ought to do to you right here and now, Fogg,” he cried, savagely. “But I'm not going to bother--not now. I'm here to trade with you on this one matter.”

“I'm not interested.”

“Then I shall take this man to the police station and lodge my complaint. When criminal prosecution starts you'll see what happens to you.”

“Go as far as you like,” consented Mr. Fogg, listlessly. “You can't make me responsible for the acts of a person I don't know from Adam.”

“Is that your last word?”

“Of course it is!” snapped the promoter. “You must be a lunatic to think anything else.”

?Very well. May I use your telephone to call the police??

?Certainly.? Mr. Fogg lighted a cigar and picked up a newspaper.

?Just a moment before you use that 'phone,? objected the third member of the party. ?I want an understanding. You please step out of the room, Mayo.?

?Stay where you are,? commanded Fogg. ?I'll give no chance for any underhand work.? He scowled when the prisoner winked at him. ?This looks to me like a put-up job between you two.?

?There's nothing put up between us,? declared the man. ?There'd better be something put up between _you_ two. The thing can go about so far, where I'm concerned, and no farther. I want an understanding, I say!?

Fogg slapped open the pages of his newspaper.

?I have made my talk,? said Mayo.

?By gad, I'm not going to jail--not for anybody!?

Fogg removed his eye-glasses and gave the man a full, unblinking stare.

?Did you try to dynamite that wreck??

?Is that orders--orders to talk right out??

?Orders? I don't know what you mean, sir. I have asked you a plain question.?

?And you want an answer??

?Naturally.?

?What I tried to do didn't work--he was too quick for me. There, now, get together! He has made you a fair offer, Mr. Fogg. There's no need of my going to jail. I won't go!?

?You ought to go, for what you did!? commented Fogg, dryly.

?No, for what he didn't do--from your standpoint,? suggested Captain Mayo.

?And you have been boasting, eh?? Fogg kept up his disconcerting stare, with fishy eyes.

?I ain't going to let men walk over me and wipe their feet on me when I'm obeying orders.?

?Orders from whom, sir??

?Condemn it all, orders from men who can protect me by saying one word! I ain't going to stand all this riddle-come-ree business! Flat down,

now, Mr. Fogg, what say??

?Not a word! If what this fellow says is true, you ought to be in jail.?

?The advice is good. He'll be there very soon,? declared Mayo, starting for the telephone. Fogg replaced his eye-glasses and began to read.

?I'm ready to blow up!? warned the man. He hurried across the room and guarded the telephone with outspread arms.

?Both of you will be sorry if the police are called,? he cried. To Mayo, who was close to him, he mumbled, ?Damn him, if he dumps me like this you're going to be the winner!?

There was so much reality in the man's rancor that Mayo was impressed and seized upon the idea which came to him.

?We'll test your friend,? he whispered, clutching the man, and making pretense of a struggle. ?I'll fake a call. Keep wrestling.?

Fogg gave only indifferent attention to the affair in the corner of the room.

With one hand holding down the receiver-arm Mayo called; he was pushed about violently, but managed to say: ?Desk? Call police to hotel--lobby--at once!?

?Mr. Fogg,? pleaded the man, giving Mayo an understanding nudge with his elbow, ?ain't you going to give me a chance for a private talk??

?If you ever speak to me or try to see me again I'll have you arrested.?

?But you're dumping me.?

?Get out of this room, both of you! I don't want the police up here.?

Mayo clapped hand on his prisoner's shoulder and pushed him out.

?Go down-stairs slow,? protested the man. ?He is bound to come out and call me back! He's got to! He doesn't dare to dump me!?

?He dares to do anything,? stated Mayo, bitterly, ?including what he did to me and the _Montana_. I suppose you read about it--everybody else did.?

They walked leisurely, but Mr. Fogg's door remained closed. They waited in the office of the hotel. He did not appear.

?By Judas!? rasped the man, ?another two-spot torn up and thrown into the discard along with you! And I helped 'em do it to you! I'm coming across, Mayo! That telephone business was a mighty friendly trick to help me force him. I appreciate it! I was on board the _Montana_ that night you and she got yours! My name is Burkett--Oliver. I was there, though you didn't see me.?

?I heard you were there, afterward,? stated Captain Mayo, grimly.
?Captain Wass mentioned you!?

?And probably didn't give me much of a reputation. I can't help that! You needn't put one bit more trust in me, Captain Mayo, than you want to. I don't ask you to have any respect for me. But I want to tell you that when a man promises to back me and then turns round and dumps me so as to cover his own tracks, he will get his if I'm able to hand it to him! I'm generally dirty. I'm especially dirty in a case like that!?

?If you show me any favors, Mr. Burkett, I suppose I'll have to depend on your spite against Fogg instead of your affection for me. You see, I'm perfectly frank. But I have been fooled too much to place any trust in anybody.?

?I don't ask you to trust me. I know how the _Montana_ job was done. I'm not going to tell you right now. I'm going to make sure that I have been thrown down by Fogg. And if I have been--if he means it--I'm going to use you so that I can get back at him, no matter how much it helps you. I can be pretty frank myself, you understand!?

They were silent and looked at each other.

?Well?? inquired Burkett, sourly.

?Well, what?? asked Mayo, with as little show of liking.

?What about this police business--about your complaint against me??

?I'm not going to say anything about the case! You're free, as far as I'm concerned. I am ashore here to make a raise of money or credit. I can't spend any time in court, bothering with you.?

?I reckon you got your satisfaction out of that beating-up you gave me. I rather began to like you after that,? said Burkett, pulling one corner of his mouth into a grin that was a grimace. ?I'm going to stay at this hotel.?

?Fogg will see that our affair just now was a bluff. He will have you into camp once more.?

?You've got to take your chances on it, Mayo. What do you say??

?I'll take my chances.?

?By gad! sir, you're a square chap, and I'm not meeting many of that sort in these days! Let this thing hang. Before you leave the city, slip word to me here. I'll tell you the news!?

With that understanding they parted.

Three days later, acknowledging to himself that he was a thoroughly beaten young man, Mayo walked into the Nicholas Hotel. He had been

unable to secure either encouragement, money, or credit. There were parties who would back him in any attempt to junk the _Conomo_; but his proposition to raise her with the aid of the tribe of Hue and Cry made his project look like a huge joke and stirred hearty amusement all along the water-front. Everywhere he found proof of Fogg's neat work of discouragement. If a real salvaging company had turned the scheme down as impracticable, how could penniless amateurs hope? It was conceded in business and financial circles that they hoped because they were amateurs.

Mayo's outlook on his own strictly personal affairs was as dismal as his view of the Razee project in which his associates were concerned. He went to the hotel merely because he had promised Burkett that he would notify that modern buccaneer regarding any intended departure. He despondently reflected that if Fogg and Burkett had agreed again, the combination against him still existed. If they were persistently on the outs, Burkett was merely a discredited agent whose word, without proofs, could be as easily brushed away as his connection with Fogg in the matter of the _Conomo_. In fact, so Mayo pondered, he might find association with Burkett dangerous, because demands for consideration can be twisted into semblance of blackmail by able lawyers. He entertained so few hopes in regard to any assistance from Burkett that he was rather relieved to discover that the man was no longer a guest at the hotel.

?Has he left town??

?I suppose there's no secret about the thing,? explained the clerk. ?Mr. Fogg had the man arrested yesterday, for threatening words and actions. Something of that sort. Anyway, he is in jail and must give bonds to keep the peace.?

Mayo's flagging interest in the possibilities of Burkett as an aid in his affairs was a bit quickened by that piece of news, and he hurried up to the jail. If ever a captured and fractious bird of passage was beating wings against his cage's bars in fury and despair, Mr. Burkett was doing it with vigor. Mayo, admitted as a friend who might aid in quelling the disturbance that was making the deafened jailers and noise-maddened prisoners regret the presence of Mr. Burkett, found the man clinging to the iron rods and kicking his foot against them.

?It's the last thing he did before he left town, this what he has done to me. I can't give bonds. I don't know anybody in this city,? raved the prisoner.

?I'm afraid that I don't know the folks here very well, judging from my experiences trying to raise money,? stated Captain Mayo, after he had quieted Burkett. ?But I'll go out and see what I can do.?

After some pleading he induced a fish wholesaler to go to the jail with him and inspect Burkett as a risk in the matter of bonds. Mr. Burkett, being a man of guile, controlled his wrath and offered a presentable guise of mildness.

?But how am I going to know that he won't be hunting this enemy up as soon as I give bonds?? asked the fishman.

?Captain Mayo is tackling a job of wrecking, offcoast,? said Burkett, ?and I'm out of work just now and will go with him. I'll be a safe risk, all right, out there.?

?Does that go with you, Captain Mayo??

?Yes, sir.?

After the matter of bonds had been arranged before the commissioner, and when Burkett walked down the street with Mayo, the latter stopped on a corner.

?I'll have to leave you here, Burkett. I'm going aboard the schooner. We're sailing.?

?But how about your taking me??

?I was willing to help you lie that much, Burkett. I knew you did not intend to go with me.?

?I don't want to put you in bad with anybody after this, Captain Mayo. I need to keep away for a time where I won't be in danger of seeing Fletcher Fogg. If I meet him while I'm frothing like this, I'll kill him, even if it means the chair. Give me a lay aboard that steamer, no matter how bad your prospects are, and I'll be square with you. That's my man's word to you. I realize it isn't much of a word in your estimation--but there are some promises I can keep. I propose to help you get back at Fogg and his gang. That's reason enough for what I'm doing,? he pleaded, earnestly. ?You ought to see that yourself. I'm just as good a man with machinery as I am in the pilot-house. I won't set you back any!?

?All right, Mr. Burkett, come along,? agreed Mayo, curtly, without enthusiasm.

There was a fair wind for their departure and Mayo headed the schooner for Maquoit. The few words which Captain Candage had dropped in regard to Rowley's state of mind worried Mayo. His little edifice of hope was tottering to a fall, but the loss of the _Ethel and May_ meant the last push and utter ruin. He decided that he was in honor bound to preserve the schooner for the uses of the men of Hue and Cry, even if it meant abandonment of the _Conomo_ and going back to fishing. Without that craft they would be paupers once more.

The _Ethel and May_ sneaked her way into Maquoit harbor--if a schooner can be said to sneak. A breeze at nightfall fanned her along, and when her killick went down, the rusty chain groaned querulously from her hawse-hole.

Mayo rowed ashore and toiled his way up the little street to the widow's cottage. He was ashamed to meet Polly Candage--ashamed with the feelings

of a strong man who has put out every effort and has failed. But, somehow, he wanted to feel that sisterly grip of her hand and look down into those encouraging gray eyes. He remembered that in times past she had soothed and stimulated him. This time he did not come to her expecting to get new courage for further effort; he had exhausted all resources, he told himself. But in his bitter humiliation he needed the companionship of a true friend--yes, he felt, almost, that she was now the only friend he had left. His experiences with those whom he had before looked on as friends had made him feel that he stood alone.

She came running to him in the little parlor, her hands outstretched and her face alight.

He felt at first sight of her, and his face flushed at thought of his weakness, that he wanted to put his head on her shoulder and weep.

?You poor boy, things have not been going well!?

He choked, for the caress in her tones touched his heart. He patted her hands, and she sat down beside him on the old haircloth sofa.

?I've had a terrible week of it, Polly.?

Her sweet smile did not waver. The gray eyes stared straight into his.

?I have talked to 'em till my mouth has been parched and my tongue sore, and God knows my heart is sore. All they do is look at me and shake their heads. I thought I had friends alongshore--men who believed in me--men who would take my word and help me. I'll never be fooled again by the fellows who pat you on the back in sunny weather, and won't lend you an umbrella when it rains unless you'll leave your watch with 'em for security. And speaking of the watch,? he went on, smiling wistfully, for her mere presence and her unspoken sympathy had begun to cheer him, ?reminds me why I'm here in Maquoit. Oh yes,? he put in, hastily, catching a queer look of disappointment on her face, ?I did want to see you. I looked forward to seeing you after all the others had turned their backs on me. There's something wonderfully comforting in your face, Polly, when you just look at me. You don't have to say a word.?

?I do thank you, Boyd.?

?I hear that Rowley is getting uneasy about his schooner--wants to take it away from us. So I have sold my watch and all the other bits of personal things I could turn into cash, and am here to give him the money and tell him we're going back to fishing again.?

?You'll give up the steamer??

?Yes--and hopes and prospects and all. I've got to.?

?But if you could win!?

?I'll stay down where I belong. I won't dream any more.?

?Don't give up.?

?There's nothing else to do. We poor devils need something besides our bare hands.?

The girl struggled mightily with her next question, but he did not note her emotions, for his elbows were on his knees and he was staring at the rag carpet.

?Will it cost a lot of money for what you want to do on the steamer??

?We may need a lot before we can do it all. But I have been sitting up nights planning the thing, Polly. I have gone over and over it. When I was on board the steamer waiting for your father, I examined her as best I could.. If I had a little money, I could make a start, and after I started, and could show the doubters what could be done, I could raise more money then. I am sure of it. Of course the first investment is the most dangerous gamble, and that's why everybody is shy. But I believe my scheme would work, though I can't seem to get anybody else to believe it.?

?Will I understand if you'll tell me??

?I'd get a diver's outfit and material, and build bulk-heads in her, both sides of the hole in her bottom. Then I'd have an engine and pumps, and show that I could get the water out of her, or enough of it so that she'd float.?

?But the big hole, you wouldn't mend that??

?I think we could brace the bulkheads so that we could hold the water out of both ends of her and let the main hole in her alone.?

?And she wouldn't sink??

He was patient with the girl's un wisdom in the ways of the sea.

?Since you've been here at Maquoit, Polly, you have seen the lobster-smacks with what they call 'wells' in them. All amidships is full of water, you know--comes in through holes bored in the hull--fresh sea-water that swashes in and out and keeps the lobsters alive till they get to market. But the vessel is tight at both ends, and she floats. Well, that's what I plan to do with the Conomo. With a few thousand dollars I'm sure I can make enough of a start so I can show 'em the rest can be done.? He promptly lost the bit of enthusiasm he had shown while he was explaining. He began his gloomy survey of the carpet once more. ?But it's no use. Nobody will listen to a man who wants to borrow money on a wild hope.?

She was silent a long time, and gazed at him, and he did not realize that he was the object of such intent regard. Several times she opened her mouth and seemed about to address him eagerly, for her eyes were brilliant and her cheeks were flushed.

?I wish I had the money to lend you,? she ventured, at last.

?Oh, I wouldn't take it--not from a girl, Polly. No, indeed! This is a gamble for men--not an investment for the widow and orphan,? he declared, smiling at her. ?I believe in it; that's because I'm desperate and need to win. It's for a big reason, Polly!?

She turned her face away and grew pale. She flushed at his next words:

?The biggest thing in the world to me is getting that steamer off Razee and showing that infernal Marston and all his 'longcoast gang that I'm no four-flusher. I've got it in for 'em!?

He patted the hands she clasped on her knees, and he did not notice that she was locking her fingers so tightly that they were almost bloodless. He rose and started for the door.

?I'll go and pacify Rowley to-night, and be ready for an early start.?

?Boyd,? she pleaded, ?will you do me a little favor??

?Most certainly, Polly.?

?Wait till to-morrow morning for your business with Mr. Rowley.?

?Why?? He looked at her with considerable surprise.

?Because--well, because you are a bit unstrung, and are tired, and you and he might have words, and you might not use your cool judgment if he should be short with you. You know you are a little at odds with all the world just now!? She spoke nervously and smiled wistfully. ?I would be sorry to have you quarrel with Mr. Rowley because--well, father is a partner, and has already had words with him. Please wait till morning. You must not lose the schooner!?

?I'm too far down and out to dare to quarrel with Rowley, but I'll do as you say, Polly. Good night.?

?You're a good boy to obey a girl's whim. Good night.?

The moment his foot was off the last step of the porch she hurried to her room in the cottage and secured a little packet from her portfolio.

She heard the thud of his dory oars as she walked down the street. She was glad to know that he was safely out of the way.

Rowley's dingy windows shed a dim blur upon the frosty night. It was near time for him to close his store, and when she entered he was turning out the loafers who had been cuddling close to his barrel stove.

After a few moments of waiting the girl was alone with him.

?No, I don't want to buy anything, Mr. Rowley. I need your help. I ask you to help me to do a good deed.?

He pulled his spectacles to the end of his nose and stared at her doubtfully and with curiosity.

'If it's about the schooner, I'd rather do business with men-folks,' he said.

'This is business that only you and I can do, and it must be a secret between us. Will you please glance at this bank-book?'

He licked a thin finger and turned the leaves.

'Deposit of five thousand dollars and accrued interest,' he observed, resuming his inquisitive inspection of her animated countenance.

'My mother's sister left me that legacy. It's all my little fortune, sir. I want to loan that money to my father and Captain Mayo.'

'Well, go ahead, if you're fool enough to. I ain't your guardeen,' assented Deacon Rowley, holding the book out to her. 'But I advise you to keep your money. I know all about their foolishness.'

'My father wouldn't take it from me--and Captain Mayo wouldn't, either.'

'That shows they ain't rogues on top of being fools.'

'But I have faith that they can succeed and make a lot of money if they get a start,' she insisted. 'I see you do not understand, sir, what I need of you. I want you to lend them that money, just as if it came from you. I'll give you the book and a writing, and you can draw it.'

'No, ma'am.'

'Won't you help a girl who needs help so much? You're a Christian man, you say.'

'That's just why I can't lie about this money. I'll have to tell 'em I'm lending it.'

'You will be lending it.'

'How's that, miss?'

'For your trouble in the matter I'll let you collect the interest for yourself at six per cent. Oh, Deacon Rowley, all you need to do is hand over the money, and say you prefer not to talk about it. You're a smart business man; you'll know what to say without speaking a falsehood. You'll break my heart if you refuse. Think! You're only helping me to help my own father. He has foolish notions about this. You can say you'll let them have it for a year, and you'll get three hundred dollars interest for your trouble.'

'I don't believe they'll ever make enough to pay the interest--much less the principal.'

?Give them five thousand dollars and draw a year's interest for yourself out of my interest that has accrued.?

?Say, how old be you??

?I'll be twenty-two in June.?

Deacon Rowley looked at her calculatingly, fingering his nose.

?Being of age, you ought to know better, but being of age, you can do what you want to with your own. Do you promise never to let on to anybody about this??

?I do promise, solemnly.?

?Then you sign some papers when I get 'em drawn up, and I'll hand 'em the money; but look-a-here, if I go chasing 'em with five thousand dollars, I'll have 'em suspecting that I'm crazy, or something worse. It ain't like Rufus Rowley to do a thing of this sort with his money.?

?I know it,? she confessed, softening her frank agreement with an ingenuous smile. ?But Captain Mayo is coming to you to-morrow morning on business about the schooner, and you can put the matter to him in some way. Oh, I know you're so keen and smart you can do it without his suspecting a thing.?

?I don't know whether you're complimenting me or sassing me, miss. But I'll see it through, somehow.?

She signed the papers giving him power of attorney, left her bank-book with him, and went away into the night, her face radiant.

She threw a happy kiss at the dim anchor light which marked the location of the _Ethel and May_ in the harbor.

?I am helping you get the girl you love,? she said, aloud.

She went on toward the widow's cottage. Her head was erect, but there were tears on her cheeks.

XXIX ~ THE TOILERS OF OLD RAZEE

Hurrah! Hurrah! for Yankee wit.

Hurrah! Hurrah! for Cape Ann grit.

It's pluck and dash that's sure to win--?The _Horton's_ in!

The _Horton's_ in!?

--Old Locality.

Polly Candage, covering her emotions with that mask of demureness which nature lends to the weaker sex for their protection, received a

tumultuous Mayo next morning in the parlor of the cottage.

"I don't know how it has happened. I don't understand it," he exploded. "I didn't suppose anybody could blast money out of his pocket with dynamite--your father said it couldn't be done. But Deacon Rowley has loaned us five thousand dollars. Here's his check on the Limeport First National. Only charges six per cent. I'm so weak it was all I could do to walk up here."

"What did he say to explain it?" inquired Polly, with maiden's curiosity in learning to what extent of prevarication a deacon would go in order to make three hundred dollars.

"Wouldn't say much of anything. Handed out this check, said my indorsement on it would be enough for a receipt, and said your father and I could sign a joint note later--sometime--when he got around to it. Have you heard any rumor that the old fellow is losing his mind? But this check looks good!"

"Well, I think he's been pondering on the matter since father was here. In fact, Deacon Rowley has said a few things to me," said the girl, meeting Mayo's gaze frankly. "Not much, of course, but something that hinted he had a lot of confidence in both of you, seeing that you have used him nicely in the other business he has done with you. Sometimes, you know, these hard old Yankees take a liking to somebody and do things all of a sudden."

"This is sudden, all right enough," stated Mayo, scratching the serrated edge of the check across his palm as if to make sure it was real and not a shadow. "Yes, he told me not to mention the note to him till he said something to us about it himself, and to keep quiet about the loan. Didn't want others running to him with their schemes."

"And if I were in your place," advised the girl, "I wouldn't tell father where you got the money--not for a time. You know, he doesn't get along so very well with Deacon Rowley--old folks sometimes do quarrel so--and he might be worried, thinking the deacon had some scheme behind this. But you don't think that way, do you?"

"I have the money, and he hasn't asked me to sign any papers. There's no come-back there, far as I can see," declared the young man.

"Now what will you do?"

"Rush for Limeport, hire equipment--for I've cash to pay in advance for any leases--and get to that wreck and on to my job."

"Simply tell father you raised the money--from a friend! If he is worrying about anything, he doesn't work half as well. I'll ask God to help and bless you every hour in the day."

"Polly Candage," cried Mayo, taking her warm, plump hands, "there's something about you that has put courage and grit and determination in me ever since you patted my shoulder there in the old Polly. I have been

thinking it over a lot--I had time to think when I was out aboard that steamer, waiting.?

?There's only one girl for you to think about,? she chided.

His face clouded. ?And it's the kind of thinking that isn't healthy for a man with a normal mind. Thank the Lord, I've got some real work to think about now--and the cash to do that work with.? He fondled his pocket.

She went with him to the wharf, and when the schooner slid to sea behind Hue and Cry her white handkerchief gave him final salute and silent God-speed.

Captain Boyd Mayo, back in Limeport once more, was not the cowed, apologetic, pleading suppliant who had solicited the water-front machinists and ship-yard owners a few days before. He proffered no checks for them to look askance at. He pulled a wallet that was plethoric with new yellowbacks. He showed his money often, and with a purpose. He drove sharp bargains while he held it in view. He received offers of credit in places where before he had been denied. Such magic does visible wealth exert in the dealings between men!

He did not come across Fletcher Fogg in Limeport, and he was glad of that. Somebody informed him that the magnate had gone back to New York. It was manifest to Mayo that in his contempt Fogg had decided that the salvaging of the _Conomo_ intact had been relegated to the storehouse of dreams. His purpose would be suited if she were junked, so the young man realized. Only the _Conomo_ afloat, a successful pioneer in new transportation experiments alongcoast, would threaten his vested interests.

There had been wintry winds and intervening calms in the days since Mayo had been prosecuting his projects ashore. But by word of mouth from straying fishermen and captains of packets he had been assured that the steamer still stuck on Razee.

And when at last he was equipped he went forth from Limeport; he went blithely, although he knew that a Titan's job faced him. He kept his own counsel as to what he proposed to do with the steamer. He even allowed the water-front gossips to guess, unchallenged, that he was going to junk the wreck. He was not inviting more of that brazen hostility that characterized the operations of Fogg and his hirelings.

He was at the wheel of a husky lighter which he had chartered; the rest of the crew he supplied from his own men. The lighter was driven by its own power, and carried a good pump and a sturdy crane; its decks were loaded high with coal. The schooner was now merely convoy. It was an all-day trip to Razee, for the lighter was a slow and clumsy craft, but when Mayo at last made fast to the side of the _Conomo_ and squealed a shrill salute with the whistle, the joy he found in Captain Candage's rubicund countenance made amends for anxiety and delay.

?I knew you'd make a go of it, somehow,? vouchsafed the old skipper.

?But who did you have to knock down in a dark place so as to steal his money off'n him??

?That's private business till we get ready to pay it back, with six per cent, interest,? stated the young man, bluntly.

?Oh, very well. So long as we've got it I don't care where you stole it,? returned Candage, with great serenity. ?I simply know that you didn't get it from skinflint Rowley, and that's comfort enough for me. Let me tell you that we haven't been loafing on board here. We rigged that taakul you see aloft, and jettisoned all the cargo we could get at. It was all spoiled by the water. There's pretty free space for operations 'midships. I've got out all her spare cable, and it's ready.?

?And you've done a good job there, sir. We've got to make this lighter fast alongside in such a way that a blow won't wreck her against us. Spring cables--plenty of them--and we are sailors enough to know how to moor. But when I think of what amateurs we are in the rest of this job, cold shivers run over me.?

?That Limeport water-front crowd got at you, too, hey??

?Captain Candage, I have watched men more or less in this life. It's sometimes a mighty big handicap for a man to be too wise. While the awfully wise man sits back and shakes his head and figures prospects and says it can't be done, the fool rushes in, because he doesn't know any better, and blunders the job through and wins out. Let's keep on being fools, good and plenty, but keep busy just the same.?

And on that basis the rank amateurs of Razee proceeded with all the grit that was in them.

The men of Hue and Cry had plenty of muscle and little wit. They asked no questions, they did not look forward gloomily to doubtful prospects. The same philosophy, or lack of it, that had always made life full of merry hope when their stomachs were filled, taking no thought of the morrow, animated them now. Fate had given Mayo and his associate an ideal crew for that parlous job. It was not a question of union hours and stated wages; they worked all night just as cheerily as they worked all day.

An epic of the sea was lived there on Razee Reef during the weeks that followed.

The task which was wrought out would make a story in itself, far beyond the confines of such a narrative as this must be.

Bitter toil of many days often proved to be a sad mistake, for the men who wrought there had more courage in endeavor than good understanding of methods.

Then, after disappointment, hope revived, for further effort avoided the mistakes that had been so costly.

The brunt of the toil, the duty of being pioneer, fell on Mayo.

He donned a diving-suit and descended into the riven bowels of the wreck and cleared the way for the others.

On deck they built sections of bulkhead, and he went down and groped in the murky water, and spiked the braces and set those sections and calked the spaces between bulkhead and hull.

There were storms that menaced their lighter and drove the little schooner to sea in a welter of tempest.

There were calms that cheered them with promise of spring.

The schooner was the errand-boy that brought supplies and coal from the main. But the men who went ashore refused to gossip on the water-front, and the occasional craft that hove to in the vicinity of Razee were not allowed to land inquisitive persons on the wreck.

After many weeks the bulkheads were set and the pumps were started. There were three crews for these pumps, and their clanking never ceased, day or night. There was less water in the fore part; her bow was propped high on the ledges. The progress here was encouraging.

Aft, there were disasters. Three times the bulkhead crumpled under the tremendous pressure of the sea, as soon as the pumps had relieved the opposing pressure within the hull. Mayo, haggard, unkempt, unshorn, thin with his vigils, stayed underwater in his diving-dress until he became the wreck of a man. But at last they built a transverse section that promised to hold. The pumps began to make gains on the water. As the flood within was lowered and they could get at the bulkhead more effectively from the inside, they kept adding to it and strengthening it.

And then came the need of more material and more equipment, for the gigantic job of floating the steamer was still ahead of them.

Mayo felt that he had proved his theory and was now in a position to enlist the capital that would see them through. He could show a hull that was sound except for the rent amidships--a hull from both ends of which the trespassing sea was being evicted. With the money that would furnish buoying lighters and tugs and the massive equipment for floating her, he felt that he would be able to convert that helpless mass of junk into a steamer once more--change scrap-iron into an active value of at least one hundred and fifty thousand dollars.

And when he and Captain Candage had arrived at that hopeful and earnest belief, following days of tremulous watching of the work the pumps were doing, the young man went again to the main on his momentous errand.

As they sailed into Limeport, Mayo was a bit astonished to see green on the sloping hills. He had been living in a waking dream of mighty toil on Razee; he had almost forgotten that so many weeks had gone past.

When he went ashore in his dory from the schooner, the balmy breath of spring breathed out to him from budding gardens and the warm breeze fanned his roughened cheeks.

As he had forgotten that spring had come, so had he forgotten about his personal appearance. He had rushed ashore from a man's job that was now waiting for him to rush back to it. He did not realize that he looked like a cave-man--resembled some shaggy, prehistoric human; his mind was too full of his affairs on Razee.

When Captain Mayo strode down the main street of Limeport, it troubled him not a whit because folks gaped at him and turned to stare after him. He had torn himself from his gigantic task for only one purpose, and that idea filled his mind.

He was ragged, his hands were swollen, purple, cut, and raw from his diver's labors, his hair hung upon his collar, and a beard masked his face. They who thronged the streets were taking advantage of the first warm days to show their spring finery. The contrast of this rude figure from the open sea was made all the more striking as he brushed through the crowds.

Here and there he bolted into offices where there were men he knew and whom he hoped to interest. He had no fat wallet to exhibit to them this time. He had only his empty, swollen hands and a wild, eager, stammering story of what he expected to do. They stared at him, many of them stupidly, some of them frankly incredulous, most of them without particular interest. He looked like a man who had failed miserably; there was nothing about him to suggest success.

One man put the matter succinctly: "Look here, Mayo, if you came in here, looking the way you do, and asked me for a quarter to buy a meal with, I'd think it was perfectly natural, and would slip you the quarter. But not ten thousand--you don't look the part."

"What have my clothes got to do with it? I haven't time to think about clothes. I can't wear a plug hat in a diving-suit. I've been working. And I'm still on the job. The way I look ought to show you that I mean business."

But they turned him down. In half a dozen offices they listened and shook their heads or curtly refused to look into the thing. He had not come ashore to beg for assistance as if it were a favor. He had come feeling certain that this time he had a valuable thing to offer. His labors had racked his body, his nerves were on edge, his temper was short. When they refused to help he cursed them and tore out. That they allowed his personal appearance to influence their judgment stirred his fury--it was so unjust to his self-sacrificing devotion to his task.

He soon exhausted his circle of acquaintances, but the rebuffs made him angry instead of despondent. Thrusting rudely past pedestrians who were polite and sleek, he marched along the street, scowling.

And then his eyes fell on a face that gave a fresh stir to all the

bitterness that was in him.

He saw Fletcher Fogg standing outside the Nicholas Hotel. The day was bland, the spring sun was warming, but it was evident that Mr. Fogg was not basking contentedly; his countenance was fully as gloomy as that of Captain Mayo, and he chewed on an unlighted cigar and spat snippets of tobacco over the curb while he pondered.

Mayo was not in a mood to reason with his passion. He had just been battering his pride and persistence up against men whose manner of refusal showed that they remembered what Fletcher Fogg had said regarding the prospects of successful floating of the _Conomo_. There stood the ponderous pirate, blocking Mayo's way on the sidewalk, just as he had blocked the young man's prospects in life in the _Montana_ affair--just as he had closed avenues of credit. Mayo bumped against him and crowded him back across the sidewalk to the hotel's granite wall. He put his two raw, swollen hands on Fogg's immaculate waistcoat and shoved salt-stained, work-worn, and bearded face close.

Even then the promoter did not seem to recognize Mayo. He blinked apprehensively. He looked about as if he intended to summon help.

"You don't seem to have your iron wishbone in your pocket this time," growled the assailant. He jabbed his thumbs cruelly into Fogg's ribs.

"Gad! You're--you're Captain Mayo! I'll be cursed if I knew you till you spoke!"

"I managed to hold myself in the last time you saw me, Fogg. I was waiting. Now, damn you, I've got you!"

He was making reference merely to the physical grip in which he held the man. But Fogg seemed to find deeper significance in the words.

"I know it, Mayo," he whined. "That's why I'm down here. I have been wondering about the best way to get to you--to meet you right!"

"You got to me all right, you infernal renegade!"

"But, see here, Mayo, we can't talk this matter here on the street."

"There isn't going to be any talking!" The meeting-up had been so unexpected and Mayo's ire was so hasty that the young man had not taken thought of what he intended to do. His impulse was to beat that fat face into pulp. He had long before given up all hope that any appeal to Fogg as a man would help. He expected no consideration, no restitution.

"But there must be some talk. I'm here to make it. You have me foul! I admit it. But listen to reason," he pleaded. "It isn't going to do you any good to rave."

"I'm going to mash your face for you! I'll take the consequences."

"But after you do that, you still have got to talk turkey with me about

those papers.?

In spite of his fury, Mayo realized from Fogg's demeanor and his words that mere fear of a whipping was not producing this humility; there was a policeman on the corner.

?Don't talk so loud,? urged Fogg. ?Come up to my room where we can be private.?

Mayo hesitated, puzzled by his enemy's attitude.

?It's a word from the Old Man himself. He ordered me down here. It's from Marston!? whispered the promoter. ?I'm in a devil of a hole all around, Mayo.?

?Very well! I'll come. I can beat you up in your room more comfortably!?

?I'm not afraid of the beating! I wish that was all there was to it,? muttered Fogg. He led the way into the hotel and Mayo followed, getting a new grip on himself, conscious that there was some new crisis in his affairs, scenting surrender of some sort in Fogg's astonishing humility.

?Will you smoke?? asked Fogg, obsequiously, when they were in the hotel room.

?No!? He refused with venom. He saw himself in one of the long mirrors and had not realized until then how unkempt and uncouth he was. He was ill at ease when he sat down in a cushioned chair. For weeks he had been accustomed to the rude makeshifts of shipboard. In temper and looks he felt like a cave-man.

?I'm in hopes that we can get together on some kind of a friendly basis,? entreated Fogg, humbly. ?Simply fighting the thing over again won't get us anywhere. I had to do certain things and I did them. You spoke of my iron wishbone! Now about that _Montana_ matter--?

?I don't want any rehearsal, Mr. Fogg. What's your business with me??

?It's hard to start unless I can feel that you'd listen to some explanations and make some allowances. When a man works for Julius Marston he has to forget himself and do--?

?I have worked for Julius Marston!?

?But not in the finance game, Mayo!? There was a tremble in the promoter's voice. ?Men are only shadows to him when it's a matter of big finance. He gives his orders to have results produced. He doesn't stop to think about the men concerned. It's the figures on his books he looks at! He uses a man like he'd use a napkin at table!?

?As you used me! You have had good training!?

?Well, if the trick was passed on down, it's now being passed on up,? stated Fogg, despondently. ?I'm the goat, right now. Can't you view me

personally in this matter??

?I don't want to. I would get up and use these fists on you, sore as they are!?

?I'm afraid it's going to be a tough matter for us to settle,? sighed the promoter. ?I thought I had everything tied up in the usual way. Damn it, if it wasn't for a woman being mixed into it, the thing would have worked out all right!? He let his temper loose. ?You can never reckon on business when a woman sticks in her fingers! I don't care if you are in love with Marston's daughter, Mayo! She is like a lot of other cursed high-flier girls who have always had more time and money than is good for them. She is Trouble swishing petticoats! And you must have considerable of a mortgage on her, seeing that she has double-crossed her own father in order to pull your chestnuts out of the fire!?

Having not the least idea what Mr. Fogg was talking about, Mayo was silent.

?You're a cool one! I must hand it to you!? snapped the promoter.

?You'd better leave the name of Miss Marston out of this business with me, sir.?

?How in blazes can I leave it out, seeing what she has done??

And Mayo, not knowing what new outbreak had marked the activities of the incomprehensible young lady, resumed his grim silence, his own interests suggesting that watchful waiting would be his best policy.

?Well, what are you going to say about the papers?? demanded Fogg. ?We may as well get down to cases!?

?I'm not going to say anything.?

?You've got to say something, Mayo. This is too big a matter to fool with. If you are reasonable, you can help me fix it up--and that will help the girl. She's Mar-ston's daughter, all right, and her father understands how erratic she is and makes allowances for her freaks. But he can't stand for some things.?

At that moment curiosity was more ardent in Mayo than resentment, though Fogg's tone in regard to Alma Marston did provoke the latter emotion. It was evident that she had undertaken something in his behalf--had in some manner sacrificed her father's interests and her own peace of mind in order to assist the outcast. He wondered why he did not feel more joy when he heard that news. He remembered her promise to him when they parted, but he had erected no hopes on that promise. It had not consoled him while he had been struggling with his problems. He was conscious that his sentiments in regard to the whole affair were rather complex, and he did not bother to analyze them; he sat tight and stared at Mr. Fogg with non-committal blankness of expression.

?Have you the papers with you??

"No!" He added, "Of course not!"

"That's all right. It may be better, providing they are in a safe place. Now see here, Mayo! I'm not going to work any bluffs with you. I can't, under the circumstances. I don't know where Burkett went and--?"

"Burkett is with me on the _Conomo_. I'm not going to work any bluffs with you, either, Fogg!"

"I don't care where he is nor what he has told you. Any allegations from regular liars and men who have been fired can be taken care of in court, under the blackmail law. But in the case of those papers it's different. I'm open and frank with you, Mayo. We have been betrayed from inside the fort. Through some leak in the office that girl got hold of those papers. I don't know what your sense of honor is in such matters. I'm not here to appeal to it. Too much dirt has been done you to have that argument have any special effect. I'm open and frank, I say!" He spread his hands. "Probably she didn't half realize what she was doing! But now that you have the papers, you realize!"

Not by a flicker of an eyelid did Mayo betray his total ignorance of what Fogg referred to.

"I want to ask you, man to man," proceeded the emissary, "whether you propose to use those papers simply for yourself--to get back--well--you know!" He waved his hand. "Or are you going to slash right and left with 'em, for general revenge?"

"I haven't decided."

"It's a fair question I have asked. So far as you are concerned in anything which may be in those papers--and that's mostly my own reports--you will be squared and more, captain. You can have the _Triton_ with a ten-years' contract as master, contract to be protected by a bond, your pay two hundred and fifty dollars a month. Of course that trade includes your reinstatement as a licensed master and the dropping of all charges in the _Montana_ matter. There is no indictment, and the witnesses will be taken care of, so that the matter will not come up, providing you have enemies. This is man's talk, Mayo! You'll have to admit it!"

"There's another thing which must be admitted, Fogg! I have been disgraced, hounded, and persecuted. The men along this coast, the most of them, will always believe I made a mistake. You know what that means to a shipmaster!"

Mr. Fogg wiped the moisture off his cheeks with a purple handkerchief.

"You were put in devilish wrong. I admit it. I went too far. That's why Marston is making me the goat now. I shall be dumped if this matter isn't straightened out between us!"

"I was in this very room one day, Mr. Fogg, and saw how you dumped one

Burkett. You seemed to enjoy doing it. Why shouldn't I have a little enjoyment of my own??

?I had to dump him. He was a fool. He had bragged. I had to protect interests as well as myself. But you haven't anything to consider, right now, but your own profit.?

?Is that so?? inquired Mayo, sardonically. ?You seem to have me sized up as one of these mild and forgiving angels.?

?Now, look here, Mayo, don't let any fool notions stand in the way of your making good. It isn't sense; it isn't business! You have something we want and we're willing to come across for it.?

?What other strings are hitched on?? asked the young man, feigning intractability as his best resource in this puzzling affair.

?Well, of course you give up that fool job you're working on. Quit being a junkman!?

?I'm not a junkman. We're going to float the Conomo.?

?Mayo, talk sense! That job can't be done!?

?So you've been telling every outfitter and banking-man in this city, Fogg! But now you are talking to a man who knows better. And let me say something else to you. I'll do no business with the kind of a man you have shown yourself to be.?

?Don't be a boy, Mayo. I'm here with full powers. We'll take that wreck off your hands.?

?Want to kill her as she stands, do you??

?It's our business what we do with her after we pay our money,? declared Fogg, bridling.

?There's something more than business--business with you--in this matter.?

?Yes, I see there is! It's your childish revenge you're looking after. I'll give you ten thousand dollars to divide among that bunch of paupers. Send them along about their fishing, and be sensible.?

?It's no use for us to talk, Fogg. I see that you don't understand me at all. You ought to know better than to ask me to sell out myself and my partners.? He rose and started for the door.

?Partners--those paupers??

?They have frozen and sweat, worked and starved, with me out on Razee Reef, Fogg. They are partners.?

?What's your lay? What are the writings?? insisted the promoter,

following Mayo.

?Not the scratch of a pen. Only man's decency and honor. You and your boss haven't got money enough to buy--There isn't anything to sell!?

?But there are some things we can buy, if it has come to a matter of blackmail,? raged Fogg. ?Are you cheap enough to trade on a foolish girl's cursed butting into matters she didn't understand? You have been pawing those papers over. You know what they mean!?

Mayo turned and looked at the excited man.

?They have nothing to do with you or your affairs, the most of those papers,? sputtered Fogg. ?Mayo, be reasonable. We can't afford to have our holding companies shown up. The syndicate can get by that infernal Federal law if we work carefully.?

?Otherwise Marston and you and a few others might go to Atlanta, eh??

?It isn't too late to send you there.?

?You are worrying about those papers, are you??

?Of course I'm worrying about them! What do you suppose I'm down here for??

?You keep on worrying, Mr. Fogg! Come on into the little corner of hell where I have been for the last few months; the fire is fine!?

He yanked open the door and slammed it behind him, shutting off the promoter's frenzied appeals.

XXX ~ THE MATTER OP A MONOGRAM IN WAX

O come list awhile and you soon shall hear.
By the rolling sea lived a maiden fair.
Her father followed the sum-muggling trade
Like a warlike he-ro,
Like a warlike he-ro that never was aff-er-aid!
--The Female Smuggler.

Captain Mayo carried only doubts and discouragement back to the wreck on Razee. His doubts were mostly concerned with the matter of the documents which Mr. Fogg was seeking so insistently. Mayo himself had done a little seeking. He inquired at the post-office, but there was no mail for him. If no papers had been abstracted from the Marston archives, if this affair were some new attempt at guile on the part of Fogg, the promoter had certainly done a masterly bit of acting, Mayo told himself. He determined to keep his own counsel and wait for developments.

Two days later the developments arrived at Razee in the person of

Captain Zoradus Wass, who came a-visiting in a chartered motor-boat. He climbed the ladder, greeted his _protégé_ with sailor heartiness, and went on a leisurely tour of inspection.

?Something like a tinker's job on an iron kittle, son,? he commented.
?You must have been born with some of the instincts of a plumber. Keep on the way you're operating and you'll get her off.?

?I'll never get her off by operating as I am just now, Captain Wass. We are standing still. No money, no credit, no grub. I made a raise of five thousand and have spent it. I don't dare to go to the old skinflint again.?

?Well, why not try the heiress?? inquired the old skipper. ?You know I have always advised you strong about the heiress.?

?Look here, Captain Wass, I don't want to hear any more jokes on that subject,? objected the young roan, curtly.

?No joke to this,? stated the captain, with serenity. ?Let's step into this stateroom.? He led the way and locked the door.

?There's no joke, son,? he repeated, ?and I don't like to have you show any tartness in the matter. Seeing what friends we have been, I ain't taking it very kindly because you have been so mighty close-mouthed. I'm a man to be trusted. You made a mistake in not telling me. The thing 'most fell down between me and her!?

He frowned reproachfully at the astonished Mayo.

?She came expecting, of course, that I was about your closest friend, and when I had to own up that you have never mentioned her to me she thought she had made a mistake in me, and wasn't going to give me the thing!?

?What thing, and what are you talking about??

Captain Wass patted his coat pocket.

?I convinced her, and it was lucky that I was able to, for it's a matter where only a close and careful friend ought to be let in. But after this you mustn't keep any secrets away from me if you expect me to help you. However, you have shown that you can take good advice when I give it to you. I advised you to grab Julius Marston's daughter and, by thunder! you went and done it. Now--?

Mayo impatiently interrupted. Captain Wass was drawling, with manifest enjoyment of the part he was taking in this romance.

?You have brought something for me, have you??

?She is a keen one, son,? proceeded the captain, making no move to show the object he was patting. ?Hunted me up, remembering that I had you with me on the old _Nequasset_, and put questions to me smart, I can

tell you! You ought to have been more confidential with me.?

?Captain Wass, I can't stand any more of this nonsense. If you have anything for me, hand it over!?

?I have taken pains for you, traveled down here, four or five hundred miles, taking--?

?Yes, taking your time for the trip and for this conversation,? declared Mayo, with temper. ?I have been put in a mighty mean position by not knowing you had these papers.?

?Safe and sure has always been my motto! And I had a little business of my own to tend to on the way. I have been finding out how that fat Fogg snapped himself in as general manager of the Vose line. Of course, it was known well enough how he did it, but I have located the chap that done it for him--that critter we took along as steward, you remember.?

In spite of his anxiety to get into his hands the parcel in the old skipper's pocket, Mayo listened with interest to this information; it related to his own affairs with Fogg.

?I'm going to help the honest crowd in the Vose line management to tip over that sale that was made, and when the right time comes I'll have that white-livered clerk in the witness-box if I have to lug him there by the ears. Now, Mayo, that girl didn't say what was in this packet.?

He pulled out a small parcel which had been carefully tied with cords. ?She is in love with you, because she must be in love to go to so much trouble in order to get word to you. If this is a love-letter, it's a big one. Seems to be all paper! I have hefted it and felt of it consid'able.?

He held it away from Mayo's eager reach and investigated still more with prodding fingers.

?Hope she isn't sending back your love-letters, son. But by the look she had on her face when she was talking about you to me I didn't reckon she was doing that. Well, here's comfort for you!? He placed the packet in Mayo's hands.

The parcel was sealed with three neat patches of wax, and on each blob was imprinted the letters ?A M? in a monogram. Mayo turned the packet over and over.

?If you want me to step out, not feeling as confidential toward me as you used to, I'll do it,? proffered Captain Wass, after a polite wait.

?I'm not going to open this thing--not yet,? declared the young man. ?That's for reasons of my own--quite private ones, sir.?

?But I'd just as soon step out.?

?No, sir. Your being here has nothing whatever to do with the matter.?
He buttoned the packet into his coat pocket. He had little respect for

Fletcher Fogg's delicacy in any question of procedure; the promoter's animus in the matter of those papers was clear. Nevertheless, the agent had crystallized in bitter words an idea which was deterring Mayo: would he take advantage of a girl's rash betrayal of her father? Somehow those seals with her monogram made sacred precincts of the inside of the packet; he touched them and withdrew his hand as if he were intruding at the door which was closed upon family privacy.

"I suppose you'd rather keep your mind wholly on straight business, seeing what a bad position you're in," suggested Captain Wass. "Very well, we'll put love-letters away and talk about something that's sensible. It's too bad there isn't some tool we could have to pry open that Vose line sell-out. The stockholders got cold feet and slid out from under Vose after the _Montana_ was laid up."

"What has been done with her?"

"Nothing, up to now. Cashed in with the underwriters and are probably using the money to play checkers with on Wall Street. Maybe they're using her for a horrible example till they scare the rest of the independents into the combination."

"Have the underwriters sold?"

"Yes. She has been bid in--probably by some tinder-strapper of the big pirates. It's a wonder they let you get hold of this one."

"They thought she was spoken for. When they found that she wasn't, they sent Burkett out here to blow her up."

Captain Wass was not astonished by that information.

"Probably! All the talk which has been circulated says that you were junking her. I didn't have any idea you were trying to save her."

"We have been blocked by some busy talkers," admitted the young man.

"It's too bad the other folks can't do some talking and have the facts to back 'em up, son. Do you know what could be done if that syndicate could be busted? The old Vose crowd would probably hitch up with the Bee line folks. The Bee-liners are discouraged, but they haven't let go their charter. You wouldn't have to worry, then, about getting your money to finish this job, and you'd have a blamed quick market for this steamer as soon as she was off this reef."

The bulging packet seemed to press against Mayo's ribs, insistently hinting at its power to help.

"I am going back and have a talk with old man Vose about this steamer," said Captain Wass. "Now, son, a last word. I don't want to pry into any delicate matters. But I sort of smell a rat in those papers in your pocket. When she took 'em out of her muff all I could smell was violet. Do you think you've got anything about you that would help me--help us--help yourself?"

?No, sir; only what you see for yourself in this steamer's possibilities.?

?Very well; then I'll do the best I can. But confound this girl business when it's mixed into man's matters!? It was heartfelt echo of Mr. Fogg's sentiments.

Captain Wass departed on his chartered motor-boat, after eating some of the boiled fish and potatoes which made up the humble fare of the workers on Razee.

Mayo based no hopes on the promised intervention of the old skipper. He had been so thoroughly discouraged by all the callous interests on shore that he felt sure his project was generally considered a failure. When he was on shore himself the whole thing seemed to be more or less a dream. {*}

* When the steamer _Carolyn_ was wrecked on Metinic Rock a few years ago a venturesome young man, without money or experience in salvaging, managed to raise a few thousand dollars, bought the steamer for \$1,000 from a frightened junk concern, and after many months of toil, during which he was mocked at by experienced men, managed to float her. She was sold recently for \$180,000, and is now carrying cargoes to Europe.

They were reduced to extremities on board the _Conomo_. There was no more coal for the lighter's engine, equipment was disabled, parts were needed for worn machinery, Smut-nosed Dolph was pounding Hungryman's tattoo on the bottom of the flour-barrel, trying to knock out enough dust for another batch of biscuit.

Mayo had kept his promise and had not confided to Captain Candage the source of the loan which had enabled them to do what they had done. After a few days of desperate consideration Mayo sailed on the _Ethel and May_ for Maquoit.

He avoided the eyes of the villagers as much as was possible; he landed far down the beach from the house which was the refuge for the folks from Hue and Cry. In his own heart he knew the reason for this slinking approach: he did not want Polly Candage to see him in this plight. Her trust had been so absolute! Her confidence in him so supreme! In his mental distress he was not thinking of his rags or his physical unsightliness. He went straight to the store of Deacon Rowley and his looks startled that gentleman into some rather unscriptural ejaculations.

However, Deacon Rowley promptly recovered his presence of mind when Mayo solicited an additional loan. The refusal was sharp and conclusive.

?But you may as well follow your hand in the thing,? insisted Mayo.

?That's why I have come to you. I hated to come, sir. I have tried all other means. You can see how I have worked!? He spread his tortured

hands. ?Come out and see for yourself!?

?I don't like the water.?

?But you can see that we are going to succeed if we get more money. You have five thousand in the project; you can't afford to drop where you are.?

?I know what I can afford to do. I have always said, from the first, that you'd never make a go of it.?

At this statement Mayo displayed true amazement.

?But, confound it all, you lent us money! What do you mean by crawfishing in this way??

Deacon Rowley was visibly embarrassed; he had dropped to this vitally interested party a damaging admission of his real sentiments.

?I mean that I ain't going to dump any more money in, now that you ain't making good! I might have believed you the first time you came. I reckon I must have. But you can't fool me again. No use to coax! Not another cent.?

?Aren't you worried about how you're going to get back what you have already lent?? demanded Mayo, with exasperation.

?The Lord will provide,? declared Deacon Rowley, devoutly.

The young man stared at this amazing creditor, worked his jaws a few moments wordlessly, found no speech adequate, and stamped out of the store. He no longer dreaded to meet Polly Candage. He felt that he needed to see her. He was seeking the comfort of sanity in that shore world of incomprehensible lunacy; he had had experience with Polly Candage's soothing calmness.

She came out from her little school and controlled her emotions with difficulty when she saw his piteous condition.

?Let's walk where I can feel the comfort of green grass under my feet,? he pleaded; ?that may seem real! Nothing else does!?

By her matter-of-fact acceptance of him and his appearance and his mood she calmed him as they walked along.

?And even Rowley,? he added, after his blunt confession of failure, ?he has just turned me down. He won't follow his five thousand with another cent. The old rascal deserves to be cheated if we fail. He is telling me that he always believed we would never make good in the job. Is he crazy, or am I??

?Make all allowances for Deacon Rowley,? she pleaded. ?Keep away from him. He is not a consoling man. But there must be some way for you, Boyd. Let us think! You have been keeping too close to the thing--to

your work--and there are other places besides Limeport.?

?There's New York--and there's a way,? he growled.

?You must try every chance; it means so much to you!?

?Is that your advice??

?Certainly, Boyd!?

He stopped and pulled the sealed packet from his coat. In the stress of his despair and resentment he was brutal rather than considerate.

?There are papers in there with which I can club Julius Marston until he squeals. I haven't seen them, but I know well enough what they are. I can scare him into giving back all he has taken away from me. I can make him give back a lot to other folks. And from those other folks I can get money to finish our work on the _Conomo_. Look at the monogram on that seal, Polly!? He pointed grimy finger and held the packet close.

?From--Miss Marston?? she asked, tremulously.

?Yes, Polly.?

?And she is helping you??

?I suppose she is trying to.?

?Well, it's what a girl should do when she loves a man,? she returned. But she did not look at him and her lips were white.

?And you think I ought to use her help??

?Yes.? She evidently realized that her tone was a mere quaver of assent, for she repeated the word more firmly.

?But these papers are not hers, Polly. She stole them--or somebody stole them for her--from her own father,? he went on, relentlessly.

?She must love you very much, Boyd.?

They turned away from each other and gazed in opposite directions. He was wondering, as he had through many agonized hours, just what motive was influencing Alma Marston in those later days. With all his soul he wanted to question Polly Candage--to get the light of her woman's instinct on his troubled affairs; but the nature of the secret he was hiding put effective stopper on his tongue.

?Under those circumstances, no matter what kind of a sacrifice she has made for you, you ought to accept it, Boyd.?

?I want to accept it; every impulse in me says to go in and grab. Polly, hell-fire is blazing inside of me. I want to tear them down--the whole of them. I do! You needn't jump! But if I use those papers which that

girl has stolen from her father I'll be a dirty whelp. You know it, and I know it! Suppose you should tell me some secret about your own father so I could use it to cheat him out of his share of our partnership? You might mean all right, but after I had used it you would hate me! Now wouldn't you??

?Perhaps--probably I wouldn't hate you,? she stammered. ?But I'd think more of you if you--yes, I'm sure I'd think more of you if you didn't take advantage of my foolishness.?

?That's it, exactly! Any man, if I told him about this situation, would say that I'm a fool not to use every tool I can get hold of. But you understand better! I'm glad I came to talk with you. I have been dreadfully tempted. Your advice is keeping me straight!?

?I have not advised you, Boyd!?

?You don't need to use words! It's your instinct telling me what is right to do. You wouldn't think it was a square deal for me to use these papers, would you??

?If you love her so much that you're willing to sacrifice yourself and your work and--?

?Say it, Polly! I'm sacrificing your father, too! It's for a notion--not much else!?

?No, it must be because you love her so much. You are afraid she will think less of you if you take advantage of her. I think your stand is noble, Boyd!?

?I don't! I think it's infernal foolishness, and I wish the Mayo breed didn't have so much of that cursed stiff-necked conscience! Our family wouldn't be where it is to-day.? He spoke with so much heat that she turned-wondering eyes on him.

?But it's for her sake, Boyd! It's--?

?Nothing of the sort! That is, it isn't as you think it is.?

?I only think you love her.?

?I don't want you to say that--or believe it!? he raved. ?If you only knew--if I could tell you--you'd see that it's insulting my common sense to say that I'm in love with Alma Marston. I don't love her! I--I don't know just where I stand. I don't know what's the matter with me. I'm in the most damnable position a man can be in. And I'm talking like a fool. Isn't that so??

?I don't understand you,? she faltered.

?Of course you don't. I reckon I'm a lunatic. I'll be rolling over here and biting the grass next!?

His passion puzzled her. His flaming eyes, his rough beard, his rage, and all the uncouth personality of him shocked her.

"Boyd, what--whatever is the matter? I'm afraid."

"I don't blame you. I'm afraid of myself these days!" He shook his swollen fists over his head.

"It ought to encourage you because she is trying to help you!"

"Be still!" he roared. "You don't know what you're talking about. Help me! There are women who can help a man--do help a man, every turn he makes. There are other women who keep kicking him down into damnation even when they think they are helping. I'm not going to stay here any longer. I mustn't stay, Polly. I'll be saying things worse than what I have said. What I said about women doesn't refer to you! You are true and good, and I envy that man, whoever he is."

He started down the slope toward the beach.

"Are you going back to the wreck?" she asked, plaintively.

"To the wreck!"

"But wait!" She could not control either her feelings or her voice.

"I can't wait. I don't dare to stay another minute!"

She called again and he halted at a little distance and faced her. He was absolutely savage in demeanor and tone.

"Remember what I said about her! Don't insult my common sense! She is--Oh, no matter!" He shook his fists again and went on his way.

She stood on the hillside and watched him row out to the little schooner. And through her tears she did not know whether he waved salute to her with those poor, work-worn hands, or again shook his fists. He made some sort of a flourish over the rail of the quarter-deck. The grieving and mystified girl was somberly certain that his troubles had touched Mayo's wits.

XXXI ~ THE BIG FELLOW HIMSELF

Will had promised his Sue that this trip, if well ended,
Should coil up his ropes and he'd anchor on shore.
When his pockets were lined, why his life should be mended,
The laws he had broken he'd never break more.
--Will Watch.

They needed food, lease-money for their hired equipment was due, and the dependents at Maquoit must be looked after.

Pride and hope had inspired the crew at Razee to salvage the _Conomo_ intact. Material removed from her would immediately become junk to be valued at junk prices, instead of being a valuable and active asset on board. But there was no other resource in sight. No word came from Captain Wass; and Mayo had put little confidence in that possibility, anyway.

There was nothing else to do--they must sell off something on which they could realize quickly.

In the estimation of many practical men this procedure would have been a warrantable makeshift, its sole drawback being a sacrifice of values. But to the captains on Razee it seemed like the beginning of complete surrender; it was the first step toward the dismantling of the steamship. It was making a junk-pile of her, and they confessed to themselves that they would probably be obliged to keep on in the work of destruction. In the past their bitterest toil had been spiced with the hope of big achievement; the work they now set themselves to do was melancholy drudgery.

They brought the _Ethel and May_ alongside and loaded into her the anchors, chains, spare cables, and several of the life-boats. Mayo took charge of the expedition to the main.

The little schooner, sagging low with her burden, wallowed up the harbor of Limeport just before sunset, one afternoon. Early June was abroad on the seas and the pioneer yachting cruisers had been coaxed to the eastward; Mayo saw several fine craft anchored inside the breakwater and paid little attention to them. He paced the narrow confines of his quarter-deck and felt the same kind of shame a ruined man feels when he is on his way to the pawnshop for the first time. He had his head down; he hated to look forward at the telltale cargo of the schooner.

"By ginger! here's an old friend of yours, this yacht!" called Mr. Speed, who was at the wheel.

They were making a reach across the harbor to an anchorage well up toward the wharves, and were passing under the stern of a big yacht. Mayo looked up. It was the _Olenia_.

"But excuse me for calling it a friend, Captain Mayo," bawled the mate, with open-water disregard of the possibilities of revelation in his far-carrying voice.

A man rose from a chair on the yacht's quarter-deck and came to the rail. Though the schooner passed hardly a biscuit-toss away, the man leveled marine glasses, evidently to make sure that what he had guessed, after Mr. Speed's remark, was true.

Mayo felt an impulse to turn his back, to dodge below. But he did not retreat; he walked to his own humble rail and scowled up into the countenance of Julius Marston. The schooner was sluggish and the breeze was light, and the two men had time for a prolonged interchange of

visual rancor.

"I didn't mean to holler so loud, Captain Mayo," barked Oakum Otie, in still more resonant manner, to offer apology. "But seeing her, and remembering last time I laid eyes on her--"

"Shut up!" commanded the master. "I'll take the wheel. Go forward and clear cable, and stand by for the word!"

He looked behind, in spite of himself, and saw that a motor-tender had come away from the _Olenia_. It foamed along in the wake of the schooner. It circled her after it had passed, and kept up those manouvers until the schooner's anchor was let go. Then the tender came to the side and stopped. The mate and engineer in her were new men; Mayo did not know them. The mate tipped respectful salute and stated that Mr. Marston had sent them to bring Captain Mayo on board the yacht at once.

"My compliments to Mr. Marston. But I am not able to come."

They went away, but returned in a short time, and the mate handed a note over the rail. It was a curt statement, dictated and typewritten, that Mr. Marston wished to see Captain Mayo on business connected with the _Conomo_, and that if Captain Mayo were not able to transact that business Mr. Marston would be obliged to hunt up some other party who could do business regarding the _Conomo_. Remembering that he had the interests of others to consider, Mayo dropped into the tender, sullen, resentful, wondering what new test of his endurance was to be made, and feeling peculiarly ill-equipped, in his present condition of courage and temper, to meet Julius Marston.

The latter had himself under full restraint when they met on the yacht's quarter-deck, and Mayo was more fully conscious of his own inadequacy.

"Below, if you please, captain." He led the way, even while he uttered the invitation.

No one was visible in the saloon. In the luxury of that interior the unkempt visitor seemed especially strange, particularly out of place.

"You will excuse what has seemed to be my hurry in getting you over here, sir, but I take it that your sailing into this port just now coincides with the arrival of the Vose crowd in this city to-day."

Mr. Fletcher Fogg first, and now Mr. Fogg's employer, had given advance information which anticipated Mayo's knowledge. The young man had been having some special training in dissimulation, and he did not betray any surprise. He bowed.

"It's better for you to talk with me before you allow them to make a fool of you. I am prepared to take that steamer off your hands, as she stands, at a fair appraisal, and I will give bonds to assume all expenses of the suit brought by the underwriters."

"There has been no suit brought by the underwriters."

Mr. Marston raised his eyebrows. "Oh! I must remember that you are considerably out of the world. The underwriters make claim that the vessel was not legally surrendered by them. Have you documents showing release? If so, I'll be willing to pay you about double what otherwise I shall feel like offering. Take a disputed title in an admiralty case and it's touchy business."

Mayo remembered the haphazard manner in which the steamer had been transferred, and he did not reply.

Marston's manner was that of calm, collected, cool business; his air carried weight. More than ever did Mayo feel his own pitiful weakness in these big affairs where more than honest hard work counted in the final adjustment.

"How much did you pay your big lawyers to stir up this suit by the underwriters?" he blurted, and Marston's eyelids flicked, in spite of his impassivity. There was instinct of the animal at bay, rather than any knowledge, behind Mayo's question.

"Why should you suggest that I have anything to do with such a suit?"

"You seem almighty ready to assume all liability."

"I'm not here to have childish disputes with you, sir. This is straight business."

"Very well. What do you want?"

"Have you documents, as I have suggested?"

"I have my bill of sale. I take it for granted that the folks who sold to me are backed by papers from the underwriters."

"That's where you are in error, unfortunately. You are all made party to a suit. Time clause, actual abandonment, right of redemption--all those matters are concerned. Of course, it means injunction and long litigation. I suggested assuming liabilities and stepping in, because I am backed by the best admiralty lawyers in New York. I repeat the offer Mr. Fogg made to you."

"You admit that Mr. Fogg made that offer for you or your interests, do you?"

"Well, yes!" admitted Marston. "We allow Mr. Fogg to act for us in a few matters."

"I am glad to know it. There has been so much cross-tag going on that I have been a little doubtful!"

"Kindly avoid sarcasm and temper, if you please! Do you care to accept the offer?"

Mayo glared at the financier, looking him up and down. Furious hatred took away his power of sane consideration. He was in no mood to weigh chances, either for himself or for his associates. He doubted Marston's honesty of purpose. He knew how this man must feel toward the presumptuous fool who had dared to look up at Alma Marston; he was conscious that the magnate must be concealing some especial motive under his cold exterior.

Whether Marston was anticipating blackmail from Mayo's possession of the documents or had hatched up ostensible litigation in order to force the bothersome amateurs out of the _Conomo_ proposition, the young man could not determine; either view of the situation was equally insulting to those whom he made his antagonists.

"Well!" snapped the magnate, plainly finding it difficult to restrain his own violent hatred much longer in this interview. "Decide whether you will have a little ready cash and a good position or whether you will be kicked out entirely!"

"I don't want your money! You're trying to cheat me with fake law business even while you are offering me money! I don't want your job! I have worked for you once. I'll never be your hired man again."

"If I did not know that you have a better reason for standing out in this fashion, I'd say that you have allowed, your spite to drive you crazy, young man."

"What is that better reason?"

"Blackmail! You propose to trade on a theft."

Mayo struggled for a moment with an impulse that was almost frantic; he wanted to throw the packet in Marston's face and tell him that he lied. Again the young man felt that queer sense of helplessness; he knew that he could not make Marston understand.

"Mayo, I have tried to deal with you as if you were more or less of a man. I was willing to admit that my agents had injured you by their mistakes. I have offered a decent compromise. I have done what I hardly ever do--bother with petty details like this!"

That impulse to deliver the papers to Marston was then not so insistent; even Mayo's rising anger did not prompt him to do that. The wreck of a man's life and hopes dismissed flippantly as petty details!

"Seeing that I am not able to deal with you on a business man's basis, I shall handle you as I would handle any other thief."

Mayo turned to leave, afraid of his own desperate desire to beat that sneering mouth into shapelessness.

At the head of the companionway stood half a dozen sailors, armed with iron grate-bars.

"If those papers are on you, I'm going to have them," stated the financier. "If they are not on you, you'll be glad to tell me where they are before I get done with you."

The captive halted between the master and the vassals.

"I'm going to crucify my feelings a little more, Mayo," stated Marston. "Step forward here where those men can't hear. It's important."

Marston knocked softly on a stateroom door and his daughter came forth. She gasped when she saw this ragged visitor, and in her stare there was real horror.

"I haven't been able to sift this thing to the bottom. By facing you two, as I'm doing, I may be able to get the truth of the case," said Marston, with the air of a magistrate dealing with malefactors. "Now, Alma, I'll allow you a minute or two to use your tongue on this fine specimen before my men use their bars."

"I heard what my father offered you. You must take it."

"I have other men to consider--honest men, who have worked hard with me."

He trembled in their presence. Her appearance put sane thoughts out of his head and choked the words in his throat. He saw himself in a mirror and wondered if this were not a dream--if it had not been a dream that she had ever loved him.

He wanted to put out to her his mutilated hands which he was hiding behind him. He yearned to explain to her the man's side of the case. He wanted her to understand what he owed to the men who had risked their lives to serve him, to make her realize the bond which exists between men who have toiled and starved together.

"You have yourself to consider, first of all. Much depends. In your silly notions about a lot of paupers you are throwing my father's kindness in his face!"

He stammered, unable to frame coherent reply.

"Be sensible. You have no right to put a heap of scrap-iron and a lot of low creatures ahead of your personal interests."

There was malice in Marston's eyes. He saw an opportunity to make Mayo's position even more false in the opinion of the girl.

"I'll be entirely frank, Mayo. In spite of our personal differences, I want your services--I need them. I have found out that you're a young man of determination and plenty of ability. I'll put you ahead fast if you'll come over with me. But you must come clean. No strings on you with that other crowd."

"I can't sell 'em out. I won't do it," protested Mayo. He did not

exactly understand all the reasons for his obstinacy. But his instinct told him that Julius Marston was not descending in this manner except for powerful reasons, and that he was attempting to buy a traitor for his uses.

"How do you dare to turn against my father?"

"I--I don't know! Something seems to be the matter with me." He wrenched at his throat with his hand.

"And after what I did--my wicked foolishness--those papers--?"

"Go on! I propose to get to the bottom of this thing," declared Marston.

The young man drove his hand into his pocket, pulled out the sealed packet, and forced it into the girl's hands. Marston promptly seized it.

"You have not opened it?"

"No, sir."

"I did not open it, either," cried the girl. "I sealed it, just as it was tied up."

Marston ripped off the strings and the wax.

Outside a loud voice was hailing the yacht. "Compliments of Captain Wass to Captain Mayo, and will he please say when he is coming back aboard his schooner?"

The financier paid no attention; he was busy with the papers. His face was white with rage. He threw them about him on the floor.

"Every sheet is blank--it is waste-paper!" he shouted. "What confounded trick is this?"

"You'd better ask the man who gave that packet to your daughter," suggested Mayo. He seemed to be less astonished than Marston and the girl. "I might have known that your man, Bradish, would be that kind of a sneak."

"What do you know about Bradish being concerned in this?"

"I'm guessing it. Probably your daughter can say."

"I'll have no more of your evasions, Alma. I'm going to the bottom of this matter now. Did Bradish give you this packet?"

"Yes, father."

"How did it get to this man here?"

"I gave it to a man named Captain Wass."

Again they heard the voice outside. "I don't care if he is busy! I tell you to take word to Captain Mayo that he is wanted right away on his schooner. Tell him it's Captain Wass."

"The devil has sent that man along at about the right time," declared Marston. He strode to the companion-way. "Inform Captain Wass that he is wanted on board here! Hide those bars till he is below!"

He came back, raging, and stood between Mayo and the girl, who had seemed to find words inadequate during the short time they had been left together.

"I don't believe anything you tell me! There's an infernal trick, here. The papers are missing. Somebody has them."

His fury blinded his prudence.

He strode toward Captain Wass when the old mariner came stumping down the companionway.

"Is your name Wass?"

"Captain Wass, sir."

"You took papers from my daughter and brought them to this man!"

"Correct."

Marston stepped back and kicked at the blank sheets on the floor.

"Perhaps you can tell me if these are what you brought?"

Captain Wass stared long at Mayo, at the girl, and at the incensed magnate. Then he looked down at the scattered papers and scratched his head with much deliberation.

"Why don't you say something?" demanded Marston.

"I'm naturally slow and cautious," stated Captain Wass. He put on his spectacles, kneeled on the soft carpet, and examined the blank papers and the broken seals. He laid them back on the carpet and meditated for some time, still on his knees. When he looked up, peering over the edge of his spectacles, he paid no attention to Marston, to the latter's indignant astonishment.

"Vose and others are waiting for us at the hotel," he informed Captain Mayo, "and it's important business, and we'd better be tending to it instead of fooling around here."

"No matter about any other business except this, sir," cried Marston.

"There can't be much business mixed up in a lot of blank sheets of paper," snapped Captain Wass. "What's the matter?"

?I have lost valuable papers.?

The old skipper bent shrewd squint at the angry man who was standing over him. ?Steamer combination papers, hey??

?You seem to know pretty well.?

?Ought to know.?

?Why??

Captain Wass rose slowly, with grunts, and rubbed his stiff knees.

?Because I've got 'em.?

?Stole them from the package, did you??

?It wasn't stealing--it was business.?

?Hand them over.?

?I insist on that, too, Captain Wass,? said Mayo, with indignation.

?Hand over those papers.?

?Can't be done, for I haven't got 'em with me. And I won't hand 'em over till I have used them in my business.?

?I shall have you arrested,? announced Marston.

?So do. Sooner the whole thing gets before the court, the better.? His perfect calmness had its effect on the financier.

?What are you proposing to use those papers for??

?To make you pirates turn back the Vose line property and pay damages. As to the rest of your combination, the critters that's in it can skin their own skunks. I guess the whole thing will take care of itself after we get the Vose line back.?

?You are asking for an impossibility. The matter cannot be arranged.?

?Then we'll see how far Uncle Sam can go in unscrambling that particular nestful of eggs. I'll give the papers to the government.?

?Haven't you any influence with this man?? Marston asked the astounded Mayo.

?No, he hasn't--not a mite in this case,? returned Captain Wass. ?He needs a guardeen in some things, and I'm serving as one just now.?

?You must get them from him--you must, Captain Mayo,? cried the girl. ?I did not understand what I was doing.?

?I will get them.?

?I'd like to see you do it, son!?

He turned on the Wall Street man. ?I'm only asking for what is rightfully due my own people. I'm a man of few words and just now I'm sticking close to schedule. Until eleven o'clock to-night you'll find Vose, myself, and our lawyers at the Nicholas Hotel. After eleven o'clock we shall be in bed because we've got to get an early start for the wreck out on Razee. We're going to finance that job. And in case we don't come to terms with you tonight we shall use our club to keep you out of our business after this. You know what the club is.?

Marston was too busily engaged with Captain Wass to pay heed to his daughter. She went close to Mayo and whispered.

?You must quit them, Boyd. It's for my sake. You must help my father. They are wretches. Think of what it will mean to you if you can help us! You will do it. Promise me!?

He did not reply.

?Do you dare to hesitate for one moment--when I ask you--for my sake??

?That's my last word,? bawled Captain Wass. ?There's no blackmail about it--we're only taking back what's our own.?

?Are you one of those--creatures?? she asked, indignantly.

If she had shown one spark of sympathy or real understanding in that crisis of their affairs, if she had not been so much, in that moment, the daughter of Julius Marston, counseling selfishness, he might have fatuously continued to coddle his romance, in spite of all that had preceded. But her eyes were hard. Her voice had the money-chink in it. He started, like a man awakened. His old cap had fallen on the carpet. He picked it up.

?Good-by!? he said. ?I have found out where I belong in this world.?

And in that unheroic fashion ended something which, so he then realized, should never have been begun. He followed Captain Wass across the saloon.

?Better advise your buckos to be careful how they handle them grate-bars,? shouted Captain Wass. ?I'm loaded, and if I'm joggled I'm liable to explode.?

They were not molested when they left the yacht. The doryman who had brought Captain Wass rowed them to the wharf.

?Those papers--? Mayo had ventured, soon after they left the yacht's side.

?Not one word about 'em!? yelped the old skipper. ?It's my business--entire! When the time comes right I'll show you that it's my private business. I never allow anybody to interfere in that.?

That night, after the conference at the hotel, and after Julius Marston, growling profanity, had put his name to certain papers, drawn by careful lawyers, Captain Wass explained why the matter of the sealed packet was his private business. He took Marston apart from the others for the purpose of explaining.

‘I haven’t said one word to Vose or his associates about this business of the documents. They think you have come because you wanted to straighten out a low-down trick worked by an understrapper. So this has put you in mighty well with the Vose crowd, sir.’

Marston grunted.

‘It ought to be kind of pleasing to have a few men think you are on the square,’ pursued Captain Wass.

‘That’s enough of this pillycock conversation. Hand over those papers!’

‘Just one moment!’ He signaled to Captain Mayo, who came to them. ‘I’m going to tell Mr. Marston why those documents were my especial business to-day, and why you couldn’t control me in the matter. I may as well explain to the two of you at once. It was my own business for this reason: I don’t know anything about any papers. I never saw any. I never opened that package. I handed it along just as it was given to me. That’s true, on my sacred word, Mr. Marston; and I haven’t any reason for lying to you--not after you have signed those agreements.’

‘Come outside,’ urged the financier. ‘I want to tell you what I think of you.’

‘No,’ said the old skipper, mildly. ‘And I’d lower your voice, sir, if I were you. These men here have a pretty good idea of you just now, and I don’t want you to spoil it.’

‘You’re a lying renegade!’

‘Oh no! I have only showed you that all the good bluffers are not confined to Wall Street. There’s one still loose there. Your man Bradish probably had reasons for wanting to bluff your daughter--and save his own skin. He’ll probably hand your papers to you!’

Marston swore and departed.

‘I laid out that course whilst I was down on my knees in his cabin, sort of praying for a good lie in a time of desp’rit need,’ Captain Wass confided to Mayo. ‘It wasn’t bad, considering the way it has worked out.’

Cheer up, Jack, bright smiles await you
From the fairest of the fair,
And her loving eyes will greet you
With kind welcomes everywhere.
Rolling home, rolling home,
Rolling home across the sea.
Rolling home to dear old England,
Rolling home, dear land, to thee!
--Rolling Home.

There was no niggardliness in the trade the Vose folks made with Captain Mayo. They contracted to co-operate with him and his men in floating the steamship, repairing her in dry dock, and refitting her for her route. She would be appraised as she stood after refitting, as a going proposition, and Mayo was to receive stock to the amount of her value--stock in the newly organized Vose line.

"Furthermore," stated old man Vose, "we shall need a chap of just about your gauge as manager. You have shown that you are able to do things."

He was up on the _Conomo's_ deck after a long inspection of the work which had been done under difficulties.

"You would have had this steamer off with your own efforts if your money had lasted. Your next job is the _Montana_ ; but you'll simply manage that, Captain Mayo--use your head and save your muscle."

"I'll get her off, seeing that I put her on."

"We all know just how she was put on--and Marston will pay for it in his hard coin."

Under these circumstances Razee Reef was no longer a mourners' bench! The dreary days of makeshift were at an end.

The lighters of one of the biggest wrecking companies of the coast hurried to Razee and flocked around the maimed steamer--Samaritans of the sea. Gigantic equipment embraced her; great pumps gulped the water from her; bolstered and supported, as a stricken man limps with his arms across the shoulders of his friends, the steamer came off Razee Reef with the first spring tide in July, and toiled off across the sea in the wake of puffing tugs, and was shored up and safe at last in a dry dock--the hospital of the crippled giants of the ocean.

No music ever sounded as sweet to Captain Mayo as that clanging chorus the hammers of the iron-workers played on the flanks of the _Conomo_. But he tore himself away from that music, and went down to Maquoit along with a vastly contented Captain Candage, who remembered now that he had a daughter waiting for him.

She had been apprised by letter of their success and of their coming.

Maquoit made a celebration of that arrival of the _Ethel and May_, and Dolph and Otie, cook and mate of the schooner, led the parade when the

men were on shore.

They came back to their own with the full purses that the generosity of their employers had provided, and there was no longer any doubt as to the future of the men who once starved on Hue and Cry.

Captain Mayo had declared that he knew where to find faithful workers when it came time to distribute jobs.

Polly Candage had come to him when he stepped foot on shore, hands outstretched to him, and eyes alight. And when she put her hands in his he knew, in his soul, that this was the greeting he had been waiting for; her words of congratulation were the dearest of all, her smile was the best reward, and for her dear self he had been hungry.

But he would not admit to himself that he had come to woo.

When the soft dusk had softened the harsh outlines of the little hamlet, and the others were busy with their own affairs and had left Mayo and Polly to themselves, he sat with her on the porch of the widow's cottage, where they spent that first evening after they had been saved from the sea.

There had been a long silence between them. "We have had no opportunity--I have not dared yet to tell you my best hopes for the dearest thing of all," she ventured.

"The one up inland. I know. I am glad for you."

"What one up inland?"

"That young man--the only young man in all the world."

"Oh yes! I had forgotten."

He stared at her. "Forgotten?"

"Why--why--I don't exactly mean forgotten. But I was not thinking about him when I spoke. I mean that now--with your new prospects--you can go to--to--There may come a time when you can speak to Mr. Marston."

"I have spoken to Mr. Marston, quite lately. He has spoken to me," he said, his face hard. "We shall never speak to each other again, if I can have my way."

He met her astonished gaze. "Polly, I hate to trouble you with my poor affairs of this kind. I can talk of business to Mr. Vose, and of the sea to your father. But there's another matter that I can't mention to anybody--except you will listen. I will tell you where I saw Mr. Marston--and his daughter."

She listened, her lips apart.

"So, you see," he said at the end, "it was worse than a dream; it was

a mistake. It couldn't have been real love, for it was not built on the right foundation. I have never had much experience with girls. I have been swashing about at sea 'most all my life. Perhaps I don't know what real love is. But it seems to me it can't amount to much unless it is built up on mutual understanding, willingness to sacrifice for each other.?

?I think so,? returned Polly, softly.

?I want to see that young man of yours, up inland. I want to tell him that he is mighty lucky because he met you first.?

?Why??

?I can't tell you just why. It isn't right for me to do so.?

?But a girl likes to hear such things. Please!?

?Will you forgive me for saying what I shouldn't say??

?I will forgive you.?

?He's lucky, because if I didn't know you were promised and in love, I'd go down at your feet and beg you to marry me. You're the wife for a Yankee sailor, Polly Candage. If only there were two of you in this world, we'd have a double wedding.?

He leaped up and started away.

?Where are you going?? she asked, and there was almost a wail in her tones. ?No, he does not understand girls well,? she told herself, bitterly.

?I'm going down to Rowley's store to see if he will take his money back and let us save interest. He told me I'd have to keep the money for a year.?

She called to him falteringly, but with such appeal in her tones that he halted and stared at her.

?Couldn't you--Isn't it just as well to let the matter rest until--till--?

?Oh, there's no time like the present in money matters,? he declared, with a laugh, wholly oblivious, not in the least understanding her embarrassment, her piteous effort to bar her little temple of love's sacrifice so that he could not trample in just then.

His laugh was a forced one. He realized that if he did not hurry away from this girl he would be reaching out his arms to her, declaring the love that surged in him, now that he had awakened to full consciousness of that love; his Yankee reticence, his instinct of honor between men, were fighting hard against his passion; he told himself that he would not betray a man he did not know, nor proffer love to a girl who, so he

believed, loved another.

"May I not go with you?" she pleaded, restraining her wild impulse to run ahead of him and warn the deacon.

"Of course!" he consented, and they walked down the street, neither daring to speak.

They found Rowley alone in his store. He was puttering around, making ready to close the place for the night.

As they entered, the girl stepped behind Mayo and, catching the deacon's eye, made frantic gestures. In the half gloom those gestures were decidedly incomprehensible; the deacon lowered his spectacles and stared at her, trying to understand this wigwagging.

"I'd like to take up that loan and save the rest of the year's interest, Deacon Rowley," stated Mayo, with sailorly bluntness.

The girl was trying to convey to the deacon the fact that he must not reveal her secret. She was shaking her head. This seemed to the intermediary like direct and conclusive orders from the principal.

"No, sir, Captain Mayo! It can't be done."

"I don't call that a square deal between men, no matter what straight business may be."

Polly now signaled eager assent, meaning to make the deacon understand that he must take the money. But the deacon did not understand; he thought the girl affirmed her desire for straight business.

"You took it for a year. No back tracks, captain."

She shook her head, violently.

"No, sir! Keep it, as you agreed, and pay your interest."

"Deacon Rowley, you're an old idiot!" blazed the girl.

When the deacon yanked off his spectacles, and Captain Mayo turned amazed eyes to her, she put her hands to her face and ran out of the store, sobbing. She was only a girl! She had no more resources left with which to meet that situation in men's affairs.

Mayo's impulse was to follow, but the deacon checked him.

"I ain't going to be made a fool of no longer in this, even to make three hundred dollars," he rasped.

"A fool! What do you mean?"

"You go settle it with her."

?What has Polly Candage got to do with this business??

?It's her money.?

?You mean to say--?

?She drewed her money out of the bank, and horn-swoggled me into lying for her. What won't a girl do when she's in love with a fellow? If you 'ain't knowed it before, it's high time you did know it!?

That last remark of the deacon's had disgusted reference only to the matter of the money. But it conveyed something else to Captain Boyd Mayo.

He ran out of the store!

Far up the road he overtook her. She was hurrying home. When she faced him he saw tears on her cheeks, though the generous gloom of evening wrapped them where they stood. He took both her hands.

?Polly Candage, why did you risk your money on me?? he demanded.

?I knew you would succeed!? she murmured, turning her face away. ?It was an--a good investment.?

?When you gave it, did you--Were you thinking--Was it only for an investment, Polly??

She did not reply.

?Look here! This last thing ought to tie my tongue, for I owe everything to you. But my tongue won't stay tied--not now, Polly. I don't care if there is somebody else up-country. I ought to care. I ought to respect your--?

She pulled a hand free and put plump fingers on his lips. ?There is nobody up-country; there never has been anybody, Boyd,? she whispered.

He took her in his arms, and kissed her, and held her close.

?Will you tell me one thing, now? I know the answer, sweetheart mine, but I want to hear you say it. Why did you give me all your money??

She put her palms against his cheeks and spoke the words his soul was hungry for:

?Because I love you!?

THE END

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK BLOW THE MAN DOWN: A ROMANCE OF THE COAST ***

Updated editions will replace the previous one?the old editions will be renamed.

Creating the works from print editions not protected by U.S. copyright law means that no one owns a United States copyright in these works, so the Foundation (and you!) can copy and distribute it in the United States without permission and without paying copyright royalties. Special rules, set forth in the General Terms of Use part of this license, apply to copying and distributing Project Gutenberg? electronic works to protect the PROJECT GUTENBERG? concept and trademark. Project Gutenberg is a registered trademark, and may not be used if you charge for an eBook, except by following the terms of the trademark license, including paying royalties for use of the Project Gutenberg trademark. If you do not charge anything for cop