

A DREAM OF
THE NORTH SEA

JAMES RUDICUM

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NORTH SEA ***

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THE FLEET.

A DREAM OF THE NORTH SEA

BY

JAMES RUNCIMAN

AUTHOR OF

"PAST AND PRESENT," "AMONG THE NORTH SEA TRAWLERS,"
"SKIPPERS AND SHELLBACKS," ETC.

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To the Queen.

MADAM,

This book is dedicated to Your Majesty with the respectful admiration of one who is proud to have been associated with an effort to make the world more hopeful and beautiful for men who not long ago knew little hope and felt no beauty.

In the wild weather, when the struggle for life never slackens from hour to hour on the trawling grounds, the great work of the Mission to Deep Sea Fishermen, like some mighty Pharos, sheds light on the troubled darkness, and brave men, in hundreds, are thankful for its wise care and steady helpfulness.

Perhaps, of all the tribe of writers, I know most minutely the scope and significance of that Mission--"as well for the body as the soul"--of which Your Majesty is the Patron; and it is my earnest conviction that no event in your brilliant and beneficent reign could well be appraised at a higher value than the despatch of Hospital Cruisers to the smacksmen, which your gracious and practical sympathy has done so much to bring about.

Permit me to subscribe myself,

MADAM,

Your Majesty's most humble,

obedient Servant,

JAMES RUNCIMAN.

KINGSTON-ON-THAMES,

May 1, 1889.

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BOOK I.

CHAPTER I.

THE DREAMER.

So many of my dreams have come true, that I sometimes incline to believe that dreams are in reality the only truths. I fancy this dream, at any rate, will be fulfilled.

* * * * *

A hard gale rushed over a torn sea, and the drift was swept so that the moon was obscured with every fresh gust. High overhead a clear, steely sky was flecked here and there with fleecy white, and, ever and again, the moon slipped her mantle of cloud from her rounded shoulder, and looked around her with large, calm glances. But there was an evil-looking sky away to the eastward, and the black wreaths of cloud crept steadily upward, obscuring little by little the fair, glittering sky. The swift waves gathered volume, and soon their hollows were like great Panpipes through which the gale blew with many doleful sounds. Everything to be seen on sea or sky promised a wild night, and the powerful schooner yacht which was charging along over the running seas was already reefed down closely. Light bursts of spray came aboard aft like flying whiplashes, and the man at the wheel stolidly shook his head as the jets cut him. Right forward a slight sea sometimes came over with a crash, but the vessel was in no trouble, and she looked as if she could hold her own in a much worse breeze. I believe that only poets and landsmen are fond of bad weather; and the steersman occasionally threw a demure, quizzical glance at a young girl who was hanging on by one hand to the companion hatch. The wind had heightened her colour, and the chance gleams of the moon showed the girl's face as a flash of warm brightness in the chill dreariness of the night. It was a strange place and strange weather for a young lady to be out in, for the autumn was far advanced, and the deadly gales might be expected at any time; but this young person was in

no way discomposed. There was something almost weird in the sight of that glowing young face, placid amid the fitful drifts; the screaming gusts caught at tiny stray curls of her dark hair; the vessel advanced with short plunges, and the flashing broad stream went past with that eerie moan which always makes me think of dire things. The girl looked quietly forward, and it seemed as if her spirit was unmoved by the tumult. She looked almost stern, for her broad brows were a little bent, but her mouth was firm and kindly, and her very impassivity gave sign of even temper. I do not like the miniature style of portrait-painting, so I shall not catalogue the features of this girl in the orthodox fashion. She would have drawn your eye in any crowd, for she had that look of slight abstraction which always marks those who are used at intervals to forget material things; and the composed mouth and rather square chin hinted at a certain capacity for practical affairs. The storm stirred her blood, and she murmured at last, "Terrors take hold on him as waters; a tempest stealeth him away in the night. The east wind carrieth him away, and he departeth; and as a storm hurleth him out of his place."

I would have ventured to tell you a good deal about that young lady's character, had I never heard her speak another word. The association, the choice of words, the sombre music of the old English--all were enough to show the bent of her mind.

At last she turned, and said, "When do you think we shall sight them?"

The man at the wheel shouted, "Somewheres towards midnight, Miss. We're a-goin' through it middling smart, and we can always draw on them."

Then the girl went below into the warm glow of the saloon. A sweet-faced lady smiled softly, and said, "Is it poetry to-night, or a new scheme for regenerating everything?" The tone was caressing and half-admiring, and the younger lady's still smile in reply was like a revelation; it showed that she accepted banter, but was too serious to return it. Marion Dearsley and her aunt, Mrs. Walton, understood each other: the matron pretended to laugh at her niece's gravity, but the genuine relation between the pair was that of profound mutual

confidence and fondness.

The soft gleam of the lamps showed a very pleasant group in the roomy, comfortable saloon. A stout, black-bearded man lounged carelessly on a sofa, supporting himself with one huge hand as the vessel kicked awkwardly. He looked as if he had been born with a smile, and every line of his great face was disposed so as to express vast contentment and good-humour. You could not call him finely bred, but when he observed, in terrific bass tones, "Hah! Miss Dearsley, you have gazed on the what's-his-name; you love the storm; you find it fahscinating--oh! fahscinating; ah! fahscinating! I like an ignoble cabin and a pipe, but the what's-his-name is fahscinating--ah! fahscinating." His infectious good-humour was better than any graces. Then his pride in his phrases was very fine to behold, and he regarded his repetition of his sonorous adjective as quite an original thing in the way of pure rhetoric. Tom Lennard was by inheritance a merchant, by choice a philanthropist; he was naturally religious, but he could not help regarding his philanthropic work as a great frolic, and he often scandalized reformers of a more serious disposition. The excellent Joseph Naylor, who was never seen to smile, and who was popularly supposed to sleep in his black frock-coat and high stock, once met Tom on a platform. When Tom was introduced to the prim, beneficent Joseph his enthusiasm overcame him; he brought his colossal paw down on Mr. Naylor's shoulder so that the poor man showed signs of shutting up like a concertina inside the frock-coat; he squeezed Joseph's hand so fervently that the poor victim looked like a dentist's patient, and Thomas roared like an amiable Bull of Bashan, "Bah! Aw'm glad to see this day, sir. To think we should meet at last! Ah! fahscinating!--oh! fahscinating."

Mr. Naylor bore the shock like a true philosopher, but at home that evening he mildly observed, "My dear, our new ally, Mr. Lennard, is most friendly, most cordial, quite impressively cordial; but do you know I should not like to sign a cheque just now. His cordiality has had distinct effect on my joints, and I wish really that his left hand were lighter. Social intercourse can only be carried on with difficulty when you feel as if a large sack had fallen on you from the third

floor of a warehouse."

The good Joseph always drew back with a timid air of maidenly modesty when Tom approached him, and I quite sympathize with this bashfulness. It has never been my fortune to exchange courtesies with a large and healthy polar bear, so I cannot describe the operation, but I should imagine that Tom's salute would aid one's imagination.

This delightful rough diamond called on Miss Dearsley to choose the lee side, and then he addressed himself to a superb young fellow who was leaning against the wainscot, and easily following the pitching of the ship. "Look here, Ferrier, you can't find one bigot in this ship's company, but we've all had a lot of experience, and we find that religion's your only blasting-powder to break up the ugly old rocks that we used to steer among. We find that we must have a clear passage; we fix our charge. Whoof! there you are; good sailing-room; beeyootiful--oh! fahscinating."

"I quite follow you, and I sympathize with you so far as I am concerned personally; but when Fullerton persuaded me to come out I only thought of the physical condition of your people, and that is why I asked for Mr. Blair's yacht so that I might have a genuine, fair show. You see, I fear I am wanting in imagination, and the sight of physical pain touches me so directly, that I never can spare a very great deal of sympathy for that obscure sort of pain that I cannot see; I'm hand and glove with you, of course, and I shall go through with the affair to the finish; but you must doctor the souls, and let me attend to the bodies for the present."

The speaker was a powerful, broad fellow, with a kind of military carriage; his tall forehead was crossed by soft lines of tranquil thought, and he had the unmistakable look of the true student. Lewis Ferrier came south to Cambridge after he had done well at Edinburgh. He might have been Senior Wrangler had he chosen, but he read everything that he should not have read, and he was beaten slightly by a typical examinee of the orthodox school. Still, every one knew that Ferrier was the finest mathematician of his year, and there was much

muttering and whispering in academic corners when he decided at last to go in for medicine. He said, "I want something practical," and that was all the explanation he ever gave to account for his queer change. He took a brilliant medical degree, and he decided to accept a professorship of Biology before attempting to practise. His reasons for being out on the North Sea in an autumn gale will come out by degrees.

A gentle-looking man stepped up to Ferrier and laid a white hand on his arm. "We shall never interfere with you in the least degree, my dear Ferrier. We'll take such help as you can give. We need all we can get. When you are fairly in the thick of our work you will perhaps understand that we have vital need of religion to keep us up at all. You can't tell what an appalling piece of work there is before us; but I give you my word that if religion were not a vital part of my being, if I did not believe that God is watching every action and leading us in our blind struggles, I should faint at my task; I should long for extinction, though only cowards seek it of their own accord."

A quiet, short man broke in here. He had sat smiling softly as the talk went on. His face was gently humorous, and all the signs of a placid and pure life were there. This smiling philosopher said, "That's right, Fullerton. Ferrier's like my old mare used to be in the days when she was a little peacocky and fiery--she always wanted to rush her journeys. She steps soberly now. We'll teach him something before we've done with him. You know, my dear boy, you must understand that the greater number of these men are, well--uncultivated, do you understand. They're not so squalid, perhaps, as Lapps or Esquimaux, but they're mostly as dense. We've fought hard for a long time, and we're making some headway; but we can do little, and if we could not get at our men by religion we couldn't manage at all. I've brought you into a queer country, and you must be prepared for a pretty set of surprises. My sister and my niece have been out before, and I persuaded Mrs. Walton and Miss Dearsley to take a turn. As soon as my people have got over their troubles we'll all make a dead set at you, you audacious young materialist that you are." Then John Blair smiled gently once

more, and there was a certain pride visible as his sad eyes twinkled on his young favourite.

This company of kind folks were all of the sort called evangelical, and they were bound on a strange errand, the like of which had brought one of the men out to sea many times before. The yacht was now chasing one of the great North Sea trawling fleets, and Fullerton's idea was to let the gallant young doctor see something of the wild work that goes on among the fishing-boats when the weather is ugly.

The dark, solemn young lady sat very still while the men talked, and her face had that air of intense attention which is so impressive when it is not simulated. I think she was a spiritual relative of Joan of Arc and Madame Roland. It seems dreadful to say so, but I am not sure that she would not have played Charlotte Corday's part had occasion arisen. In low, full tones she asked, "Did no one ever work among the fishers before Mr. Fullerton found them out?"

"No one, except the fellows who sold vile spirits, my dear," said Blair.

"Not a single surgeon?"

"Not one. That's why we decided to kidnap Ferrier. We want to give him a proper school of surgery to practise in--genuine raw material, and plenty of it, and you must help us to keep him in order. Fancy his trying to convert us; he'll try to convert you next, if you don't mind!"

The girl paid no heed to the banter. She went on as if in a reverie.

"It is enough to bring a judgment on a nation, all the idle women and idle men. Mamma told me that a brewer's wife paid two thousand pounds for flowers in one month. Why cannot you speak to women?"

"We mustn't blame the poor ladies," said Fullerton: "how could they know? Plenty of people told them about Timbuctoo, and Jerusalem, and Madagascar, and North and South America, but this region's just a trifle out of the way. A lady may easily sign a cheque or pack a missionary's medicine-chest, but she could not come out here among dangers and filth and discomfort, and the men ashore are not much pluckier. No; in my experience of English people I've always found

them lavish with their help, only you must let them know what to help. There's the point."

"And you've begun, dear Mr. Fullerton, have you not?"

"Yes; but the end is far off. We were so late--so late in beginning, and I must pass away, and my place will know me no more; and many and many another will pass away. Oh, yes! we shall travel from gulf to gulf; but I think, sometimes, that my soul will be here on the wild nights. I must be near my men--my poor men!--and I'll meet them when their voyage is over."

The enthusiast spoke solemnly, and his queer diction somehow was not unbecoming or grotesque. I suppose George Fox and Savonarola did not use quite the ordinary language of their day and generation.

The doctor listened with a kind look on his strong face, and when the dark young girl quietly whispered "Amen!" our professor quite simply repeated the word.

Tom Lennard had been going through a most complicated series of acrobatic movements, and he now broke in--

"Ah! Harry Fullerton, if you're not an angel, you're pretty near one. Ah! that eloquence is of the most--the most--a kind of--ah! fascinating--oh-h-h! fascinating! But I believe this vessel has a personal spite against me, or else the sea's rising."

"It is, indeed," said Mr. Blair, who had peeped out from the companion. "We're actually running up to the fleet, and the rocket has gone up for them to haul trawls. It looks very bad, very bad. You're not frightened, Mrs. Walton, I hope?"

The reserved, silent lady said--

"Oh, no! Marion and I seem to take kindly to bad weather. I believe if she could wear a sou'-wester she would hang on to the rigging. It's her combative instinct. But I do hope there is no danger for the poor fishermen?"

Mr. Blair very quietly said--

"If their vessels were like ours there would be no fear. We haven't an

unsound rope or block, but many of the smacks are shockingly ill-found, and one rope or spar may cost a crew their lives if it's faulty. The glass has gone down badly, and we are in for a gale, and a heavy one. But my ship would be quite comfortable in the Bay of Biscay."

A trampling on deck sounded. "See if the ladies can look from the companion," said Tom Lennard. "The sight should be splendid. You and I must shove on oilskins, Blair, and see if we can keep our legs."

This was almost the end of the night's conversation. Those good mission-folks, as has been seen, contrived to get on without saying either clever things or bitter things, and persons who possess the higher intellect may fancy that this was a sign of a poor spirit. Perhaps; and yet I have read somewhere that the poor in spirit may not fare so very badly in the long run.

CHAPTER II.

THE BREEZE.

The spectacle on deck was appalling, and the sounds were appalling also. The blast rushed by with a deep ground note which rose in pitch to a yell as the gust hurled itself through the cordage; each sea that came down seemed likely to be the last, but the sturdy yacht--no floating chisel was she--ran up the steep with a long, slow glide, and smashed into the black hollow with a sharp explosive sound. Marion Dearsley might have been pardoned had she shown tremors as the flying mountains towered over the vessel. Once a great black wall heaved up and doubled the intensity of the murky midnight by a sinister shade; there came a horrible silence, and then, with a loud bellow, the wall burst into ruin and crashed down on the ship in a torrent which seemed made up of a thousand conflicting streams. The skipper silently dashed aft, flung his arms round Tom

Lennard, and pinned him to the mast; Mr. Blair hung on, though he was drifted aft with his feet off the deck until he hung like a totally new description of flying signal; the ladies were drenched by the deluge which rushed down below, and the steward, when he saw the water swashing about over his cabin floor, exclaimed with discreet bitterness on the folly of inviting ladies to witness such a spectacle as a North Sea gale.

Tom observed: "The grandeur is--ah! fascinating, but it's rather damp grandeur. It's only grandeur fit for heroes. Give me all my grandeur dry, if you please."

"Yes, sir," said the streaming skipper, "that was a near thing for you and me when she shipped it. If I hadn't been on the right side of the mast, both of us must have gone."

Dawn rose slowly; the sky became blotched with snaky tints of dull yellow and livid grey; the gale kept on, and the schooner was hove-to to meet a sea of terrifying speed and height. Two of the ladies were below, only craving to be left alone even by the stewardess; but the hideous fascination of the storm drew Marion Dearsley again and again, and she sheltered herself under the hatch, and looked with awe at the mad turmoil which could be seen astern. Here and there, far up on the rushing sides of the foaming mountains, stray smacks hung like specks; the schooner shipped very little water now, and Ferrier kept the deck with some difficulty. Events succeeded each other with the terrifying suddenness of shocking dreams, and when the skipper said, "Thank God for a good vessel under us, sir; many a good man has gone to meet his Maker this night," Ferrier had quite a new sensation, which I might almost say approached terror, were I not writing about an absolutely courageous fellow.

Still the series of moving accidents went on. A smack hove up under the stern of the schooner, and our skipper said gravely, "That Brixham man's mad to try sailing that vessel. If one puff comes any harder than the last, he'll be hove down." Then the skipper turned to look forward, and Ferrier followed him. A low, strangled moan made them both start and look down the companion.

Marion Dearsley, pointing with convulsively rigid arm, exclaimed, "The vessel-- oh, the poor men!"

That smack was hove down, and her main-sail was held by the weight of water.

"I expect we must carry away something, but I'm going down to him. Jump to the wheel, sir, and cast that lashing. When I wave, shove it hard a-starboard. That way, sir. The men and I must manage forrad. You must go below at once, Miss. Jim, shove those bolts in."

There was a shock, and Ferrier thought the mainsheet had parted; then three strongish seas hit the schooner until she shuddered and rolled under the immense burden. It was a fearful risk, but the vessel freed herself and drove to the smack. One man was hanging on over the starboard side which was hove up; the schooner swept on in cruel danger, and the skipper might well look stern and white. "We sha'n't save it," he growled. Then Ferrier groaned, "Oh, God," for the keel of the smack at last heaved up, and she went down, down, slowly down, while her copper showed less and less, till the last fatal sea completed the work of wrath and ruin.

Ferrier felt that sensation of sickness which I have so often seen shown by strong men. The skipper said: "We'll heave her to again. You'd better get below. Your pluck's all right, but an unlucky one might catch you, and you ain't got the knack of watching for an extra drop o' water same as us."

Lewis Ferrier went below and found all his friends looking anxious. Indeed, the clamour was deafening, and the bravest man or woman had good reason for feeling serious. Marion Dearsley looked at Ferrier with parted lips, and he could see that she was unable to speak; but her eyes made the dread inquiry which he expected. He bowed his head, and the girl covered her face with a tearing sob: "Oh, the fatherless! O Lord, holy and true, how long? Bless the fatherless!" The poor prostrate ladies in the further cabin added their moanings to that dreadful wail, and you may guess that no very cheerful company were gathered in that dim saloon. Of course they would have been swamped had not the skylights

been covered in, and the low light was oppressive. At six in the morning the skipper came with a grin and beckoned Mr. Blair into the crew's cabin.

"I pretended to laugh, sir," said he, "but it's not quite laughing now. The fog's coming over, and we're just going into cloud after cloud of it. Don't let either of the ladies peep up again on any account. I'm afeared o' nothing but collision, but it's regular blind man's holiday when one o' them comes down."

"I'll see my sister right, Freeman, and I'll come and try if I can have a peep from your ladder."

Then Blair saw a thing which always seems more impressive than anything else that can be witnessed at sea--except, perhaps, a snow-storm. A mysterious portent came rolling onward; afar off it looked like a pale grey wall of inconceivable height, but as it drew nearer, the wall resolved itself into a wild array of columns, and eddies, and whirlpools, and great full-bosomed clouds, that rolled and swam and rose and fell with maddening complexity. Then came a breath of deadly chillness, and then a horror of great darkness--a darkness that could be felt. The skipper himself took to the fore rigging, and placed one of the watch handy to the wheel; finally he called all hands up very quietly, and the men hung on anyhow. One drift after another passed by in dim majesty, and the spectacle, with all its desolation, was one never to be forgotten. After half an hour or so, Blair glanced up and noticed a dim form sliding down the shrouds; then the skipper rushed aft, for the helmsman could not see him, and then came a strange dark cloud of massive texture looming through the delirious dance of the fog-wreaths. First a flare was tried, then the bell was rung with trebled vigour.

"Down below, sir, and call all up. He's yawed into us."

Blair saw the shape of a large vessel start out in desperate closeness; and running through to the saloon, cried quickly, "All up on deck! Ferrier, Fullerton, Tom, lend a hand with the ladies."

A yell was heard above; the poor sick folk came out in piteously thin wrappings, moaning as they walked, and all the company got on deck just in time to see a big barque go barely clear.

The youngest girl fainted, and Marion Dearsley attended to her with a steady coolness that earned the admiration of her assistant--the doctor. The serried ranks of the wreaths ceased to pour on, and the worn-out landsfolk went below.

Right on into the next night the unwearied gale blew; significant lumps of wreckage drifted past the schooner, and two floating batches of fish-boxes hinted at mischief. The frightful sea made it well-nigh impossible for those below to lie down with any comfort; they hardly had the seaman's knack of saving themselves from muscular strain, and they simply endured their misery as best they could. The yelling of wind and the volleying of tortured water made general conversation impossible; but Tom went from one lady to another and uttered ear-splitting howls with a view of cheering the poor things up. Indeed, he once described the predicament as distinctly fascinating, but this example of poetic license was too much even for Thomas, and he withdrew his remark in the most parliamentary manner. Ferrier was more useful; his resolute, cheerful air, the curt, brisk coolness of his chance remarks, were exactly what were wanted to reassure women, and he did much to make the dreary day pass tolerably. His services as waiter-general were admirably performed, and he really did more by resolute helpfulness than could have been done by any quantity of exhortation.

He ventured to take a long view at sundown, and he found the experience saddening. The enormous chequered floor of the sea divided with turbulent sweep two sombre hollow hemispheres. Lurid red, livid blue, cold green shone in the sky, and were reflected in chance glints of horror from the spume of the charging seas. Cold, cold it was all round; cold where the lowering black cloud hung in the east; cold where the west glowed with dull coppery patches; cold everywhere; and ah! how cold in the dead men's graves down in the darkling ooze! Ferrier was just thinking, "And the smacksmen go through this all the winter long!" when the skipper came up.

"It'll blow itself out now, sir, very soon, and a good job. We've had one or two very near things, and I never had such an anxious time since I came to sea."

"I suppose we didn't know the real danger?"

"Not when we shipped that big 'un, sir. However, praise the Lord, we're all safe, and I wish I could say as much for our poor comrades. It'll take two days to get the fleet together, and then we shall hear more."

At midnight a lull became easily perceptible, and the bruised, worn-out seafarers gathered for a little while to hold a prayer-meeting after their fashion. They were dropping asleep, but they offered their thanks in their own simple way; and when Ferrier said, "I've just had a commonplace thought that was new, however, to me: the fishermen endure this all the year, and do their work without having any saloons to take shelter in," then Fullerton softly answered, "Thank God to hear you say that. You'll be one of us now, and I wish we could only give thousands the same experience, for then this darkened population might have some light and comfort and happiness."

And now let me close a plain account of a North Sea gale. When the weather is like that, the smacksmen must go on performing work that needs consummate dexterity at any time. Our company of kindly philanthropists had learned a lesson, and we must see what use they make of the instruction. I want our good folk ashore to follow me, and I think I may make them share Lewis Ferrier's new sensation.

CHAPTER III.

THE SECOND GALE.

In thirty-six hours the gale had fined off, and the scattered and shattered vessels of the fleet began to draw together; a sullen swell still lunged over the banks, but there was little wind and no danger. Fullerton said, "Now, Ferrier, we have an extra medicine-chest on board, besides Blair's stock, and you've seen the surgery.

You'll have plenty of work presently. After a gale like this there are always scores of accidents that can't be treated by rough-and-tumble methods. A skipper may manage simple things; we need educated skill. The men are beginning to know Blair's boat, and I wish we had just twelve like her. You see we've got at a good many of the men with our ordinary vessels, and that has worked marvels, but all we've done is only a drop in the sea. We want you fellows, and plenty of you. Hullo! What cheer, my lads! what cheer!"

A smack lumbered past with her mainsail gone, and her gear in a sadly tangled condition.

"Can you send us help, sir? We'm got a chap cruel bad hurt."

"We've got a doctor on board; he shall come."

[image]

FERRYING THE FISH--BAD WEATHER.

All round, the rolling sea was speckled with tiny boats that careered from hill to hollow, and hollow to hill, while the two cool rowers snatched the water with sharp dexterous strokes. After the wild ordeal of the past two days these fishers quietly turned to and began ferrying the fish taken in the last haul. While the boat was being got ready, Ferrier gave Mrs. Walton and Miss Dearsley an arm each, and did his best to convey them along the rearing deck. The girl said--

"Is that the steam-carrier I have heard of? How fearful! It makes me want to shut my eyes."

To Marion Dearsley's unaccustomed sight the lurching of the carrier was indeed awful, and she might well wonder, as I once did, how any boat ever got away safely. I have often told the public about that frantic scene alongside the steamers, but words are only a poor medium, for not Hugo, nor even Clark

Russell, the matchless, could give a fair idea of that daily survival of danger, and recklessness, and almost insane audacity. The skipper was used to put in his word pretty freely on all occasions, for Blair's men were not drilled in the style of ordinary yachtsmen. Freeman, like all of the schooner's crew, had been a fisherman, and he grinned with pleasing humour when he heard the young lady's innocent questions.

"Bless you, Miss, that's nothing. See 'em go in winter when you can't see the top of the steamboat's mast as she gets behind a sea. Many and many's the one I've seen go. They're used to it, but I once seen a genelman faint--he was weak, poor fellow--and we took aboard a dose of water that left us half-full. He would come at any risk, and when we histed him up on the cutter's deck, and he comes to, he shudders and he says, 'That is too horrible. Am I a-dreaming?' But it's all use, Miss. Even when some poor fellows is drowned, the men do all they can; and if they fail, they forget next day."

"Could you edge us towards the cutter, skipper?" said Fullerton.

"Oh, yes. Bear up for the carrier, Bill; mind this fellow coming down."

The beautiful yacht was soon well under the steamer's lee, and the ladies watched with dazed curiosity the work of the tattered, filthy, greasy mob who bounded, and strained, and performed their prodigies of skill on the thofts and gunwales of the little boats. Life and limb seemed to be not worth caring for; men fairly hurled themselves from the steamer into the boats, quite careless as to whether they landed on hands or feet, or anyhow. Fullerton exclaimed--

"Just to think that of all those splendid, plucky smacksmen, we haven't got one yet! I've been using the glass, and can't see a face that I know. How can we? We haven't funds, and we cannot send vessels out."

Miss Dearsley's education was being rapidly completed. Her strong, quick intelligence was catching the significance of everything she saw. The smack with the lost mainsail was drawing near, and the doctor was ready to go, when a boat with four men came within safe distance of the schooner's side.

"Can you give us any assistance, sir? Our mate's badly wounded--seems to

a' lost his senses like, and don't understand."

A deadly pale man was stretched limply on the top of a pile of fish-boxes. Mrs. Walton said--

"Pray take us away--we cannot bear the sight."

And indeed Marion Dearsley was as pale as the poor blood-smeared fisherman. Ferrier coolly waited and helped Tom and Fullerton to hoist the senseless, mangled mortal on deck. The crew did all they could to keep the boat steady, but after every care the miserable sufferer fell at last with a sudden jerk across the schooner's rail. He was too weak to moan.

"Don't take him below yet," said Ferrier. "Lennard, you help me. Why, you've let his cap get stuck to his head, my man. Warm water, steward."

The man was really suffering only from extreme loss of blood; a falling block had hit him, and a ghastly flap was torn away from his scalp. That steady, deft Scotchman worked away, in spite of the awkward roll of the vessel, like lightning. He cut away the clotted hair, cleansed the wound; then he said sharply--

"How did you come to let your shipmate lose so much blood?"

"Why, sir, we hadn't not so much as a pocket-handkerchief aboard. We tried a big handful of salt, but that made him holler awful before he lost his senses, and the wessel was makin' such heavy weather of it, we couldn't spare a man to hould him when he was rollin' on the cabin floor."

"Yes, sir; Lord, save us!" said another battered, begrimed fellow. "If he'd a-rolled agen the stove we couldn't done nothin'. We was hard put to it to save the wessel and ourselves."

"I see now. Steward, my case. This must be sewn up."

Ferrier had hardly drawn three stitches through, when one of the seamen fainted away, and this complication, added to the inexorable roll of the yacht, made Ferrier's task a hard one; but the indomitable Scot was on his mettle. He finished his work, and then said--

"Now, my lads, you cannot take your mate on board again. I'm going to

give him my own berth, and he'll stay here."

"How are we to get him again, sir?"

"That I don't know. I only know that he'll die if he has to be flung about any more."

"Well, sir, you fare to be a clever man, and you're a good 'un. We're not three very good 'uns, me and these chaps isn't, but if you haves a meetin' Sunday we're goin' to be here."

Then came the usual hand-shaking, and the two gentlemen's palms were remarkably unctuous before the visitors departed.

"Look here, Lennard, if I'd had slings something like those used in the troopships for horses, I should have got that poor fellow up as easily as if he'd been a kitten. And now, how on earth are we to lower him down that narrow companion? We must leave it to Freeman and the men. Neither of us can keep a footing. What a pity we haven't a wide hatchway with slings! That twisting down the curved steps means years off the poor soul's life.

The gentle sailors did their best, but the patient suffered badly, and Ferrier found it hard to force beef-tea between the poor fellow's clenched teeth.

Lucky Tom Betts! Had he been sent back to the smack he would have died like a dog; as it was, he was tucked into a berth between snowy sheets, and Tom Lennard kept watch over him while Ferrier went off to board the disabled smack. All the ladies were able to meet in the saloon now, and even the two invalids eagerly asked at short intervals after the patient's health. Lucky Tom Betts!

Marion Dearsley begged that she might see him, and Tom gave gracious permission when he thought his charge was asleep. Miss Dearsley was leaning beside the cot. "Like to an angel bending o'er the dying who die in righteousness, she stood," when she and Lennard met with a sudden surprise. The wounded man opened his great dark eyes that showed like deep shadows on the dead white of his skin; he saw that clear, exquisite face with all the divine fulness of womanly tenderness shining sweetly from the kind eyes, and he smiled--a very beautiful smile. He could speak very low, and the awe-stricken girl murmured--

"Oh, hear him, Mr. Lennard, hear him!"

The man spoke in a slow monotone "It's all right, and I'm there arter all. I've swoor, and I've drunk, and yet arter all I'm forgiven. That's because I prayed at the very last minute, an' He heerd me. The angel hasn't got no wings like what they talked about, but that don't matter; I'm here, and safe, and I'll meet the old woman when her time comes, and no error; but it ain't no thanks to me."

Then the remarkable theologian drew a heavy sigh of gladness, and passed into torpor again. Tom Lennard, in a stage whisper which was calculated to soothe a sick man much as the firing of cannon might, said--

"Well, of all the what's-his-names, that beats every book that ever was."

Tears were standing in the lady's sweet eyes, and there was something hypocritical in the startling cough whereby Thomas endeavoured to pose as a hard and seasoned old medical character.

Meanwhile Ferrier was slung on board the smack which hailed first, and his education was continued with a vengeance.

"Down there, sir!"

Lewis got half way down when a rank waft of acrid and mephitic air met him and half-choked him. He struggled on, and when he found his bearings by the dim and misty light he sat down on a locker and gasped. The atmosphere was heated to a cruel and almost dangerous pitch, and the odour!--oh, Zola! if I dared! A groan from a darkened corner sounded hollow, and Ferrier saw his new patient. The skipper came down and said--

"There he is, sir. When our topmast broke away it ketches him right in the leg, and we could do nothin'. He has suffered some, he has, sir, and that's true."

Ferrier soon completed his examination, and he said--

"It's a mercy I'm well provided. This poor soul must have a constitution like a horse."

An ugly fracture had been grinding for forty-eight hours, and not a thing could be done for the wretched fellow. Quickly and surely Ferrier set and strapped up the limb; then disposing the patient as comfortably as possible in an

unspeakably foul and sloppy berth, he said--

"Let that boy stand by this man, and take care that he's not thrown from side to side. I must breathe the air, or I shall drop down." When on deck he said, "Now, my man, what would you have done if you hadn't met us?"

"Pitched him on board the carrier, sir."

"With an unset fracture!"

"Well, sir, what could we do? None on us knows nothin' about things of that sort, and there isn't enough of Mr. Fullerton's wessels for one-half of our men. I twigged a sight on him as we run up to you, and I could a-gone on these knees, though I'm not to say one o' the prayin' kind."

"But how long would the carrier be in running home?"

"Forty-eight hours; p'raps fifty-six with a foul wind."

"Well, that man will have a stiff leg for life as it is, and he would have died if you hadn't come across me."

"Likely so, sir, but we don't have doctors here. Which o' them would stop for one winter month? Mr. Doctor can't have no carriage here; he can't have no pavement under his foot when he goes for to pay his calls and draw his brass. He'd have to be chucked about like a trunk o' fish, and soft-skinned gents don't hold with that. No, sir. We takes our chance. A accident is a accident; if you cops it, you cops it, and you must take your chance on the carrier at sea, and the workus at home. Look at them wessels. There's six hundred hands round us, and every man of 'em would pay a penny a week towards a doctor if the governors would do a bit as well. I'm no scholard, but six hundred pennies, and six hundred more to that, might pay a man middlin' fair. But where's your man?"

Ferrier's education was being perfected with admirable speed.

The yacht came lunging down over the swell, and Freeman shaved the smack as closely as he dared. The skipper hailed: "Are you all right, sir? We must have you back. The admiral says we're in for another bad time. Glass falling."

Ferrier sang out, "I cannot leave my man. You must stand by me somehow

or other and take me off when you can."

The ladies waved their farewells, for people soon grow familiar and unconventional at sea. Blair shouted, "Lennard's a born hospital nurse, but he'll overfeed your patient." Then amid falling shades and hollow moaning of winds the yacht drove slowly away with her foresail still aweather, and the fleet hung around awaiting the admiral's final decision. The night dropped down; the moon had no power over the rack of dark clouds, and the wind rose, calling now and again like the Banshee. A very drastic branch of Lewis Ferrier's education was about to begin.

Dear ladies! Kindly men! You know what the softly-lit, luxurious sick-room is like. The couch is delicious for languorous limbs, the temperature is daintily adjusted, the nurse is deft and silent, and there is no sound to jar on weak nerves. But try to imagine the state of things in the sick-room where Ferrier watched when the second gale came away. The smack had no mainsail to steady her, but the best was done by heaving her to under foresail and mizen. She pitched cruelly and rolled until she must have shown her keel. The men kept the water under with the pumps, and the sharp jerk, jerk of the rickety handles rang all night.

"She do drink some," said the skipper.

Ferrier said, "Yes, she smells like it."

Down in that nauseating cabin the young man sat, holding his patient with strong, kind hands. The vessel flung herself about, sometimes combining the motions of pitching and rolling with the utmost virulence; the bilge water went slosh, slosh, and the hot, choking odours came forth on the night. Coffee, fish, cheese, foul clothing, vermin of miscellaneous sorts, paraffin oil, sulphurous coke, steaming leather, engine oil--all combined their various scents into one marvellous compound which struck the senses like a blow that stunned almost every faculty. Oh, ladies, have pity on the hardly entreated! Once or twice Ferrier was obliged to go on deck from the fetid kennel, and he left a man to watch the sufferer. The shrill wind seemed sweet to the taste and scent, the

savage howl of tearing squalls was better than the creak of dirty timbers and the noise of clashing fish-boxes; but the young man always returned to his post and tried his best to cheer the maimed sailor.

"Does the rolling hurt you badly, my man?"

"Oh! you're over kind to moither yourself about me, sir. She du give me a twist now and then, but, Lord's sake, what was it like before you come! I doan't fare to know about heaven, but I should say, speakin' in my way, this is like heaven, if I remember yesterday."

"Have you ever been hurt before?"

"Little things, sir--crushed fingers, sprained foot, bruises when you tumbles, say runnin' round with the trawl warp. But we doan't a-seem to care for them so much. We're bred to patience, you see; and you're bound to act up to your breedin'. That is it, sir; bred to patience."

"And has no doctor been out here yet?"

"What could he du? He can't fare to feel like us. When it comes a breeze he wants a doctor hisself, and how would that suit?"

"Have you eaten anything?"

"Well, no, sir. I was in that pain, sir, and I didn't want to moither my shipmets no more'n you, so I closes my teeth. It's the breed, sir--bred to patience."

"Well, the skipper must find us something now, at any rate."

There was some cabbage growing rather yellow and stale, some rocky biscuit, some vile coffee, some salt butter, and one delicious fish called a "latchet." With a boldness worthy of the Victoria Cross, Lewis set himself to broil that fish over the sulphurous fire. He cannot, of course, compute the number of falls which he had; he only knows that he imbued his very being with molten butter and fishy flavours. But he contrived to make a kind of passable mess (of the fish as well as of his clothing), and he fed his man with his own strong hand. He then gave him a mouthful or two of sherry and water, and the simple fellow said--

"God bless you, sir! I can just close my eyes."
Reader, Lewis Ferrier's education is improving.

CHAPTER IV.

A NEAR THING.

Ferrier was anything but a fatalist, yet he had a happy and useful way of taking short views of life. In times of extreme depression he used to say to himself, "Things seem black just now, but I know when I get over the trouble I shall look over the black gap of misery and try to imagine what is on the other side." It is a good plan. Many a suicide would have been averted if the self-slain beings had chosen to take a short view instead of harbouring visions of huge banked-up troubles.

No young fellow was ever in a much more awkward position than that of Ferrier. The *Haughty Belle* smack, in spite of her highly fashionable name, was one of the ramshackle tubs which still contrive to escape the censure of the Board of Trade; and Bill Larmor, the skipper, skilful as he was, could not do himself justice in a craft that wallowed like a soaked log. Then poor Withers, the maimed man, was a constant care; all the labour of two hands at the pumps was of little avail, and, last of all, the unhappy little boy could hardly count at all as a help.

But the bricklayer's saying, "It's dogged as does it," holds all over the world, and brave men drive death and despair back to their fastnesses. Ferrier thought, "I'm all well except for the active inhabitants of the cabin. They seem to be colonizing my person and bringing me under cultivation; barring that I'm not so ill off. If I can ease my patient, that is something to the good." So he claimed the boy's assistance for the night, and determined to divide his time between soothing Withers and lending a hand on deck.

Skipper Larmor was composed, as men of his class generally are; you

rarely hear them raise their voices, and they seldom show signs of being flurried. As quietly as though he had been wishing his passenger good evening, he said--

"We're blowing away from them, sir, and we can't do much. I hope the yacht will be able to stand by us. Later on we'll show them a few flares, and if things get over and above bad I must send some rockets up."

"I'm mainly anxious about my man below. If we only had any kind of easy mattress for him I should not be so anxious, but he's thrown about, and every bad jerk that comes wakes him out of his doze. A healthy life-guardsmen would be helpless after one night like this!"

"As I said, sir; Lord, help us; we must bear what's sent."

The *Haughty Belle* became more and more inert, and the breeze grew more and more powerful. The Mediterranean is like a capricious woman; the North Sea is like a violent and capricious man. The foredoomed smack was almost like a buoy in a tideway; the sea came over her, screaming as it met her resistance, like the back-draught among pebbles. Ferrier found to his dismay that, even if he wanted to render any assistance, he was too much of a landsman to keep his feet in that inexorable cataract, and he saw, too, that the vessel was gradually rolling more and more to starboard. The pumps were mastered, and even on deck the ugly squelch, squelch of the mass of water below could be heard. Every swing of that liquid pendulum smote on our young man's heart, and he learned, in a few short hours, the meaning of Death.

Can a seaman be other than superstitious or religious? The hamper of ropes that clung round the mainmast seemed to gibber like a man in fever as the gale threaded the mazes; the hollow down-draught from the foresail cried in boding tones; it seemed like some malignant elf calling "Woe to you! Woe for ever! Darkness is coming, and I and Death await you with cold arms." Every timber complained with whining iteration, and the boom of the full, falling seas tolled as a bell tolls that beats out the last minutes of a mortal's life. The Cockney poet sings--

"A cheer for the hard, glad weather,
The quiver and beat of the sea!"

Shade of Rodney! What does the man know about it? If his joints were aching and helpless with the "hardness," he would not think the weather so "glad"; if the "beat of the sea" made every nerve of him quiver with the agony of salt-water cracks, I reckon he would want to go home to his bath and bed; and if the savage combers gnashed at him like white teeth of ravenous beasts, I take it that his general feelings of jollity would be modified; while last of all, if he saw the dark portal--goal of all mortals--slowly lifting to let him fare on to the halls of doom, I wager that poet would not think of rhymes. If he had to work!---- But no, a real sea poet does not work.

Ferrier was a good and plucky man, but the moments went past him, leaving legacies of fear. Was he to leave the kindly world? Oh! thrilling breath of spring, gladness of sunlight, murmur of trees, gracious faces of women! Were all to be seen no more? Every joyous hour came hack to memory; every ungrateful thought spoken or uttered was now remembered with remorse. Have you looked in the jaws of death? I have, and Ferrier did so. When the wheels of being are twirling slowly to a close, when the animal in us is cowed into stupor, then the spirit craves passionately for succour; and let a man be never so lightsome, he stretches lame hands of faith and gropes, even though he seem to gather but dust and chaff.

Roar on roar, volley on volley, sweep on sweep of crying water--so the riot of the storm went on; the skipper waited helplessly like a dumb drudge, and a hand of ice seemed to clutch at Ferrier's heart.

He went down to see Withers and found him patient as before.

"She du seem to have got a lot of water in her, sir. I never felt quite like this since once I was hove down. Say, here, sir."

The man spoke with a husky voice.

"If so be you has to try the boat, don't you mind me. If you try to shove me aboard you'll lose your lives. I've thought it round, and, after all, they say it's only three minutes."

"But, my man, we won't leave you; besides, she's not gone yet. A tub will float in a sea-way; why shouldn't the vessel?"

"I knows too much, sir, too much. Excuse me, sir, have you done what they call found Christ? I'm not much in that line myself, but don't you think maybe an odd word wouldn't be some help like in this frap? I'm passin' away, and I don't want to leave anything out."

Lewis slipped up on deck and signed for Larmor.

"Our man wants to pray. Don't you think we may all meet? You can do nothing more than let the vessel drift. Leave one hand here ready to show a flare, and come down."

"I don't much understand it, sir; but Bob and me will come."

Then, knee deep in water, the forlorn little company prayed together. I do not care to report such things--it verges on vulgarism; but I will tell you a word or two that came from the maimed man. "O Lord, give me a chance if you see fit; but let me go if any one is to go, and save my commerades. I've been a bad 'un, and I haven't no right to ask nothing. Save the others, and, if I have no chance in this world of a better life, give me a look in before you take me."

Who could smile at the gruff, innocent familiarity? A very great poet has said, "Consort much with powerful uneducated persons." Fellows like Withers make one believe this.

The prayer was not, perhaps, intelligent; but He who searches the hearts would rightly appraise those words, "I've been a bad 'un." Ferrier felt lightened, and he shook hands with Larmor before they once more faced the war of the night.

The fire was out, it was bitter chill, yet hope was left--a faint sparkle--but still a stay for the soul of the tempest-tossed men. The climax of the breeze seemed approaching at four o'clock; and, as Larmor said, "it couldn't be very

much worse." The skipper was then hanging as he best could to the mizen rigging; Lewis had his arms tightly locked on the port side round the futtock shrouds, and was cowering to get clear of the scourging wind. There was a wild shriek forward.

"Water, skipper!"

Lewis looked up. There it was, as high as the mast-head, compact as a wall, and charging with the level velocity of a horse regiment. The doctor closed his eyes and thought, "Now for the grand secret." Then came the immense pressure--the convulsive straining, the failing light, the noise in the ears. First the young man found himself crushed under some strangling incubus; then, with a shrieking gasp, he was in the upper air. But he was under a hamper of ropes that strung him down as if he were in a coop, and his dulled senses failed for a moment to tell what ailed him. At last, after seconds that seemed like ages, it dawned on him; the masts had snapped like carrots, both were over the side, and the hulk was only a half-sunken plaything for the seas to hurl hither and thither. Larmor? Gone! How long? These things chased each other through his dim mind; he slipped his arm out and crept clear; then a perception struck him with the force of a material thing; a return wave leaped up with a slow, spent lunge on the starboard side, and a black something--wreckage? No. A shudder of the torn nerves told the young man what it was. He slid desperately over and made his clutch; the great backwash seemed as though it would tear his arm out of the socket, but he hung on, and presently a lucky lift enabled him to haul Larmor on board! All this passed in a few flying instants, but centuries--æons--could not count its length in the anguish-stricken human soul.

I once knew a sailor who was washed through a port in a Biscay gale; the return sea flung him on board again. I asked, "What did you think?"

He answered, "I thought, 'I'm overboard.'"

"And when you touched deck again, what did you think?"

"I thought, 'Blowed if I'm not aboard again.'"

"Did the time seem long?"

"Longer than all my lifetime."

Not more than half a minute had passed since the hulk shook herself clear, but Larmor and Lewis had lived long. The doctor took out the handy flask and put it to the skipper's lips; the poor man's eyes were bright and conscious, but his jaw hung. He pointed to his chin, and the doctor knew that the blow of falling mast or wreckage had dislocated the jaw.

In all the wide world was there such another drama of peril and terror being enacted? Lewis's hands almost refused their office; he was unsteady on his legs, but he gathered his powers with a desperate effort of the will, and set the man's jaw. "Stop, stop! You mustn't speak. Wait." With a dripping handkerchief and his own belt Ferrier bound Larmor's jaw up; then for the first time he looked for the fellows forward.

Both gone! Oh! friends who trifle cheerily with that dainty second course, what does your turbot cost? Beckon it up by rigid arithmetic, and work out the calculation when you are on your knees if you can. All over the North Sea that night there were desolate places that rang to the cry of parting souls; after vain efforts and vain hopes, the drowning seamen felt the last lethargy twine like a cold serpent around them; the pitiless sea smote them dumb; the pitiless sky, rolling over just and unjust, lordly peer and choking sailor, gave them no hope; there was a whole tragedy in the breasts of all those doomed ones--a tragedy keen and subtle as that enacted when a Kaiser dies. You may not think so, but I know. Forlorn hope of civilization, they met the onset of the sea and quitted themselves like men; and, when the proud sun rose at last, the hurrying, plundering, throbbing, straining world of men went on as usual; the lovers spoke sweet words; the strong man rejoiced exceedingly in his strength; the portly citizen ordered his fish for dinner, and the dead fishermen wandered hither and thither in the dark sea-depths, their eyes sealed with the clammy ooze.

That is an item in the cost of fish which occurs to a prosaic arithmetician.

Lewis Ferrier had certainly much the worst so far in his defensive battle with wind and wave. Here was a landsman on a swept hulk with a dumb captain,

a maimed man; two hands overboard, and a boy as the available ship's company. Never mind. He got Larmor below, and the dogged skipper made signs by hissing and moving his fist swiftly upward. "The rockets?" Larmor nodded, and pointed to a high locker. Lewis found the rockets easily enough; he also found a ginger-beer bottle full of matches; but of what use would matches be in that torrent of blown spray? The cabin was worse awash than ever, and there was no possibility of making a fire. Ferrier felt in his inside breast pocket. Ah! the tin box of fusees was there--all dry and sound inside. He beckoned Larmor, and signed to him expressively; then he crouched under the hatch and pressed the flaming ball to the root of the rocket. One swing, and the rushing messenger was through the curtain of drift, and away in the upper air. Larmor clapped his poor hands and bowed graciously. Two minutes, three minutes, five minutes they waited; no reply came. With steadiness born of grim despair the doctor sent away another rocket. With fiercely eager eyes he and Larmor strove to pierce the lashing mist, and then!--oh, yes, the long crimson stream flew, wavered in the gale, and broke into scattered star-drift. Larmor and the doctor put their arms round each other and sobbed. Then they told poor death-like Withers, and his wan eyes flickered with the faint image of a smile. Ferrier gave him the remainder of the wine, and the helpless seaman patted his benefactor's hand like a pleased child.

The gale dropped as suddenly as it had risen, but it left an immense smooth sea behind, for the whole impetus of two successive breezes had set the surface water hurling along, and it mostly takes a day to smooth the tumult down.

To say that the *Haughty Belle* was in danger would be to put the matter mildly; the wonder was that she did not settle sooner. The only hope was that the wind might bring the signalling vessel down before it fell away altogether.

Larmor pointed to the boat (which had remained sound for a mercy), and the doctor saw that he wanted her got ready. He sung out to the boy, "Ask Withers to steady himself the best way he can, and you come up and tell me how to clear the boat." Only one of the wire ropes needed to be thrown off; then the

boy squeaked shrilly, "Make the painter fast to a belaying-pin for fear a sea lifts the boat over," and then Ferrier was satisfied. His strength was like the strength of madness, and he felt sure that he could whirl the boat over the side himself without the aid of the falls. His evolutions while he was working on the swashing deck were not graceful or dignified, but he was pleased with himself; the fighting spirit of Young England was roused in him, and, in spite of numbing cold, the bite of hunger, and all his bruises, he sang out cheerily, "Never mind, skipper; I'll live to be an old salt yet."

Only one quarter of an hour passed, and then a vessel came curtseying gracefully down.

"What's that?" shouted Ferrier.

Larmor pointed to the questioner.

"Do you mean it's the yacht?"

The skipper nodded. The doctor would have fallen had he not brought all his force to bear; the strain was telling hard, and soon Lewis Ferrier's third stage of education was to be completed.

The schooner swam swiftly on, like a pretty swan. Ah! sure no ship come to bear the shipwrecked men to fairyland could have seemed lovelier than that good, solid yacht. Right alongside she came, on the leeward quarter of the hulk. *Four* ladies were on deck.

"Ah! the invalid ghosts are up. *That* ship hasn't suffered very much," said Lewis.

When Tom Lennard caught sight of Ferrier he gathered his choicest energies together for the production of a howl. This vocal effort is stated by competent critics to have been the most effective performance ever achieved by the gifted warbler. He next began a chaste but somewhat too vigorous war-dance, but this original sign of welcome was soon closed by a specially vindictive roll of the vessel, and Thomas descended to the scuppers like another Icarus.

Ah! blessed sight! The boat, the good, friendly faces of the seamen; and

there, in the stern sheets, the pallid, spiritual face of Henry Fullerton, looking, as Ferrier thought, like a vision from a stormless world of beatified souls.

"Two of you men must come and help to lug my patient up."

Could you only have seen that gallant simpleton's endurance of grinding pain, and his efforts to suppress his groans, you would have had many strange and perhaps tender thoughts. Mr. Blair was watching the operations from the yacht, and he said--

"Yes, Lennard, the doctor is right; we need a hospital here. Look at that poor bundle of agonies coming over the side. How easy it would be to spare him if we only had the rudiments of proper apparatus here! Yes, we must have a hospital."

Tom answered: "Yes, and look at the one with the head broken. He'll suffer a bit when he jumps."

And indeed he did, but he bore the jar like the Trojan that he was--the good, simple sea-dog.

"Hurry away now, all. I wouldn't give the poor old *Belle* another half-hour," said the mate.

In a minute or two the cripples were safe, and Ferrier was in the power of Blair and Lennard, who threatened to pull his bruised arms away. The two gentlemen pretended to be in an uproarious state of jollity, and to hear them trying to say, "Ha! ha!" like veritable war-horses, while the tears rolled down their cheeks, was a very instructive experience.

And now I must speak of a matter which may possibly offend the finer instincts of a truly moral age. Mrs. Walton totally forgot matronly reserve; she stepped up to Mr. Ferrier, and, saying, "My brave fellow" (it is a wicked world, and I must speak truth about it)--yes, she said, "My brave fellow!" and then she kissed him! Blair's sister, Mrs. Hellier, was more Scotch in accent than her brother, and she crowned the improprieties of this most remarkable meeting by giving the modest young savant two kisses--I am accurate as to the number--and saying, "My bonny lad, you needn't mind me; I have three sons as big as

yourself." Then the battered hero was welcomed by two joyous girls, and the young Scotch niece said, "We fairly thought you were gone, Mr. Ferrier, and all of us cried, and Miss Dearsley worst of all."

Half dazed, starving, weary to the edge of paralysis, the young doctor staggered below, ate cautiously a little bread and milk, bathed himself, and ended this phase of his lesson with an ecstatic stretch on a couch that was heavenly to his wrenched limbs. Before he sank over into the black sleep of exhausted men, he saw Henry Fullerton's beautiful eyes bent on him. The evangelist patted the young doctor's shoulder and said, "God has sent a sign to show that you are a chosen worker; you durst not reject it; you have gone through the valley of the shadow of death, and you must not neglect the sign lest you displease the One who made you His choice. I've heard already what the men say about you. Now sleep, and I'll bring you some soup when you wake."

Like all the men who move the world, Fullerton was a practical man doubled with a mystic. A mystic who has a wicked and supremely powerful intellect may move the nations of men and dominate them--for a time--yes, for a time. Your Napoleon, Wallenstein, Strafford have their day, and the movement of their lips may at any time be the sign of extinction for thousands; the murder-shrieks of nations make the music that marks their progress; strong they are and merciless. But they lean on the sword; they pass into the Night, leaving no soul the better for their tremendous pilgrimage.

But the good mystic plants influences like seed, and the goodly growths cover the waste places of the earth with wealth of fruit and glory of bloom. I think of a few of the good mystics, and I would rather be one of them than rule over an empire. Penn, George Fox, and General Gordon--these are among the salt of the earth.

So the young man slept on, and the good folk who had come through peril as well, talked of him until I think his dreams must have been coloured with their praises. The wounded seamen were carefully bestowed, and Tom Betts crawled out to greet them.

When Marion went down to see Withers, she said, "I was so grieved to see how you had to be thrown about; but never mind, I have made up my mind that very few more men shall suffer like that. Now sleep, and the doctor shall see you when he has rested--at least, I know he will."

Then Withers took Miss Dearsley's hand in his brown, ragged, cracked paw, and kissed it--which is offence number three against the proprieties. But then you know the soldiers used to Miss Florence Nightingale's shadow! Didn't they?

CHAPTER V.

AFTER THE STORMS.

It was very pleasant on the third day that followed the gale; the sky once more took its steel-grey shade, the sharp breezes stole over gentle rollers and covered each sad-coloured bulge with fleeting ripples. That blessed breeze, so pure, so crisp, so potently shot through with magic savours of iodine and ozone, exhilarates the spirits until the most staid of men break at times into schoolboy fun. Do you imagine that religious people are dull, or dowie, as the Scotch say? Not a bit of it. They are the most cheerful and wholesome of mortals, and I only wish my own companions all my life had been as genial and merry. How often and often have I been in companies where men had been feeding--we won't say "dining," because that implies something delicate and rational. The swilling began, and soon the laughter of certain people sounded like the crackling of thorns under a pot, and we were all jolly--so jolly. The table was an arena surrounded by flushed persons with codfishy eyes, and all the diners congratulated themselves on being the most jovial fellows under the moon. But what about next morning? At that time your thoroughly jovial fellow who despises saintly milksops is usually a dull, morose, objectionable person who

should be put in a field by himself. Give me the man who is in a calmly genial mood at six in the morning.

That was the case with all our saintly milksops on board the yacht. At six Blair and Tom were astir; soon afterwards came the ladies and the other men, and the company chatted harmlessly until the merry breakfast hour was over; their palates were pure; their thoughts were gentle, and, although a Cape buffalo may be counted as rather an unobtrusive vocalist in comparison with Mr. Lennard, yet, on the whole, the conversation was profitable, and generally refined. Tom's roars perhaps gave soft emphasis to the quieter talkers.

In the middle of the bright, sharp morning the whole of our passengers gathered in a clump aft, and desultory chat went on. Said Blair, "I notice that the professor's been rather reticent since we mariners rescued him."

"I am not quite a hero, and that last night on the *Haughty Belle* isn't the kind of thing that makes a man talkative. Then that poor silly soul down below gave me a good deal to think about. He must have suffered enough to make the rack seem gentle, and yet the good blockhead only thought of telling us to leave him alone in case the vessel went. Did you ever know, Miss Dearsley, of a man doing such a thing before? And you see he hasn't said anything since he came aboard, except that he never knowed what a real bed was afore. These things take me. We spend hundreds of thousands on the merest wastrels in the slums, and the finest class that we've got are left neglected. I would rather see every racecourse loafer from Whitechapel and Southwark blotted out of the world than I would lose ten men like that fellow Withers."

Marion Dearsley said, "I don't think the neglect is really blameworthy. For instance, I'm sure that my uncle knows nothing about what we have seen in the last few days. He is charitable on system, and he weighs and balances things so much that we tease him. He never gives a sixpence unless he knows all the facts of the case, and I'm sure when I tell him he'll be willing to assist Mr. Fullerton. Then I'm as ignorant as my uncle. I can guess a great deal, of course, but really I've only seen about half a dozen men, after all. It's terrible to watch the ships in

bad weather, but for our purpose--I mean Mr. Fullerton's purpose--we might as well have been looking at Stanfield's pictures."

"Never mind. You fascinate your uncle, Miss Dearsley, and we'll show you what we can do. What do you think, Miss Ranken?"

Miss Lena Ranken, Mr. Blair's niece, creased her brow in a little wrinkle; "I'm not sure that I know anything; Marion there studies questions of all sorts, but an ordinary girl has to do without knowledge. I know that when auntie and I were wishing you would drop us over into the water, I thought of the men who use the same damp bed for two months instead of having changes and all that."

"What is your idea now, Ferrier, about the business? I'm not asking you for a gratis lecture, but I want to see how far you would go."

"Well, frankly, at present I think that Fullerton's the best guide for all of us. I should be a mock-modest puppy if I pretended not to know a good deal about books, because books are my stock-in-trade; but I've just seen a new corner of life, and I've learned how little I really know. Head is all well in its way; a good head may administer, but great thoughts spring from the heart."

"Very good, Professor. Oh, bee-yootiful! Great thoughts spring from the heart."

Fullerton broke in with dreamy distinctness, "I think the doctor will agree with me that you must never frame a theory from a small number of instances. I never even ventured to hint what I should like to any of our friends until I had been at sea here for a long time. I'm convinced now that there is much misery all over the fishing banks, and I have a conviction that I shall help to remove it. I am called to make the effort, but I never listen to sentiment without also hearing what common sense has to say. Perhaps we should all see the everyday life of the men, and see a good deal of it before we begin theorizing. Look at that smack away on our port bow. I'll be bound one or two are hurt in some way there. That's one of 120 sail that we saw; multiply 120 by 20, and then you have the number of vessels that we must attend under this crackbrained scheme of ours. All the ledger and daybook men say we are crack-brained. Now, if we can

go on doing just a little with our ordinary dispensaries, is it wise to risk playing at magnificence? You see I am taking the side of Mr. Commonsense against my own ideas."

"I certainly think you may succeed," said Miss Dearsley.

"So do I; and now you see my point. We want to persuade other people as quickly as possible to think as we do. To persuade, we must back all our talkee-talkie by facts, and to get facts we must work and endure in patience. You see what an amazingly clear political economist I am. Wait till we run into the fleet; we shall be sure to catch them before the trawls go down for the night, and, unless I'm mistaken, some of us will be astonished. I never go into a new fleet without seeing what a little weir we have at present to check a Niagara of affliction."

Mrs. Walton had much to do with many philanthropic movements, and men were always glad to hear her judgments--mainly because she was not a platform woman. She turned an amused look on Fullerton, and said, "Of course a woman can't deal with logic and common sense and all those dreadful things, and I know what a terribly rigid logician Mr. Fullerton is. I think, even without seeing any more misery and broken bones and things, that we have no very great difficulty before us. The case is as simple as can be--to a woman. There is an enormous fund set aside by the public for charity, and everybody wants to see a fair distribution. If a slater comes off a roof and breaks a limb, there is a hospital for him within half an hour's drive in most towns. If one of our men here breaks his arm, there is no hospital within less than two days' steam. We don't want the public to think the fisher is a more deserving man than the slater; we want both men to have a fair chance. Charitable men can see the slater, so they help him; they can't see the fisher without running the chance of being bruised and drenched, so they don't help him--at present. They don't want good feeling; they want eyes, and we must act as eyes for them. Women can only be useful on shore; you gentlemen must do everything that is needed out here. I'm very glad I've seen the North Sea in a fury, but I should not care to be a mere coddled

amateur, nor would any one else that I work with."

"Quite right, madam," said the professor, nodding his head with the gravity of all Cambridge; "and I should like to see women taking part in the management of our sea hospitals if the scheme is ever to be any more than a dream. The talking women are like the talking men: they squabble, they recriminate, they screech and air their vanity, and they mess up every business they touch. But if you have committee work to do, and want economy and expedition, then give me one or two lady members to assist."

Then Blair called, "Come along, skipper; she's going easy. Bring up one or two of the men and we'll have some singing."

Now the ordinary sailor sings songs with the merriest or most blackguard words to the most dirge-like tunes; but our fishermen sing religious words to the liveliest tunes they can learn. I notice they are fonder of waltz rhythms than of any others. The merchant sailor will drawl the blackguard "I'll go no more a-roving" to an air like a prolonged wail; the fisherman sings "Home, beautiful home" as a lovely waltz. Blair always encouraged the men to sing a great deal, and therein he showed the same discretion as good merchant mates.

I cannot describe Freeman's ecstasies, and I wish I could only give an idea of the helmsman's musical method. This latter worthy had easy steering to do, so he joined in; he was fond of variety, and he sang some lines in a high falsetto which sounded like the whistling of the gaff (with perhaps a touch of razor-grinding added); then just when you expected him to soar off at a tangent to Patti's topmost A, he let his voice fall to his boots, and emitted a most blood-curdling bass growl, which carried horrid suggestions of midnight fiends and ghouls and the silent tomb. Still, his mates thought he was a musical prodigy; he was entranced with the sweetness and power of his own performance, and the passengers were more than amused, so every one was satisfied.

The gentlemen who vary my slumbers by howling "The Rollicking Rams" in eight different keys at four in the morning would call the ship's company of that schooner soft. There are opinions and opinions. At any rate the hours passed

softly away until the yacht ran clean into the thick of the fleet, and the merry, eldritch exchange of salutes began.

The second breeze had been worse than the first, and many men had gone; but the smacksmen, by a special mercy, have no time for morbid brooding. They will risk their lives with the most incredible dauntlessness to save a comrade. The Albert Medal is, I make bold to say, deserved by a score of men in the North Sea every year. The fellows will talk with grave pity about Jim or Jack, who were lost twenty years ago; they remember all his ways, his last words, his very relatives; but, when a breeze is over, they make no moan over the lost ones until they gather in prayer-meetings.

"Watch now, and you'll soon see something," said Blair to Ferrier.

The boats began to flit round on the quiet sea, and the lines of them converged towards the schooner or towards a certain smart smack, which Fullerton eyed with a queer sort of paternal and proprietary interest. The men knew that the yacht was free to them as a dispensary, and the care they took to avoid doing unnecessary damage was touching. When you are wearing a pair of boots weighing jointly about three stone, you cannot tread like a fairy. Blair knew this, and, though his boat was scrupulously clean, he did not care for the lady's boudoir and oak floor business.

Lewis had his hands full--so full that the ladies went below. The great scholar's mind was almost paralyzed by the phenomena before him. Could it be possible that, in wealthy, Christian England there ever was a time when no man knew or cared about this saddening condition of affairs? The light failed soon, and the boats durst not hang about after the fleet began to sail; but, until the last minute, one long, slow, drizzle of misery seemed to fall like a dreary litany on the surgeon's nerves. The smashed fingers alone were painful to see, but there were other accidents much worse. Every man in the fleet had been compelled to fight desperately for life, and you cannot go through such a battle without risks. There were no malingerers; the bald, brutal facts of crushed bones, or flayed scalp, or broken leg, or poisoned hand were there in evidence, and the men used

no extra words after they had modestly described the time and circumstances under which they met with their trouble. Ferrier worked as long as he could, and then joined the others at tea--that most pleasant of all meetings on the sombre North Sea. The young man was glum in face, and he could not shake off his abstraction. At last he burst out, in answer to Fullerton, "I feel like a criminal. I haven't seen fifty per cent. of the men who came, and I've sent back at least half a dozen who have no more right to be working than they have to be in penal servitude. It is ghastly, and yet what can we do? I have no mawkish sentiment, but I could have cried over one fellow. His finger was broken, and then blood-poisoning set in. Up to the collar-bone his arm is discoloured, and the glands are blackish-blue here and there. He smiled as he put out his hand, and he said, 'He du hurt, sir. I've had hardly an hour's sleep since the first breeze, and, when I du get over, I fare to feel as if cats and dogs and fish and things was bitin'.' Then I asked him if he had stuck to work. Yes; he had helped to haul as late as this last midnight. Now he's gone back, and I must see him, at any price, to-morrow, or I cannot save that arm. I couldn't hurry like a butcher, and so there will be many a man in pain this night."

Marion Dearsley was deeply stirred. "I wish I could go round with you to-morrow and search out any bad cases."

"I must tell you that, so far as I can see, almost every conceivable kind of accident happens during a violent gale--everything, from death to a black eye. But, all the same, I wish you *could* come with me."

Blair burst into his jolly laugh; he was such a droll dog was Blair, and he *would* have his joke, and he *would* set up sometimes, as a sly rascal, don't you know--though he was the tenderest and kindest of beings.

"This is what your fine scheme has come to, is it? Oh! I see a grand chance for the novel-writers."

Oh, Blair was indeed a knowing customer. He made Ferrier look a little foolish; but the ladies knew him, Tom Lennard adored him, and the grand, calm Marion smiled gently on him. In the case of any other man it would have seemed

like sacrilege to talk of a sentimental flirtation before that young woman; but then she sometimes called him Uncle John and sometimes Mr. Blair, according to the company they were in; so what would you have?

After tea came the men's time for smoking; the bitter night was thick with stars; the rime lay on the bulwarks, and, when the moon came out, the vessel was like a ghostly fabric. Ferrier took charge of the two girls, and Tom entertained the elder ladies with voluminous oratory.

The surgeon was uneasy; the sudden splendour of the moon was lost on him, and he only thought of her as he might of a street lamp.

"I'm glad the moon has come, Miss Dearsley. If there is no chance of her clouding over, I shall ask the skipper to slip us into the thick of the fleet, and I'll take the boat."

"You are very good to take the risk after that dreadful time."

"I'm afraid I only follow a professional instinct. One thing is certain, I shall stay out here for the winter and do what I can."

Girls are tied by conventions; they cannot even express admiration in fitting language; they may giggle or cackle so that every ripple of laughter and every turn of a phrase sounds nauseously insincere. Marion Dearsley durst not talk frankly with this fine fellow, but she said enough.

"I'm not sure that you will not be better here than spending time in society--that is, if you have no pressing ambition, as most men have. I mean ambition for personal success and praise, and position. My brother always spoke of Parliament, and I suppose you would aim at the Royal Society. Girls have little scope, but I should imagine you must suffer."

"Maisie, you're the dearest old preacher in the world. Why don't you persuade Mr. Ferrier to be a great man on shore instead of coming out here to be bruised, and drowned, and sent home, and all that kind of thing?"

Then Miss Lena thoughtfully added, as in soliloquy--

"But he might come to be like old Professor Blabbs who makes a noise with his soup, or Sir James Brennan with the ounce of snuff round his studs. No.

Perhaps Maisie's right."

"I have plenty of ambition--I am burning with it, and I have an intuition that this is one of the widest and finest fields in the world--for impersonal ambition, that is, ambition above money, and so forth."

Then Ferrier, with a touch of pride quite unusual in him, said--

"I'm not persuaded that I've done so badly in the ambitious way up to now. This should be a fair change."

Then they stopped and watched the shadowy vessels stealing away into the luminous gloom. I hope they loved the sight; the thought of it makes all Beethoven sing over my nerves. The water was lightly crisped, and every large sigh of the low wind seemed to blow a sheet of diamonds over the quivering path of the moon; the light clouds were fleeting, fleeting; the shadows were fleeting, fleeting; and, ah me! the hours of youth were fleeting, fleeting to the gulf. The girls never spoke; but Ferrier thought of one of them that her fateful silence was more full of eloquence than any spoken words could be. She seemed to draw solemn music from every nerve of big body. Oh, droll John Blair! Did those placid, good blue eyes see anything? The deep contralto note of Marion Dearsley's voice broke the entranced silence.

"It seems a waste of one's chances to leave this, but we must go. Lena and I must trouble you to help us, though I'm sure I don't know why. I shall never forget that sight."

"Nor I," thought Ferrier; but he was not an accomplished lady's man, so he did not speak his thought.

Then Lewis and Mr. Blair fell into one of their desultory conversations, with Tom as explanatory chorus, and Fullerton brooding alongside in profound reverie. The breeze was enough to send the schooner past the trawlers, but her foresail had been put against her so that she kept line. An hour before the trawls were hauled Ferrier suggested that the yacht should be allowed to sail, just to see if a case could be picked up. Said the enthusiast Tom--

"I'll go with you. I can step into the boat now, but when you have sixteen

stone to drop on the top of a tholepin, I assure you it makes you cautious. In my wild days I should have used terms, sir--oh, distressing! oh, harrowing! To-night I'm ready for a thingumbob on 'the blue, the fresh, the ever free.' Ah! entrancing! Oh-h-h! bewitching!"

Freeman sailed his craft and threaded the lines of the dragging trawlers with stealthy speed. A hail came at last.

"Yacht ahoy! Have you still got the doctor aboard?"

The weird answer rang amid the shrill treble of the gaffs.

"Then come aboard of us if you can. It's bad."

Two men were down in the boat in a moment, and the yacht edged her way toward the smack. When Lewis and Tom went down below, the burly comedian's true character soon became apparent. A handsome young fellow was twisting and gasping on the floor in pain cruel to see.

"He've eat somethin's disagreed with him, sir. We've tried Gregory, what my mate had, and we give him some pills what I had, would a'most done for me. 'Tisn't a morsel o' good."

Tom Lennard picked the poor fellow off the floor--so gently, so very gently; he eased him up and put the man's head against his breast. A slight swing of the vessel followed, and the lad shrieked and gasped. Instantly Ferrier saw what had happened.

"Help me to take his clothes off, Lennard."

They stripped the patient to the skin; then Ferrier glanced once, touched just lightly enough to make the young man draw breath with a whistling sound, then the deft, steady fingers ran carefully down, and Lewis said--

"Tom, keep him as easy as you can till I come back from the yacht. Skipper, you didn't think to strip him."

"No, sir; why?"

"Well, he has three ribs broken, that is all."

"Eh! he said he had a tumble agin the anchor in the breeze."

"Yes, and I cannot tell how his lung has escaped."

When Lewis returned he strapped the sufferer up like an artist, and then said--

"Now, skipper, you must run home as soon as the trawl is up."

"Home! An' lose my woyage maybe?"

"Can't help that. You have no place for him here. See, he's off to sleep now his pain's gone, but where will he be if the sea rises?"

The skipper groaned; it seemed hard. Lewis thought a little and said--

"Will you let me take him aboard of us now while it's smooth, and I'll see if we can find you a man? If Larmor of the *Haughty Belle* will come, can you work with him?"

"Like a shot."

Larmor's jaw was better, and he said--

"I'd be a bad 'un if I wouldn't oblige you, sir, anyway. My jaw's main sore, but I can do little things."

"You see, Lennard," quietly observed Lewis, after Larmor had gone, "I'm making an experiment. If that lad had been left without such a mattress as ours, he would have died, surely. And now I'll guarantee that I send him back able to steer and do light work in ten days."

"That's where the hospital would come in. Well, you'll soon teach us instead of us teaching you. Oh! surprising! oh-h-h! paralyzing! oh-h-h! majestic! majestic!"

Tom was right in his exclamatory way, as we shall see by and by.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MISSION HALL.

And now you know what our people have been driving at all the time. I have reported their talk, and we shall have very little space for more of it, as the time must shortly come for swift action. From the moment when Ferrier groaned with despair, a lightning thought shot into Marion's brain and settled there. She had a grand idea, and she was almost eager to get ashore: one indefinite attraction alone held her. Ferrier was almost as eager to return, for his electric nature was chafed by the limitations that bound him; he knew he could do nothing without further means and appliances, and, in the meantime, he was only half doing work of supreme importance. He wished to glance slightly at the social and spiritual work of the fleet, but his heart was in his own trade.

The weather held up nicely, and on the morning after Ferrier saved the broken-ribbed youngster, the schooner had a rare crowd on board. The men tumbled over the side with lumbering abandonment, and met each other like schoolboys who gather in the common-room after a holiday. As Blair said, they were like a lot of Newfoundland puppies. Poor Tom Betts came up among the roistering crowd--pale, weary, and with that strange, disquieting smile which flits over sick men's faces; he was received as an interesting infant, and his narratives concerning the marvellous skill of the doctor were enough to supply the fleet with gossip for a month. None of the "weeds" of the fleet were on board, and the assembly might be taken as representing the pick of the North Sea population. With every observant faculty on the stretch Ferrier strolled from group to group, chatting with man after man; no one was in the least familiar, but the doctor was struck with the simple cordiality of all the fellows. A subtle something was at

work, and it gradually dawned on the young student that these good folk had the sentiment of brotherhood which is given by a common cause and a common secret. The early Christians loved one another, and here, on that grey sea, our sceptic saw the early Christian movement beginning all over again, with every essential feature reproduced. All types were represented; the grave man, the stern man, the sweet-faced dreamy man--even the comic man. The last-named here was much beloved and admired on account of his vein of humour, and he was decidedly the Sydney Smith of the fleet. His good-temper was perfect; a large fellow of the Jutish type lifted him with one huge arm, and hung him over the side; the humorist treated this experience as a pleasant form of gentle exercise, and smiled blandly until he was replaced on deck. When he was presented with a cigar, he gave an exposition of the walk and conversation of an extremely haughty aristocrat, and, on his saying, "Please don't haddress me as Bill. Say 'Hahdeyedoo, Colonel,'" the burly mob raised such a haw-haw as never was heard elsewhere, and big fellows doubled themselves up out of sheer enjoyment, the fun was so exquisite.

Lewis was struck by the men's extraordinary *isolation* of mind; you may not understand his thought now, but, when you visit the North Sea, the meaning will flash on you. *Isolation*--that is the word; the men know little of the world; they are infantine without being potty; they have no curiosity about the passage of events on shore, and their solid world is represented by an area of 70 feet by 18. They are always amusing, always suggestive, and always superhumanly ignorant of the commonest concerns that affect the lives of ordinary men. When your intellect first begins to measure theirs, you feel as if you had been put down in a strange country, and had to adapt your mind and soul to such a set of conditions as might come before you in a dream. I, the transcriber of this history, felt humiliated when a good man, who had been to sea for thirty-three years on a stretch, asked me whether "them things is only made up"; them things being a set of spirited natural history pictures. I reckon if I took Mr. Herbert Spencer, or Mr. Grant Allen, or Mr. Lang out to the fleets, I could give them a few shrewd

observations regarding the infancy of the human mind.

There was a fair amount of room for a religious service, the men packed themselves into their places with admirable and silent politeness, and the yacht was transformed into a mission hall. As to the fishermen's singing, one can never talk of it sufficiently. Ferrier was stirred by the hoarse thunder of voices; he seemed to hear the storming of that gale in the cordage once more, and he forgot the words of the hymn in feeling only the strong passion and yearning of the music. Then Fullerton and Blair prayed, and the sceptic heard two men humbly uttering petitions like children, and, to his humorous Scotch intellect, there was something nearly amusing in the naïve language of these two able, keen men. They seemed to say, "Some of our poor men cannot do so much as think clearly yet; we will try to translate their dumb craving." Charles Dickens, that good man, that very great man, should have heard the two evangelists; he would have altered some of the savage opinions that lacerated his gallant heart. To me, the talk and the prayers of such men are entrancing as a merely literary experience; the balanced simplicity, and the quivering earnestness are so exactly adapted to the one end desired.

Blair's sermon was brief and straightforward; he talked no secondhand formalities from the textbooks; he met his hearers as men, and they took every word in with complete understanding. When I hear a man talking to the fishers about the symbolism of an ephod, I always want to run away. What is needed is the human voice, coming right from the human heart: cut and dried theological terms only daze the fisherman; he is too polite to look bored, but he suffers all the same. I fancy Blair's little oration might be summed up thus: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man--and I do not know that you can go much further. The wild Kurd in the desert will say to you, "I cannot do that. It is a shame"; he has no power of reasoning, but he *knows*; and I take it that the fishers are much like him when their minds are cleared alike of formalism and brutality. Many of the men were strongly moved as Blair went on, and Lewis saw that our smiling preacher had learned to cast away subtleties.

Fullerton's preaching was like Newman's prose style; it caught at the nerves of his hearers, and left them in a state of not unhealthy tension. It seemed impossible for them to evade the forcible practical application by the second speaker of points in the discourse to which they had already listened; nor could they soon--if ever--forget the earnest words with which he closed--"Bear in mind, my friends, that Christianity does not consist in singing hymns or saying prayers, but in a personal knowledge of Jesus Christ as your Saviour; and when you have learned to know Him thus, your one object in life will be to glorify Him. It is right and well both to sing and to pray, but let us take care that these exercises are the expression in words of the heart's devotion to its Divine Lord and Master."

They were ripe for the "experience" meeting, and this quaintest of all religious exercises gave Ferrier data for much confused meditation. Apparently a man *must* unbosom himself, or else his whole nature becomes charged with perilous stuff, so these smacksmen had, in some instances, substituted the experience meeting for the confessional. In Italy you may see the sailors creeping into the box while the priest crouches inside and listens to whispers; on the North Sea a sailor places a very different interpretation upon the Divine command, "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another that ye may be healed." He goes first to his Saviour, and afterwards stands up before all his mates and makes his confession boldly: every new confidence nails him to his vows; he knows that the very worst of his past will never be brought up against him, and he is supported by the sympathy of the rough fellows who punctuate his utterances with sighs and kindly handshaking.

When the penitent sits down his mind is eased; the mysterious sympathy of numbers cheers him, the sense of Divine forgiveness has given him power, and he is ready to face life again with new heart. Ferrier caught the note of formality again and again, but he could see that the phrases had not putrefied into cant.

Just as the soul can only be made manifest through the body, so a thought can only be made manifest by means of words. An importunate, living thought is

framed in a perfect phrase which reflects the life of the thought. Then you have genuine religious utterance.

The conditions change and the thought is outworn: if the phrase that clothed the old thought remains and is used glibly as a verbal counter, then you have Cant, and the longer the phrase is parroted by an unbeliever, the more venomous does the virus of cant become. To the fishers--childlike men--many of the old Methodist turns of speech are vital; to a cultured man the husk of words may be dry and dead, but if he is clever and indulgent he will see the difference between his own mental state and that of the poor fisher to whom he listens.

The experiences were as varied as possible; some were awe-striking, some were pitiful, some verged on comedy. The comfortable thing--the beautiful thing--about the confessions, was that each man seemed tacitly to imply a piteous prayer, "My brothers help me to keep near my Saviour. I may fall unless you keep by me;" while the steady-going, earnest men took no praise to themselves for keeping straight, but generally ended with some such phrase as, "Praise the blessed Lord; it's all along o' His grace as I've been walkin' alongside o' Him."

One fine man, with stolid, hard face, rose and steadied himself against a beam. His full bass tones were sad, and he showed no sign of that self-satisfied smirk which sometimes makes the mind revolt against a convert.

"My friends, I'm no great speaker, but I can tell you plain how I come to be where I am. I was a strongish, rough young chap, and thought about nothing but games. I would fight, play cards, and a lot of more things that we don't want to talk about here. When I married, I drank and thought of nothing but my own self. Once I took every penny I had off a voyage to the public-house, and I stopped there and never had my boots off till I went to sea again. Every duty was neglected, my wife went cold in the bad weather, and my children were barefooted. When you're drinking and fooling you can see nothing at all, and you think you're a-doing all right, and everybody else is wrong when they try to help you. Out at sea I gambled and drunk when I could get the money; I made rare

game of religious men, and lived as if I had never to die. Then I was persuaded by one of my mates to visit the Mission ship, the very first as ever come, and I wish there was twenty. I'd had a bad time ashore, and my children was frightened of my ways, though I was kind enough when sober, and I'd left the wife to pick up a living how she could. Then I heard what Mr. Fullerton said. God bless him! And I says to myself, 'Tom Barling, you're no better than a pig you're not.' But I was proud, and I needed to be brought low. I went again and again and talked with old John about the Mission ship, but, bless you, I couldn't see nothing. But some kind of a--what I may say a voice kept a-saying, 'Tom Barling, you're not a good 'un,' and at last I got what I wanted, and I bursts out crying for joy, for I had learned to trust my blessed Saviour, whose blood cleanses from all sin. And now by His grace I've dropped the drink, and them fits of bad temper, and my family looks well, and I'm so quiet in my breast here like, as I can walk for hours on deck and pray quiet, and never think of no drink, nor cards, nor excitement, and I never nags at any man that's wrong as I was, but I says 'I wish you were happy as me, mate, and you may be if you'll come to the dear Lord.' And that's all. I bless God for the Mission, because there's many a chap like me that would like to do right but he don't know how. I was a bad chap, and I went on doing bad things because I knew no better; and so, brothers, when you see a mate going wrong just coax him. And God bless you, gentlemen and ladies, and all on us."

Every variety of story was told, and, in the exaltation of the hour, the men sang rapturously. Some of the speakers moved the doctor with terrible pathos. (I, who chronicle these things, have heard tales which come to me in wild dreams, and make me tremble with pity and terror.) There was no showing off, and even those who used the stereotyped phrase, "When I was in the world," did it with a simple modesty which our learned friend found charming. Apparently not one of those poor fellows felt a single prompting of conceit, and if their very innermost feeling had been translated it would come out like this: "Brothers, through mercy we've all slipped away from an ugly fate; we're on safe ground; let's hang

together and help each other nearer to God, lest we should get adrift and make shipwreck."

Lewis was particularly pleased with their kindly mode of talking about backsliders.

"Come, old lads," said one fair-haired Scandinavian, "let's all say a word for poor old Joe Banks. He's a backslider just now, through that dreadful drink. Let's all pray as he may see his sin against his Saviour, and come right back to Him. He's too good to lose, and we won't let go on him."

Then the excitement gathered, and the meeting really developed into what might be fairly termed a Service of Praise. The men almost roared their choruses, then they prayed passionately, then they sang again, and the rush of harmless excitement went on hour by hour, until the strongest enthusiasts had to obey the signal given by the darkness.

On deck there were merry partings, and the Newfoundland puppy business was resumed with exceeding vigour. Tom Lennard was exalting his popularity, and he knew the history of the father, the mother, the wife, the children (down to the last baby), of every man with whom he talked. The wind was still, the moon made silver of the air; the fleet hung like painted ships on painted ocean,--and the men delayed their partings like affectionate brothers whom broad seas must soon divide. The distant adoration paid to the ladies would have amused some indifferent shoregoers. You know the story of the miners who filled a Scotch emigrant's hand with gold dust and "nuts" on condition that he let his wife look out from the waggon? I can believe the tale. Great fourteen-stone men lifted their extraordinary hats and trembled like children when our good ladies talked to them; the sweetness of the educated voice, the quiet naturalness of the thorough lady, are all understood by those seadogs in a way which it does one good to remember. The fellows are gentlemen; that is about the fact. Their struggles after inward purity are reflected in their outward manners, and to see one of them help a lady to a seat on deck is to learn something new about fine breeding. Marion Dearsley was watched with a reverence which never became sheepish, and

Ferrier at last said to himself, "One might do anything with these men! The noblest raw material in the world."

"Good-night; good-night. God bless you." One weird sound after another came from boats that swam in the quivering moonbeams. Then came the silence, broken only by the multitudinous whistling of the gaffs, and the gentle moan of the timbers.

The nightly talk came off as usual; and also as usual the great mathematician was forced to take the leading part, while Blair quizzed, and the ladies, after the fashion of their sex, stimulated the men to range from topic to topic. Fullerton was watching Ferrier, just as I have seen a skilful professor of chemistry watching a tube for the first appearance of the precipitate. This quiet thinker knew men, and he knew how to use them; moreover, he thought he saw in Ferrier a born king, and he strove to attract him just as he had striven to fascinate Miss Dearsley. It was for the cause.

"What do you think of our work so far, Ferrier?"

"Good. But I want more."

Then, of course, Blair must needs have one of those wonderful jokes of his. "Ha! I want more! A sort of scientific Oliver. I want more! What a Bashaw! And what does his highness of many tails want?"

"Mr. Ferrier mustn't be too exorbitant. Science wears the seven-league boots, but we have to be content with modest lace-ups and Balmorals," quietly observed Mrs. Walton.

"Oh! beautiful! A regular flash of--the real thing, don't you know. An epigram. Most fascinating! Oh-h!"

Poor Tom's elephantine delight over anything like a simile was always emphatic, no matter whether he saw the exact point or not, and I'm afraid that brilliant folk would have thought him perilously like a fool. Happily his companions were ladies and gentlemen who were too simple to sneer, and they laughed kindly at all the big man's floundering ecstasies.

Ferrier said, "When I have got what I want, I shall vary your programme if

you will permit me. Do you know, it struck me that those good souls are very like a live lizard cased in the dry clay? He fits his mould, but he doesn't see out of it. I should like to give the men a little wider horizon."

"Isn't heaven wide enough?"

"But your men are always staring up at heaven. Could you not give them a chance of looking *round* a bit?"

"What are you driving at?"

"Mr. Ferrier means that they do not employ all their faculties. They are going cheerfully through a long cave because they see the sun at the mouth; but they don't know anything about the earth on the top of the cave."

This was a surprisingly long speech for Marion Dearsley.

"You take me exactly. Now, Fullerton, I'm going to stay the winter out here."

"You're what?" interjected Blair.

"Yes, I'm going to see the winter through; and I mean to lay some plans before you."

"The Bashaw has some glimmerings of sense. Yes, the scientific creature has. Go on, oh! many-tailed one."

"You miss the secular side a little. You cannot expect those grand, good-humoured fellows of yours to be always content with devotional excitement."

"But we don't. Our secular work, our care for the men's bodies, is just as great as our care for their souls," said Fullerton, warmly. "We simply cannot do everything; we lack means, and that must be our plea, no matter how sordid it may seem to you. But you must clearly understand that for my part, while I hold tenaciously to the primary duty of 'holding forth the Word of Life'--for it is 'the entrance of Thy Word giveth light *and understanding to the simple*'--yet I am entirely with you in feeling that we need to cultivate the intellect of these men. Go on, Ferrier."

"Well; I meant to say that you must let the men know something of the beauty of the world, and the wonder of it as well. Look here, Blair: do you mean

to say that I couldn't make a regular fairy tale out of the geology of these Banks? Pray, ladies, excuse just a little shop; I can't help it. Give me just one tooth of an elephant, dredged up off Scarborough, and if I don't make those men delighted, then I may leave the Royal Society."

"But, my good Bashaw," said Blair, "if you blindfold one of the skippers, and tell him the soundings from time to time, he'll take you from point to point, and pick up his marks just as surely as you could touch your bedroom-door in the dark."

"Exactly. That's empirical knowledge; but when you explain *causes*, you give a man a new pleasure. It *clinches* his knowledge. Then, again, supposing I were to tell those men something accurate about the movement of the stars? Don't you think that would be interesting? If I could not make it like a romance, then all the years I spent in learning were thrown away."

"Could you get them to care for anything of the kind? Do you know that a seaman is the most absolutely conservative of the human race?"

"We must begin. You give the men light, and I'll be bound that some of us will make them like sweetness. If Miss Dearsley were to read 'Rizpah,' or 'Big Tom,' or any other story of pathos or self-sacrifice, she would do the men good. Why, if I had the chance, I'd bring off my friend Tom Gale, and let him make them laugh till they cried by reading about Mr. Peggotty of Great Yarmouth and the lobster; or Mrs. Gummidge and the drown-ded old-'un."

Mrs. Walton had been very quiet. She turned to the staid and taciturn Mrs. Hellier and asked, "How do you find your readings suit at your mission-room?"

"They please the women, and I suppose they would please men. Our people are quite happy when we have a good reader. I'm a failure, because I always begin to cry at the critical points; but Lena has no feelings at all, and she can keep the room hushed for a whole hour."

Mrs. Walton smiled placidly.

"You see, Mr. Blair, there may be something in Mr. Ferrier's idea after all. I believe that sweet, simple stories, or poetry, or pictures, would please the men.

See how pleased that Great Grimsby man was with the girl's picture-book that you gave him. I'm almost converted. Besides, now I remember it, I heard a gentleman who had been public orator at Cambridge make a crowd of East-End people cry by reading 'Enoch Arden'--of all the incredible things in the world."

"Thank you, madam; and when I have got that hospital for you, I shall insist on having one room for pleasure, and pleasure alone; and I'll take good care my patients are not disturbed in any way. Fullerton is already on our side, so you and I will take Blair in hand, and curb that unruly scepticism of his. He is a most unblushing, scoffing sceptic, is he not, madam?"

Blair shook his jolly sides and rose, muttering something about a fascinating young puppy;--whereby it may be perceived that he was thinking of mocking Tom. The night was splendid, and when a sharp air of wind set all the smacks gliding, our voyagers had once more an experience that is one of the most memorable for those to whom it comes seldom. The seaman tramps smartly; cocks an eye at the topsail, swings round, and rolls back till he is abreast of the wheel; then *da capo*, and so on all night. But the reflective landsman gathers many sheaves for the harvest of the soul. Happy is he if he learns to know what the dense seaman's life is like.

There are nights when the joy of living will not let one sleep. Do I not know them?

Ferrier held a little chat with the girls before the scattered party finally broke up, and Marion Dearsley pleased him mightily by saying, "You were quite right about the pleasure-room. Only wait till we've begun our work, and we shall make that dreadful Mr. Blair ashamed of himself."

"What's this? Scandal and tittle-tattle begun on board? I shall exert my authority as admiral."

"I knew you were behind me, and that is why I reproved you, sir. We think the same about the matter, and so does Lena."

Then Ferrier and Blair and Tom talked until the air of the small hours drove them below, and they saw the yacht skimming among the quiet fleet. There was

enough wind to move the trawls, but the lonely procession did not travel as on that tremendous night when Lewis first learnt what a regular hustler was like.

All the days that followed went by pleasantly enough, though Ferrier could not help chafing. He was constantly busy with lancet, bandages, splints; he kept a diary of his cases, and after he had cruised among the fleet for three weeks he came to the conclusion that, if the average of injuries and ailments were the same all the year round, every man in the fleet must be under treatment at least *three times a year*. It sounds queer, but I can back it with facts--definite cases.

November opened finely, and the weather, except for sharp breezes in the chill of the early morning, left it possible to visit vessel after vessel daily. Ferrier never had an uncivil word. One rough customer whom he asked to board the yacht grinned and answered, "No, sir; I don't hold with Bethel ships. But," he added remorsefully, "I've heard I reckon fifty times about you and your ladies and gentlemen, and if you was capsized out o' that eer boat, I'd have mine out and take her arter you my own self if the seas was a comin' over that there mast-head."

Then Lewis shook hands with his frank opponent, who grinned affably and waved until the boat was nearly out of sight. When the time for parting came, Blair told the Admiral, and the bold fellow said humbly, "Well, you've done us good. If you only knew, sir, what it is for us--us, you know, to have people like you among us, why you'd go and give such a message as would make the gentlemen ashore feel regular funny. When I first come to sea we was brutes, and we was treated as brutes. We know you can't do everything, but just the thought of you being about makes a difference. It makes men prouder and more ready to take care o' themselves--if you'll excuse me saying so."

"We'll do far more yet, Admiral," interposed Fullerton. "We're learning to walk at present. Wait till you see us in full going order, and none of you will know yourselves."

"Well, good-bye, sir. And I want to ask you particular, sir--*very* particular. If the wind suits, don't run for home till just about dusk to-morrow evening, and go

through us. The glass is firm, and I think we shall do well for days to come. Mind you oblige us, sir."

And next morning, as the boats met by the side of the carrier, there was much gossip, and many mysterious messages passed. Blair told Skipper Freeman what the Admiral wanted, and the good man grinned hard. "Right, sir; your time's your own. I'll manage."

The dusk drooped early; a fair breeze was blowing, and the swift schooner loitered with the smacks. Freeman sent up a rocket, the schooner's foresail was let over, and she rustled away through the squadron of brown-sailed craft.

"What's that, Freeman?" asked Blair, as a rocket shot up from the Admiral's vessel.

"You'll see, sir, presently."

The schooner lay hard over when the big topsails were put on her, and drew past one smack after another. Then a dingy vessel broke suddenly into spots of fire; then another, then another. Flares, torches--every kind of illumination was set going; the hands turned up, and a roar that reverberated from ship to ship was carried over the water. The very canopy of light haze looked fiery; the faces of the men flashed like pallid or scarlet phantoms; the russet sails took every tint of crimson and orange and warm brown, and from point to point of the horizon a multitude of flames threw shaking shafts of light that glimmered far down and splendidly incarnadined the multitudinous sea.

Every ship's company cheered vociferously, and the yacht tore on amid clamour that might have scared timid folk.

"Why, the good fellows, they're giving us an illumination," said Fullerton.

"Hah! very modest, I'm sure. I should just think they *were* giving us an illumination, sir. I should venture to say that they possibly *were* doing a little in that way, sir. Yes, sir. Hah! Oh! No-o-oble, sir. Picturesque, sir, in extreme! I'll write a poem descriptive of this, sir. And, thank God," said Tom at last, with real feeling, "thank God there are some people in the world who know what gratitude is like. Hah! I'm glad I lived to see this day."

The last cheer rattled over the waves. "That's the grandest thing I ever saw, Miss Dearsley," whispered Lewis.

"I was about to say those very words."

Still the schooner tore on; still the light failed more and more; and then once again, with stars and sea-winds in her raiment, Night sank on the sea. The yacht was bound for home, and every one on board had a touch of that sweet fever that attacks even the most callous of sailors when the vessel's head is the right way. We shall see what came of the trip which I have described with dogged care.

END OF BOOK I.

BOOK II.

CHAPTER I.

JANUARY IN THE NORTH SEA!

A bitter morning, with light, powdery snow spotting here and there a livid background; grey seas travelling fast, and a looming snow-cloud gradually drooping down. The gulls are mad with hunger, and a cloud of them skirl harshly over the taffrail of a stout smack that forges fast through the bleak sea. The smack is coated with ice from the masthead to the water's edge; there is not much of a sea, but when a wave does throw a jet of water over the craft it freezes like magic, and adds yet another layer to a heap which is making the deck resemble a miniature glacier.

The smack has a flag hoisted, but alas! the signal that should float bravely is twisted into a shabby icicle, and it would be lowered but for the fact that the

haliards will not run through the lump of ice that gathers from the truck to the mast-head. All round to the near horizon a scattered fleet of snow-white smacks are lingering, and they look like a weird squadron from a land of chilly death. On the deck of the smack that has the flag a powerful young man is standing, and by his side--by all that is astounding--is an enormous man with an enormous beard and a voice that booms through the Arctic stillness. That is our new scene.

* * * * *

I am not going to play at mystery, for you know as well as I do that the young man named in that gloomy overture was Lewis Ferrier, and that his companion was good Tom Lennard;--though what brought the giant out into the frozen desolation I shall not say just yet.

Yes, Lewis kept his word, and at the time of which we are speaking he had been three weeks at work on the Bank. He had now three cloth coats on over his under-wear, and, over all, a leather coat made at Cronstadt, and redolent of Russia even after weeks of hard wear. With all this he could not do much more than keep warm. Tom was equipped in similar fashion, and both men wore that air of stoical cheerfulness which marks our maligned race, and which tells of the spirit that has sent our people as masters over all the earth.

"Let's come down and have coffee with the men, Tom. I'm going to have a try at that Lowestoft smack if the snow only keeps away."

"Right, my adventurer; I'm with you. But I'm not going to let you run any more risks of that life of yours, my bold mariner. Hah! I'm here to take care of you, and you've got to be very meek, or I'll set up an opposition shop. Don't you think I can? Didn't I do up that skipper's arm in his sling after you took off his finger? Eh! Beware of a rival. Ah-h!"

"Yes, Thomas, but if you administer turpentine for pleurisy, as you did to the big Yarmouth fellow, we shall have to turn on a special coroner to attend on

you."

"My good what's-his-name?--Admirable Hitchin--ah-h Admirable Crichton! that child of Nature took the turpentine of his own accord. I left it with orders that the application should be external, and it was to be rubbed in until we got back with the emulsion and the proper liniment; he tastes it, and finds it hot; he swallows the lot by degrees, and he doesn't die--he gets well. How am I to blame! I take credit for a magnificent cure, sir. If you say two words, I'll advertise Lennard's miraculous emulsion in every journal in town when we get back."

"Coffee, skipper, coffee. The shipwrecked mariners demand refreshment," boomed Thomas.

Ah! that coffee! Thick, bitter-sweet, greasy with long stewing! What a fluid it is--or rather what a solid! Its insolent stodginess has only a surface resemblance to a fluid; yet it is a comfort on snowy mornings, and our wanderers took to it kindly.

Lewis had laid himself out to be merry, and several grinning faces peered from the bunks with kindly welcome as he took his seat on a rickety fish-box. The skipper asked, "Shall the steward fetch your bread in here, sir? You can't manage ours."

"All right. How are the men aft?"

"The young fellow from the *Achilles* was jabbering a bit again. By the way, you knew Tom Betts had come away in the old *Achilles*, didn't you, sir?"

"What Tom Betts? Oh yes. Man with concussion of the brain, wasn't it?"

"So I heerd, sir. He told everybody at home how you saved him, and when he said how he thought he'd gone to heaven he set all the women in the Mission Hall a-pipin' of their eye. He's on the Lord's side now, sir. You done that."

"Well, I'm a queer customer to do anything of the kind, skipper. I'm only glad I got him sewed up soon enough, but my business ends there."

"You're jest as good as some as makes a frap about bein' good. I think, sir, you put's on some of that light-come-go-away kind of a game."

"Never mind; we'll only hope we'll have no more cases like that exactly. I don't know how we should have managed if there had been such another last week."

"That was a strongish sea, and we're sure of more."

You never can get a North Sea man to own that any weather is very bad. Years after a really bad gale he may give the wind credit for being in earnest, but usually he talks in a patronizing way of the elements, using diminutives, and trying to make light of the trouble so long as it lasts. There had been hard weather since Lewis came out, and, though he had ample stores and appliances now, he found that he was hampered by the limitations of space as he was on board the schooner. Life had been very rough for the young fellow and his burly worshipper since they came out, and they only kept each other up by a mutual sham of the most elaborate character. After breakfast, Lewis gave orders to run as close as might be safe to the thick of the fleet; the smack was practically under his command, and he took her where he thought he might be most needed. One of his patients in the after-cabin was muttering uneasily, for there was some feverishness; the other man had come down with a crash on the icy deck, and the shock had apparently caused concussion of the spine, for he could not move, and he was fed as if he were a child. Lewis bent over the helpless seaman, and spoke kindly. The man sighed, "Thank God I am where I am, sir. That long plaster begins to burn a bit, but I a'most like it. There's little funny feelings runs down my arms and legs."

"All right! You'll soon be better. Did you work all through the gale?"

"We was about for two nights and a day, sir, and every one of us with the ulcers right up the arms. It was warm business, I can tell you, sir. My ulcers are all going away now, with this warm cabin, but they were throbbing all night before. When I come down such a crack I was makin' a run for the taickle, for fear we might let the gear drop, and I saw a flash in my eyes, and nothing more till I was aboard here."

"You were trawling when that breeze started?"

"Yes. We mustn't mind weather when the market's to be considered. Tell me now, sir--you've got time, haven't you, sir? Talkin' of the market, and I've been nearly dead, and not out o' the muck yet--does the people know what us chaps gets for fish?"

"They never think. The fish comes, and the milk comes, and they pay the fishmonger's bill and the milkman's, and they think one's the same as the other, my man."

"Eh! I was thinkin' about a gentleman as came from this Mission vessel aboard of us. He saw our twelve o'clock haul, and he says, 'Bad breeze last night, my man. Did you work through it?' Well, there was nothing much of a wind--just enough to make us reef her; so I answers, and he says, 'I suppose this is your night's work. Now, what is your share?' So I said my share would likely be tenpence. Well, he gives a reg'lar screech; and then I reckoned up the price of all the lot as well as I could guess, and he screeched again. 'Why,' says he, 'old Mother Baubo, that keeps the shop in my district at home, would charge me eight shillings for that turbot, four-and-six for that, eightpence for each of those sixty haddocks, and nobody knows what for the rest.' Now, I've thought of that gentleman and his screech many a time since, and when I felt the light a-comin' to my eyes here, I thought again. Do you think I shall die, sir? Excuse me."

"Die! No. Fact is, I'm too good-natured a doctor. I shall have to stop you from talking. Die! We'll make a man of you, and send you on board soon. Go on, I can stay another five minutes."

"Well, sir, when I thought of death, I thought what people would say if they knew how much I got for risking this smash. That night I was over the rail on to the trawl-beam twice; I was at the pumps an hour; I pulled and hauled with both arms raw, and the snow freezing with the salt as soon as it came on my ulcers, and then I got the smash. And all for about eightpence. And that screeching gentleman told me as how his Mother Baubo, as he calls her, drives a broom and two horses, or a horse and two brooms--I'm mixed. No, 'twas a land-oh and two horses, and a broom and one horse. And I gets eightpence for a-many hours and

a smash. I never mind the fellows that tells us on Sundays when we're ashore to rise and assirk our rights or something, but there's a bit wrong somewhere, sir. It don't seem the thing."

"Well, you see people would say you needn't be a fisherman; you weren't forced to come."

"But I was, sir. I knew no more what I was coming to than a babe, and once you're here, you stays here."

"Well, never mind for the present, my man. Why, you're a regular lawyer, you rascal; I shall have to mind my p's and q's with you. Now don't talk any more, or you'll fidget, and that won't do your back any good. Will you have bread and milk, or beef-tea and toast, you luxurious person? And I must be your valet."

"I don't know about vally, sir. It's vally enough for me. To think as I should have a gentleman waitin' on me as if he was a cabin-boy! Anything *you* like, sir. The sight of you makes me better."

The man's tears were flowing; he was weak, poor fellow, and wanting in the item of well-bred reticence. Lewis fed one patient, trimmed the other's bed, put on a woollen helmet, sou'-wester, two pairs of gloves, and the trusty Russian coat; then he was slung into the boat like a bundle of clothes; landed springily on a thole, and departed over seas not much bigger than an ordinary two-storey house. It was quite moderate weather, and the sprightly young savant had lost that feeling which makes you try to double yourself into knots when you watch a wave gradually shutting away the outer world and preparing to fold its livid gloom about you. "What would the Cowes fellows say to this, I wonder?" thought the irreverent young pioneer. Then he chuckled over the thought of the reckless Seadogs who march in nautical raiment on the pier. Those wild, rollicking Seadogs! How the North Sea men would envy them and their dower of dauntlessness! The Seadog takes his frugal lunch at the club; he begins with a sole, and no doubt he casts a patronizing thought towards the other Seadogs who trawled for the delicate fish. They are not so like seamen in appearance as is the

Cowes Seadog; they do not wear shiny buttons; the polish on their boots is scarcely brilliant; they wear unclean jumpers, and flannel trousers fit to make an æsthetic Seadog faint with emotion of various sorts. No! they are not pattern Seadogs at all--those North Sea workers. Would that they could learn a lesson from the hardy Cowes Rover.

Well, the Rover tries a cutlet after his fish, then he has cheese and a grape or two, and he tops up his frugal meal with a pint of British Imperial. A shilling cigar brings his lunch up to just sixteen shillings--as much as a North Sea amateur could earn in a week of luck--and then he prepares to face the terrors of the Deep. Does he tremble? Do the thoughts of the Past arise in his soul? Nay, the Seadog of Cowes is no man to be the prey of womanish tremors; he goes gaily like a true Mariner to confront the elements. The boat is ready, and four gallant salts are resting on their oars; the Seadog steps recklessly on board and looks at the weather. Ha! there is a sea of at least two inches high running, and that frail boat must traverse that wild space. No matter! The man who would blench at even two hundred yards of water, with waves even three inches high is totally unworthy of the name of a British Seadog! One thought of friends and mother dear; one last look at the Club where that sole was served, and then, with all the ferocious determination of his conquering race, the Seadog bids the men give way. It is an awful sight! Four strokes, and the bow man receives as nearly as possible half a pint of water on his jersey! Steady! No shirking, my sons of the sea-kings. Twenty strokes more--the peril is past; and the Seadog bounds on to the deck of his stout vessel. He is saved. A basket with a turbot is in the stern-sheets; that turbot will form part of the Seadog's humble evening meal. It cost a guinea, and the North Sea amateurs, who received two shillings of that amount, would doubtless rejoice could they know that they risked their lives in a tearing August gale to provide for the wants of a brother Seadog.

By the time Lewis had finished his heroic reverie, he was nicely sheeted with ice, for the spray froze as it fell, and he was alongside of the smack that he wanted--which was more to the purpose. In a few minutes he was engaged in

dealing with a prosaic, crushed foot. A heavy boat had jammed his patient against the iron side of the steam-carrier. The man was stoical, like the rest of his mates, but he was in torture, for the bones were all huddled into a twisted mass--a gruesome thing, ladies, and a common thing, too, if you would but think it. Ferrier had to use the knife first, for the accident was not so recent as he could have wished; then for near half an hour he was working like some clever conjurer, while the vessel heaved slowly, and the reek of the cabin coiled rankly round him. What a picture! That man, the pride of his university, the rising hope of the Royal Society, the professor whom students would have idolized, was bending his superb head over a poor, groaning sailorman, and performing a hard operation amid air that was merely volatile sewage! A few men looked on; they are kind, but they all suffer so much that the suffering of others is watched with passive callousness.

"Brandy now, my man. This is your first and last drink, and you may make it a good one. Don't give him any more, skipper, even if you have it on board. You know why? Ah! the colour's coming back again. Now, my lad, we're going to make your bed up on the cabin floor. Hand me a flannel; and you, my man, some water out of the kettle. Now for a clean place. I'll set up as a housemaid when I go ashore."

"Excuse me, sir, but if you thinks you're goin' to be let to scrub that ar plank, sir, you're mistaken. I'm skipper here, and I'll do that jest to show you how we thinks of your politeness, mister. Hand over that scrubber."

"All right, you obstinate mule; of course you'll have your own way. Let me see his mattress, then. Won't do! Which of you durst come with the boat, and I'll send a cocoanut-fibre one for him?"

"We never talks about durst here, sir. Not many on us doesn't. We'll go, when you goes."

So Lewis cheerily ended his task, and when his man was laid out, with a dry bundle of netting under his head, the doctor bent over him only to smile in his face quietly. He never looked at himself in a glass excepting to part his hair;

but he had learned that something in his look tended to hearten his patients, so he gazed merrily at the cripple and said, "Now, when you're better, tell your friends Professor Ferrier said you were the pluckiest fellow he ever saw. I couldn't have borne what you did. You are a real good, game bit of stuff! and don't let any one tell me otherwise."

This unconscionable young doctor was picking up the proper tone for the North Sea; he had no airs, and, when his boat was reeling away to his own vessel again over the powdery crests of the sea, an Aldeburgh fisherman said, "Well, Joe, be sewer, he's a wunnerful fine gent, that is! He's the wunnerfullest, finest gent ever *I* fared for to see. And that he is--solid."

"Yes, Jimmy," said the skipper. "It's my belief, in a way o' speakin', that if that theer mizen-boom caught you and knocked your head off, that theer wunnerful young gent 'ud come, and he'd have his laugh, and he'd up and he'd mend you, same as if you'd never come adrift, not one little bit. What a thing is larin', to be sewer. Yes, sir, he'd mend you. Nobody knows what he can dew, and nobody knows what he can't dew. If we puts to this night--and I don't know why not, for we're sailin'--if we gets a turbot I'll pay for it, and he'll have that theer fish if I swims for it."

"You've always got a good way o' puttin' things, skipper, and I says I holds 'long o' you."

The patient slumbered blissfully in the dreary cabin, which could only be likened to a bewitched laundry in which things were always being washed and never cleaned; the men awaited the Admiral's signal; the snow thickened into ponderous falling masses;--and the professor jumped on deck, to be met with a loud boom of gratification by Tom, who had begun to dread the snow.

I like to think of that young gentleman faring over the treacherous lulls of sad water amid the sinister eddies of the snowstorm. I wonder if any other country could produce a gently-nurtured young scholar who would make a similar journey. It seems doubtful, and more than doubtful.

Tom had been reading to the paralyzed fisherman, and, although his

ordinary tones had too much of the minute-gun about them to suit small apartments, he could lower his voice to a quiet deep bass which was anything but unpleasant, and he had completely charmed the poor helpless one by reading--or rather intoning--"Evangeline." Seafaring folk *will* have sentiment in their literature and music; humour must be of the most obvious sort to suit them--in fact they usually care only for the horseplay of literature--but pathos of any sort they accept at once, and Tom had tears of pride in his eyes when he told Lewis how the man had understood the first part of the poem, and how he had talked for a good half-hour about the eviction of the Acadians, and its resemblance to the fate of various fishermen's wives who had got behind with their rents.

The evening closed in a troublous horror of great darkness, and the anxious night began. Ferrier always made up his mind to stay below at night, and he amused himself either by snatching a chat with the skipper, or by reading one or two good novels which he had brought. But imagine the desolation, the sombre surroundings, the risks to be run every hour--every second--and you will understand that those two English gentlemen had something in them passing self-interest, passing all that the world has to offer. Ferrier never dreamed of becoming a nautical recluse; he was too full of the joy of life for that: but he had a purpose, and he went right at his mark like a bullet from a rifle. Once that evening he went on deck and tried to peer through the wall of trembling darkness that surrounded him; the view made him feel like the victim in Poe's awful Inquisition story--the walls seemed to be closing in. Faintly the starboard light shone, so that the snowflakes crossed its path like dropping emeralds that shone a little in glory and then fell dark; on the other side a fitful stream of rubies seemed to be pouring; the lurid gleam from the cabin shone up the hatchway;--and, for the rest, there was cold, darkness, the shadow of dread, and yet the lookout-men were singing a duet as if death were not. The freezing drift was enough to stop one's breath, but the lads were quite at ease, and, to the air of a wicked old shanty, they sang about weathering the storm and anchoring by and

by. Ferrier was not a conscious poet;--alas! had he the fearful facility which this sinful writer once possessed, I shudder to think of the sufferings of his friends when he described the brooding weariness of this night in verse. He bottled up his verses and turned them all into central fire; but he had poetry in every fibre all the same.

Tom remarked, "This is very much like being iced for market. I wonder what we could possibly do, if anything came into us as that barque did? Let's talk about home."

"Pleasant indoors now; I can see the fire on the edges of the furniture. The very thought of a hearthrug seems like a heathen luxury. What will you do first when you get home, Tom?"

"Turkish bath."

"And then?"

"Oysters."

"Then?"

"Dinner."

"And after?"

"I'll spend the whole evening in pretending to myself I'm on the North Sea again, and waking up to find that I've got my armchair under me."

"Can you see anything, Jim, just a point or so abaft the beam."

This was an ugly interruption to the Barmecides, who had begun to set forth shadowy feasts. That is the way in thick weather; you are no sooner out of one scrape than you blunder into another.

"Yes, sir, she'll go clear," sang out the man.

"She won't, I'm afraid," said Lewis, under his breath. It was most puzzling; there was no guide; the snow made distances ridiculous, and the black shadow came nearer.

"Up, all of you, and set your fenders. Doctor, show him a flare."

It was a smack, and her lights had gone wrong somehow; she was moving but slowly, and she let the Mission vessel off with a hole in the mizen. The

scrimmage would have meant death had any breeze been blowing; but the men took it coolly after the one dread minute of anxiety was over. If we were all able to imagine our own deaths as possible--to *really* imagine it, I mean--then one snowy night on the banks would drive any man mad; no brain could stand it. We all know we shall die, but none of us seem to believe it, or else no one would ever go to sea a second time in winter. A steady opiate is at work in each man's being--blurring his vision of extinction, and thus our seamen go through a certain performance a dozen times over in a winter, and this performance is much like that of a blindfold man driving a Hansom cab from Cornhill to Marble Arch on a Saturday evening during a November fog.

The man who shoved the cork fender over the side had received a graze which sent a big flap of skin over his eye and blinded him with blood. He laughed when Lewis dressed him, and said, "That was near enough for most people, sir. I've seen two or three like that in a night."

"Well, I like to see you laugh, but I thought all was over when I saw he was going to give us the stem."

"So did I, sir; but fishermen has to git used to being drowned."

As Lennard and the doctor sat filling the crew's cabin with billows of smoke, the former said--"There's a kind of frolicsome humour about these men that truly pleases me. Frolicsome! isn't it?"

"Well, we've stood another dreary day out; but think of those poor beggars aft, lying in pain and loneliness. Tom, let's say our prayers; I don't know that there's much good in it, but when I think of twelve thousand men bearing such a life as we've had, I think there must--there must be some Power that won't let it last for ever. Mind, when we've done praying, no more sentiment; we'll smoke and laugh after we've put in a word for the fishermen--and ourselves."

"And somebody else."

"Who?"

"I'll write and ask Mr. Cassall. That's Miss Dearsley's uncle."

I have seen our Englishmen fool on in that aimless way during all sorts of

peril and trouble. I want you to understand that the evangelist and the sceptic both were prepared to hear the scraunch of the collision on that deadly night; they had seen two entire ships' companies lost since they came out, yet they would not give in or look serious altogether. They had come to found a hospital for the mangled hundreds of fishermen, and they were going through with their task in the steady, dogged, light-hearted British way. Foreigners and foreigneering Englishmen say it is blockheaded denseness. Is it?

CHAPTER II. A CRUCIAL TEST.

"When you sailed away in the Yarmouth ships,
I waved my hand as you passed the pier;
It was just an hour since you kissed my lips,
And I'll never kiss you no more, my dear.

* * * * *

For now they tell me you're dead and gone,
And all the world is nothing to me;
And there's the baby, our only one,
The bonny bairn that you'll never see."
(*"The Mate's Wife," by J. Runciman.*)

Suffering--monotonous, ceaseless suffering; gallant endurance; sordid filth; unnamed agonies; gnawing, petty pains; cold--and the chance of death. That was the round of life that Lewis Ferrier gazed upon until a day came that will be remembered, as Flodden Field was in Scotland, as Gettysburg is in America, as January 19th, 1881, is in Yarmouth. Ferrier had stuck to his terrible routine work, and, as Sir Everard Romfrey observes: "To stick to work *after* the great effort's over--that's what shows the man." The man never flinched, though he had

tasks that might have wearied brain and heart by their sheer nastiness; the healer must have no nerves.

A little break in the monotony came at last, and Mr. Ferrier and Mr. T. Lennard had an experience which neither will forget on this side of the grave. Contrary to the fashion of mere novelists, who are not dreamers and who consequently cannot see the end of things, I tell you that both men were kept alive, but they had something to endure.

The day had been fairly pleasant considering the time of year, and our friends were kept busy in running from vessel to vessel, looking after men with slight ailments. There was no snow, but some heavy banks hung in the sky away to the eastward. When the sun sank, the west was almost clear, and Tom and Lewis were electrified by the most extraordinary sunset that either had ever seen. The variety of colour was not great; all the open spaces of the sky were pallid green, and all the wisps of cloud were leprous blue: it was the intensity of the hues that made the sight so overpowering, for the spaces of green shone with a clear glitter exactly like the quality of colours which you see on Crookes's tubes when a powerful electric current is passed through.

"That's very artistic, and everything else of the sort; it's ah-h better than any painting I ever saw, but there's something about it that reminds me of snakes and things of that kind. Snakes! If you saw a forked tongue come out of that blue you wouldn't be surprised."

"You're getting to be quite an impressionist, Tom. The sky is horrible. I see all our vessels are getting their boats in; we'd better follow suit. How's the glass, skipper?"

"Never saw anything like it, sir. This night isn't over yet, and I reckon what's coming is coming from the nor'-east. We're going to reef down. I haven't seen anything like this since 1866, and I remember we had just such another evening."

As usual, the gulls were troubled in their minds, and wailed piercingly, for they seem to be mercurial in temperament, and no better weather prophets can be

seen.

The two ambulance-service men went below, declining to show any misgivings, and they had a good, desultory chat before anything happened to call them on deck. They talked of the poor bruised fellows whom they had seen; then of home; then of the splendid future when men would be kinder, and no fisherman with festering wounds would ever be permitted to die like a dog in a stinking kennel. Pleasant, honest talk it was, for the talkers were pleasant and honest. No bad man can talk well. Our two gentlemen had learned a long lesson of unselfishness, and each of them seemed to become gentler and more worthy in proportion as he gave up more and more of his comfort and his labour to serve others.

At last Ferrier said, "Well, Tom, we had a heavy turn in the autumn. If we go this time we'll go together, and I've often wondered what that could be like. What do men say when they meet the last together? Whew-w! How I hate death. The monster! The beastly cold privation. To leave even a North Sea smack must be bitter."

The patients were listening; the man with concussion was gone, cured, and his place was held by a burly man who had tried (as heavy fellows will) to haul his own fourteen stone up to the main-boom during a breeze, in order to repair a reef-earring. The vessel came up to the wind, and the jar flung poor Ebenezer Mutton clash on to the deck. Luckily he did not land on his skull, but he had a dislocated ankle.

Ebenezer whispered, "I heern you talkin' about the gale, sir, and you're right; we've got somethin' to come. I have a left arm that can beat any glass ever was seen. I come down from the jaws of the gaff just when we was snuggin' her before the gale in '66, and my arm went in four places. Ever since then that there arm tells every change as plain as plain can be. Yes, sir, it's hard to die, even out off a North Sea smack, as you say. Just before the '66 breeze I used often to think, 'Shall I go overboard?' but when we was disabled, and skipper told us 'twas every man for hisself, I looked queer. My arm says there's bad a-comin',

and I know you don't skeer easy, or a wouldn't tell you."

A hollow sound filled the whole arch of the sky; it was a great, bewildering sound like a cry--an immense imprecation of some stricken Titan.

"What can that be?" murmured Lennard, with his bold face blanched. "That caps everything."

The masterful sound held on for a little, and then sank into a tired sort of moan.

"Callin' them together, sir,--that's what some o' the West Country chaps calls the King o' the Winds speakin'. It's only snow gettin' looked in the sky, and you'll see it come away in a little."

"I don't know what it is, Ebenezer, but I don't like it."

On deck the night was black, the splendid green of the west had burnt out, and a breeze was making little efforts from time to time, with little hollow moans.

"Bad, bad, bad, bad, sir," barked the skipper, angrily.

The vanward flights of twirling flakes came on then, as if suddenly unleashed, the wind sprang up, and the great fight began. If you, whoever you may be, and two more strong men had tried to shut an ordinary door in the teeth of that first shock, you would have failed, for the momentum was like that of iron.

"Steady, and look out," the skipper yelled.

The third hand was lifted off his feet and dashed into the lee channels. Ferrier fought hard, but he was clutched by the hand of the wind, and held against the mizen-mast; he could just clutch the rest in which a life-buoy was hanging, and that alone saved him from being felled.

The Lord is a Man of War! Surely His hosts were abroad now. No work of man's hands could endure the onset of the forces let loose on that bad night. The sea jumped up like magic, and hurried before the lash of the wind. Then, with a darkening swoop, came the snowstorm, hurled along on wide wings; the last remnants of light fled; the vessel was shut in, and the devoted company on board

could only grope in the murk on deck. No one would stay below, for the sudden, unexampled assault of the hurricane had touched the nerve of the coolest.

I am told by one who was on a wide heath at the beginning of that hurricane, that he was coated with solid ice from head to foot on the windward side; his hair and beard were icicles; his spaniel cowered and refused to move; and a splendid, strong horse, which was being driven right in the teeth of the wind, suddenly put its nose to the ground, set its forelegs wide apart, and refused to go on. Not far from the horse was a great poplar, and this tree suddenly snapped like a stick of macaroni; the horse started, whirled round, and galloped off with the wind behind.

What must it have been at sea? Men durst not look to windward, for a hard mass seemed to be thrust into nostrils and eyes, so that one was forced to gasp and choke. As for the turmoil!--all Gravelotte, with half a million men engaged, could not have made such a soul-quelling, overmastering sound. Every capacity of sound, every possible discordant vibration of the atmosphere was at work; and so, with bellow on bellow, crash on crash, vast multitudinous shriek on shriek, that fateful tempest went on.

Ferrier found that unless he could get under the lee of something or other, he must soon be sheathed in a coat of ice that would prevent him from stirring at all. Oddly enough, he found afterwards that the very fate he dreaded had befallen several forlorn seamen: the icy missiles of the storm froze them in; the wind did not chill them, it throttled them, and they were found frozen rigid in various positions.

The mate came and whispered in Ferrier's ear (for shouting was useless), "The skipper would like a word with you. We'll keep some sort of a look-out, but it isn't much good at present. Come into our cabin."

Lewis was not sorry, for the waves began to take the vessel without "noticing" her, as it were, just as a good hunter takes an easy ditch in his stride. If one came perpendicularly upon her, it was easy to see what must happen.

The skipper said, "I want you gentlemen to assist me. I'm ordered to obey

you, but I know this sea, and I tell you that I'm doubtful whether I shall save the vessel. I can't keep her hove-to much longer, for this simple reason as she'll bury herself and us. I've got two hundred and forty-four miles to run home. Will you let me run her? If so, I'll take her in under storm canvas. She's splendid before wind and sea, and I can save her that way; if we stop as we are, I fear we drown. I've seen so many years of it that I don't so much mind, but having you is a terrible thing. Hishht, a sea's coming!--I can tell by the lull."

Then the two landsmen cowered involuntarily, and looked in each other's eyes with a wild surmise, for a shock came which made the vessel quiver like a tuning-fork in every fibre; the very pannikins on the cabin floor rattled, and all the things in the pantry went like rapidly chattering teeth. It was not like an ordinary blow of the sea. The skipper rushed aft, hoping to get on deck through Ferrier's cabin, but he met a cataract of water which blinded him, and he came back saying, "I doubt her deck won't stand another like that. Now, gentlemen, it's for you to decide."

"Skipper, send Bill up to help me with the boat. That last's drove her abreast the skylight."

The one look-out man had saved himself. How, only a smacksman can tell. The skipper came down again.

"Now, gentlemen, shall I run or not?"

"Well, skipper, if we get through this we shall be more needed than ever."

"Yes, sir; but if that last sea hadn't glanced a bit on our starboard bow, we *shouldn't* have got through. We've saved the boat, but she was snapped from the grips like a rotten tooth."

"But, skipper, we may be pooped in running, or we may do some damage to the rudder and broach-to. Then we should be worse off than here."

"Very well, gentlemen. I'm not concerned for myself. My duty's done now, and I'll do my best. I advise you to take some coffee, and try to get a few hours' rest before the pinch comes. You'll not get much rest then."

Another sea came, and another; the sound of the wind paralyzed thought

and made speech impossible. Had any one said, "The end of the world has come," you would have felt only a mild surprise, for even the capacity for fear or apprehension was stunned as the brain is stunned by a blow.

"I can't stand this any longer, Tom. Even brandy wouldn't do much good for more than an hour. Do you hear me?"

Tom nodded in a dazed way.

"Well, then, let's go into the open somehow. Perhaps the skipper's strong, hot coffee *will* wake us. Anyhow, let us try a cup."

Oh! that indescribable night! To know that death was feasting in that blackness; to feel that vigilance was of no avail; to turn away convulsed from the iron push of the demoniac force which for the time seemed to have taken the place of an atmosphere. Smash! Rattle. Then a wild whistling; a many lashes, that flapped and cracked; then the fall of the spar, and the deep, quick sigh from Lennard as it whizzed close by him. The gaff of the mizen had broken away, halliards and all, as if a supernatural knife had been drawn across by a strong hand. The men were hanging on, while a bellying, uncontrollable canvas buffeted them as if it had volition and sense, and strove to knock their senses out of them. A canvas adrift is like an unruly beast. All hands came through the after-cabin, and attacked the thundering sail.

"For your lives now, chaps, before another sea comes! I can't slack away these halliards. Bob, out knife, and up in the rings; cut them away."

The gaff had fallen, but it was not clear yet. In some mysterious fashion the mizen halliards had yielded and slipped for some distance after a sudden shock had cut the gaff halliards and let the jaws of the gaff free; so now the sail would neither haul up nor come down. Like a cat Bob sprang up the remaining rings, and hacked at the gear; the sail fell--and so did Bob, with a dull thud.

"Oh! skipper, that's a bad 'un."

"Cast a line round him till we've stowed. Jim, take hold of her; she's falling off! Shove her to the wind again till we're done! Now, lads, all of you on to the sheet! Haul! oh, haul! Slack away them toppin' lifts. So; now we've got her!

Where's Bob?"

"Doctor's got him below, skipper."

Poor Bob had tried to save himself with his right arm, and his hand had been bent backwards over, and doubled back on his forearm. Bob was settled for the rest of the gale. Lewis soon had the broken limb put up, and Bob stolidly smoked and pondered on the inequalities of life. Why was he, and not another, told off to spring up that reeling mizen into a high breeze that ended by mastering him, and flinging him as if he had been a poor wrestler matched with a champion? Here he was--crippled.

"Well, Bob, if this is a specimen, we shall see something when it clears."

"Yes, doctor; you may say that, you may. I never see nothing like it. If you give a man ten hundred thousand goulden sovereigns, and you says, 'Tell me directly you see anything comin',' he couldn't. When I was on the look-out, I held this 'ere hand, as is broken, up before my eyes, and I couldn't see it, sir--and that's the gospel, as I'm here!"

"Do you think we're out of the track of ships?"

"I know no more than Adam, sir. Hello! what's that?"

"Up here, sir--up, quick!"

Ferrier's heart jumped as he thought--"Tom."

"Haul on here, sir, with us. God be praised, he took his rope over with him. Haul, for the Lord's sake! Now! now!"

Ferrier lashed at his work in a fury of effort: a sea sent him on his knees, and yet he lay back against the inrush of water, and hauled with all the weight of body and arms.

"Haul, my men! A good life is at the end of that line. Haul! the ice may congeal his pulses before you get at him! Haul! oh, haul!"

The skipper sprang to the grating abaft the wheel.

"Here he is. Glory be to God! Are you right, sir?"

No answer.

"My God! are you sure, skipper?"

"Sure. Look!"

Ferrier saw an object like a mass of sea-weed, but the night was so pitchy that no outline could he made out.

"Who durst try to pass a line under his arms?"

"Hand here, skipper; I will."

"Oh, Lewis! Keep nerve and eye steady. The graves are twenty fathoms below."

Lennard was inert, and no one could tell how he held on until he was flung on the deck.

"Lend us that binnacle lamp, Jim. Turn it on him."

Then it was seen that Tom might have been hauled up without putting Ferrier in peril, for the rope was twice coiled under his arms and loosely knotted in front; he had taken that precaution after seeing Bob fall. Moreover, strange to say, his teeth were locked in the rope, for he had laid hold with the last effort of despair.

The wind volleyed; the darkness remained impenetrable, and every sea that came was a Niagara; yet the gallant smack stood to it, and Tom Lennard slumbered after the breath came back to him. His ribs had stood the strain of that rope, but he had really been semi-strangled, and he was marked with two lurid, extravasated bands round his chest. He never spoke before falling asleep; he only pressed Ferrier's hand and pointed, with a smile, upward.

"If it goes on like this, sir, there won't be many of us left by the morning."

"No, skipper. I hope the men will secure themselves like us. Mr. Lennard had a near thing. He has a jaw like a walrus, or his teeth must have gone."

So, in fitful whispers, the grim scraps of talk went on while the blare of the trumpets of the Night was loosened over the sea.

"Look--over the port-side, there. It's beginning."

Ferrier could make out nothing until the skipper gave him the exact line to look on. Then he saw a Something that seemed to wallow darkly on a dark tumble of criss-cross seas.

"He's bottom up, sir. If we'd been running and gone into him, we should have been at rest soon."

"How beautifully we are behaving, skipper. I suppose there's no chance of our going like that?"

"Not without something hits our rudder. We seem to have got away from the track now. While you were below, you see, I got her mainsail in, and that strip of sail has no more pull than a three-cloth jib. Please God, we may get through. If anything happens to my mainmast I shall give in--but it's a good spar."

Ferrier's mind went wandering with a sort of boding fierceness; he framed dramatic pictures of all that was passing in the chaotic ruin of shattered seas that rushed and seethed around. He had often spoken of the gigantic forces of Nature, but the words had been like algebraic formulæ; now he saw the reality, and his rebellious mind was humbled.

"To-morrow, or next day, I shall have to see the misery that this causes. But why should I talk of misery? The word implies a complaint. A hundred smacksmen die tonight. Pitiful! But if this hurricane and all the lesser breezes did not blow, then millions would die who live now in healthy air. If the sea were not lashed up and oxygenated, we should have a stagnant pest-hole like an old rotten fishpond all round the world. England would be like Sierra Leone, and there would soon be no human race. Who talks of kindness and goodness in face of a scene like this? We know nothing. The hundred fishermen die, and the unpoisoned millions live. We are shadows; we have not a single right. If I die tonight, I shall have been spent by an Almighty Power that has used me. Will He cast me to nothingness after I have fulfilled my purpose? Never. There is not a gust of this wind that does not move truly according to eternal law; there can be no injustice, for no one can judge the Judge. If I suffer the petty pang of Death while a great purpose is being wrought out, I have no more reason to complain than if I were a child sharply pushed out of the way to let a fire-engine pass. The great Purpose is everything, and I am but an instrument--just as this hurricane is

an instrument. I shall be humble and do the work next my hand, and I will never question God any more. If a man can reckon his own individuality as anything after seeing this sight, he is a human failure; he is an abortion that should be wiped out. And now I'll try to pray."

So in sharp, short steps the scholar's thought strode on, and the sombre storming of the gale made an awful accompaniment to the pigmy's strenuous musings. Ferrier's destiny was being settled in that cataclysm, had he only known it; his pride was smitten, and he was ready to "receive the kingdom of God as a little child," to begin to learn on a level with the darkened fishermen whom he had gently patronized. As soon as he had resolved that night on Self-abnegation, as soon as the lightning conviction of his own insignificance had flashed through him, he humbly but "boldly" came "to the Throne of Grace." Like every one else who thus draws near to God through the Saviour's merit, he learned what it is to "obtain mercy"; a brooding calm took possession of his purified soul, and he was born again into a world where pride, egotism, angry revolt, and despair are unknown.

There would be no good in prolonging the story of this wrestle; there was a certain sameness in every phase, though the dangers seemed to change with such protean swiftness. For three days it lasted, and on the third day Tom Lennard, Ferrier, the patients, and the crew, were far more interested in the steward's efforts to boil coffee than they were in the arrowy flight of the snow-masses or the menace of towering seas. Ferrier attended his men, and varied that employment by chatting with Lennard, who was now able to sit up. Tom was much shaken and very solemn; he did not like talking of his late ordeal.

"Lewis, my dear friend, I have looked on the Eternal Majesty, and now death has no more terror for me. He will hide me in the shadow of His wings. I have seen what was known to them of old time; I knew when the gun seemed to go off inside my head, and I could feel nothing more, I knew that I should live: and that was the last light I saw in this world until you saved me--God bless you! We won't ever speak of it again."

Thus spoke Tom, with a fluency and correctness of diction which surprised himself. And he has never dilated on his mishap throughout his life so far.

It is not uncommon--that same awe-stricken reticence. This writer knows a man, a great scholar, a specimen of the best aristocratic class, a man fitted to charm both men and women. Long ago, he and two others slid two thousand feet down an Alpine slope. For two days and two nights the living man rested on a glacier--tied to the dead. "Oh! wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!" My subject knows all about this; he has gazed on the Unutterable, and he has never mentioned his soul-piercing experience to any creature. There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy.

* * * * *

The worst of the ordeal was over; the snow ceased, the hurricane fined off, and only the turbulent water rushing in discoloured mountains under the last impetus of the wind--only that cruel water persisted in violence. It seemed as if for days the sea were sentient, and could not forget its long torture. Then came a griping frost and a hard sky, with slight breeze and a quiet sea.

Oh, the marks of ruin and annihilation! The sea was strewn with wreckage; masses of timber swung around in loose rafts; vessels, bottom up, passed the smack from day to day; the fleet was dispersed, and only a few battered and ragged vessels could be seen rolling here and there in disorganized isolation. "Goodness knows when we shall ever see our people again, sir. We can't do nothin'; I'll keep a sharp look-out all through daylight, and we'll pick them up if we can, but I fancy most of them have run for home or the Humber. Before we settle to work again I was thinking of a little thanksgiving service. We're saved for some good purpose, sir, and it's only fit we should say a word humbly to our blessed Father in heaven."

And all on board met in the simple North Sea fashion, and even the patients

had their say. Only Tom Lennard remained impenetrably silent; he knew too much; he was a past-master in the mystery of mysteries. The people used to say in Ravenna, "Behold, there is the man who has been in hell," when they saw the awful face of Dante; poor, loose-brained Tom Lennard had also seen that which may not be made known.

"There's some on 'em right ahead, skipper, I think. Joe Questor's there, I know. He hasn't lost his new mainsail. See 'em, skipper?"

A few dark grey shadows like slim poles were all that Ferrier could see; but the man was right, and when the deft fingers--those miraculous fingers--of the seaman had set the mizen right, the smack was sailed with every stitch on, until she buried herself in the sulky, slow bulges of the ground swell. Ferrier said, "You see, skipper, it's better to risk carrying away something, than to have some poor smashed customer waiting helpless." And the skipper cracked on with every rag he could show until, on a searing frosty morning, he shot in among the dismal remains of the gallant fleet.

Ferrier's vessel would have pleased certain lovers of the picturesque if they had studied her appearance, but she was in a dreadful state from the prosaic seaman's point of view. Every wave had been laid under tribute by the frost, and a solid hillock had gathered forward; the anchor was covered in like a candied fruit; the boat was entirely concealed by a hard white mass; while as for the ropes--they cannot be described fittingly. Would any one imagine that a half-inch rope could be made the centre of a column of ice three inches in diameter? Would any one imagine that a small block could be the nucleus of a lump as large as a pumpkin? From, stem to stern the vessel was caked in glossy ice, and from her gaffs and booms hung huge icicles like the stalagmites of the Dropping Cave. All the other smacks were in the same plight, and it was quite clear that no fishing could be done for awhile, because every set of trawl-gear was banked in by a slippery, heavy rock.

There was something dismal and forlorn in the sound of the salutations as Ferrier ran past each vessel; the men were in low spirits despite their deliverance, for there was damage visible in almost every craft, and, moreover, the shadow of Death was there. When Lewis came alongside of the Admiral he sang out "What cheer?" and the answer came, "Very bad. We shall be a fortnight before we get them together."

"Do you think many are lost?"

"I knows of seven gone down, but there may be more for all I know. Some that ran for home would get nabbed on the Winterton or the Scrowby."

"Up with our flag, skipper, and see about the boat." Ferrier knew that his task would soon be upon him, and he helped like a Titan, with axe and pick, to clear away the ice. A spell of two hours' labour, and the expenditure of dozens of kettles of hot water, freed the boat, and she was put out, regardless of the chance of losing her. (By the way, the men care very little about a boat's being swamped so long as the painter holds. I have seen three go under astern of one vessel during the delivery of fish. The little incident only caused laughter.)

The chapter of casualties was enough to curdle the blood of any one but a doctor--a doctor with perfect nerve and training. All kinds of violent exertions had been used to save the vessels, and men had toiled with sacks sewn round their boots to avoid slipping on a glassy surface which froze like a mirror whenever it was exposed for a few seconds to the air between the onrushes of successive waves. Ferrier carried his life in his hand for three days as he went from vessel to vessel; the sea was unpleasant; the risk involved in springing over icy bulwarks on to slippery decks was miserable, and the most awkward operations had to be performed at times when it needed dexterity merely to keep a footing. One man had the calf of his leg taken clean away by a topmast which came down like a falling spear; the frost had caught the desperate wound before Ferrier came on the scene, and the poor mortal was near his last. The young man saw that the leg must go; he had never ventured to think of such a contingency as this, and his strained nerve well-nigh failed him. A grim little conversation took

place in the cabin between the skipper, the doctor, and the patient. I let the talk explain itself, so that people may understand that Ferrier's proposed hospital was not demanded by a mere faddist. The man was stretched on a moderately clean tablecloth laid on the small open space in the close dog-hutch below; a dull pallor appeared to shine from *underneath*, and glimmered through the bronze of the skin. He was sorely failed, poor fellow. The skipper stood there--dirty, unkempt, grim, compassionate. Ferrier put away a bucket full of stained muslin rags (he had tried his best to save the limb), and then he said softly, "Now, my son, I think I can save you; but you must take a risk. We can't send you home; I can't take you with me until we get a turn of smooth water; if I leave you as you are, there is no hope. Do you consent to have the leg taken off?"

"Better chance it, Frank, my boy. I dursn't face your old woman if I go home without you."

"Will it give me a chance? Can I stand the pain?"

"You'll have no pain. You'll never know, and it all depends upon *afterwards*."

"I stand or fall with you, doctor. I have some little toebiters at home I don't want to leave yet."

"Very good. Now, skipper, stand by him till I come back; I have some things to bring."

Two wild journeys had to be risked, but the doctor's luck held, and he once more came on that glassy deck. Sharply and decisively he made his preparations.

"Have you nerve enough to assist me, skipper?"

"I'll be as game as I can, doctor."

"Then kneel here, and take this elastic bag in your hand; turn this rose right over my hands as I work, and keep the spray steadily spirting on the place. You understand? Now, Frank, my man, when I put this over your face, take a deep breath."

* * * * *

Ferrier was pale when Frank asked "Where am I?" He waved the skipper aside, and set himself to comfort the brave man who had returned from the death-in-life of chloroform.

"Bear down on our people and let my men take the boat back. I'm going to stop all night with you, skipper."

"Well, of all the----well, there sir, it you ain't. Lord! what me and Frank'll have to tell them if we gets home! Why, it's a story to last ten year, this 'ere. And on this here bank, in a smack!"

"Never mind that, old fellow. Get my men out of danger."

The extraordinary--almost violent--hospitality of the skipper; his lavishness in the matter of the fisherman's second luxury--sugar; his laughing admiration, were very amusing. He would not sleep, but he watched fondly over doctor and patient.

Ferrier was fortified now against certain insect plagues which once afflicted him, and the brilliant professor laid his head on an old cork fender and slept like an infant. He did not return until next evening; he went without books, tobacco, alcohol, and conversation, and he never had an afterthought about his own privations.

Frank seemed so cool and easy when his saviour left him, that Ferrier determined to give him a last word of hope.

"Good-bye, my man. No liquor of any sort. You'll get well now. Bear up for four days more, because I must have you near me; then either you'll run home with me, or I'll order your skipper to take you."

Nothing that the Middle Ages ever devised could equal that suffering seaman's unavoidable tortures during the next few days. He should have been on a soft couch; he was on a malodorous plank. He should have been still; he was only kept from rolling over and over by pads of old netting stuffed under him on each side. Luxury was denied him; and the necessities of life were scarce indeed.

Poor Frank! his sternly-tender surgeon did not desert him, and he was at last

sent away in his own smack. He lived to be an attendant in a certain institution which I shall not yet name.

After much sleepless labour, which grew more and more intense as the stragglers found their way up, Ferrier summarized his work and his failures. He had treated frostbite--one case necessitating amputation; he had cases of sea-ulcers; cracks in the hand. Stop! The outsider may ask why a cracked hand should need to be treated by a skilled surgeon. Well, it happens that the fishermen's cracked hands have gaps across the inside bends of the fingers which reach the bone. The man goes to sleep with hands clenched; as soon as he can open them the skin and flesh part, and then you see bone and tendon laid bare for salt, or grit, or any other irritant to act upon. I have seen good fellows drawing their breath with sharp, whistling sounds of pain, as they worked at the net with those gaping sores on their gnarled paws. One such crack would send me demented, I know; but our men bear it all with rude philosophy. Ferrier learned how to dress these ugly sores with compresses surrounded by oiled silk. Men could then go about odd jobs without pain, and some of them told the surgeon that it was like heaven.

Well, there were half a score smashed fingers, a few severe bruises, several poisoned hands, a crushed foot, and many minor ailments caused by the incessant cold, hunger, and labour. Ten men should have been sent home; one died at sea; ten more might have saved their berths if they could have had a week of rest and proper treatment.

My hero was downcast, but his depression only gave edge and vigour to his resolution in the end. He had learned the efficacy of prayer now--prayer to a loving and all-powerful Father; and he always had an assured sense of protection and comfort when he had told his plain tale and released his heart. I, the writer, should have smiled at him in those days, but I am not so sure that I could smile with confidence now.

Lennard stuck to his favourite with helpful gallantry, and became so skilled a nurse that Ferrier was always content to leave him in charge. Both men tried to

cheer each other; both were sick for home, and there is no use in disguising the fact. When Ferrier one day came across the simple lines--

"Perhaps the selfsame song has found a path
To the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,
She stood in tears amid the alien corn,"

he came near to imitating Ruth. He knew his duty well enough, but the affections and the spirit are strong. Then the almost ceaseless bad weather, and the many squalid conditions of life, were wearing to body and soul.

An abominable day broke soon after Frank had sailed for home, and a sea got up which threatened to shake the spars out of our smack. Half a gale blew; then a whole gale; then a semi-hurricane, and at last all the ships had to take in the fourth reef in the mainsail. The two Samaritans were squatting on the floor in the cabin (after they had nailed canvas strips across the sides of the berths to prevent the patients from falling out), for no muscular power on earth could have enabled its possessor to keep his place on a high seat in that maddening jump. It was enough to jerk the pipe from one's mouth. The deck was all the time in a smother of half-frozen slush, and the seas were so wall-sided that the said slush fell in great plumps from side to side with a force which plucked the men off their legs several times. Again and again it appeared as if the smack must fall off the sides of the steep seas, as the long screw colliers sometimes do in the Bay of Biscay when the three crossing drifts meet. It was a heartbreaking day, and, at the very worst, a smack bore down as if he meant to come right into the Mission vessel. Sweeping under the lee and stopping his vessel, the smack's skipper hailed. "Got the doctor on board?" Down went the newcomer into the trough, leaving just a glimpse of his truck. Up again with a rolling wave.

"Yes. What's up?"

"We've got a man dying here, and not one of my white-livered hounds will go in the small boat."

"Can't you persuade them?"

"No. They'll forfeit their voyage first."

"Edge away from us, and I'll see."

By this time the two smacks were almost in collision, but they went clear. The skipper went below and stated the case. Ferrier listened grimly.

"What do you think, skipper?"

"Your life's precious, sir. You've come to be like the apple of my eye; I'd rather die myself than you should go."

"Are your men game enough?"

"I'm going myself if you go. If I die I shall be in my Master's service."

"Is it so very bad?"

"Very."

"What's our chance?"

"Ten to one against us ever coming back."

"It's long odds. Shove the boat out."

"Stop a bit, sir. Don't smile at an old man. Let's put it before the Lord. I never found that fail. Come, sir, and I'll pray for you."

"All cant," do you say, reader? Maybe, my friend, but I wish you and I could only have the heart that the words came from. The skipper bared his good grey head, and prayed aloud.

"Lord, Thou knowest we are asked to risk our lives. We are in Thine hands, and our lives are nothing. Say, shall we go? We shall know in our hearts directly if you tell us. Spare us, if it be Thy will; if not, still Thy will be done. We are all ready."

After a pause the skipper said, "We'll do it, sir. Shove on your life-jacket. I'll take two life-buoys."

Lennard had kneeled with the others, and he said, "Shall I go?"

"You're too heavy, Tom. You'll over-drive the boat. I'll chance all."

Even to get into that boat was a terrible undertaking, for the smack was showing her keel, and the wall-siders made it likely that the boat would

overbalance and fall backward like a rearing horse. Six times Ferrier had his foot on the rail ready to make his lithe, flying bound into the cockleshell; six times she was spun away like a foambell--returning to crash against the side as the smack hove up high. At last the doctor fairly fell over the rail, landed astride on the boat's gunwale, and from thence took a roll to the bottom and lay in the swashing water. Then delicately, cautiously, the skipper and his man picked their way with short, catchy strokes--mere dabs at the boiling foam.

"God bless you," Tom sang out, and the big fellow was touched when he heard the weak voices of the patients below, crying "God bless you!" with a shrillness that pierced above the hollow rattle of the wind.

"There goes the boat up, perpendicularly as it appears. Ah! that's over her. No; it's broken aside. What a long time she is in coming up. Here's a cross sea! Ferrier's baling. Oh! it's too much. Oh! my poor friend! Here's a screamer! God be praised--she's topped it! Will the smack hit her? Go under his lee if you love me. They've got the rope now. In he goes, smash on his face! Just like him, the idiot--Lord bless his face and him!" Thomas hung on to the rigging and muttered thus, to his own great easement.

When Ferrier got up, he said, "Skipper, only once more of that for me. Once more, and no more after. If a raw hand had been there we should never have lived. Thank goodness you came! You deserve the Albert medal, and you shall have it too, if I can do anything."

The new patient was gasping heavily, and the whites of his eyes showed. The skipper explained: "You see, sir, he's got cold through with snow-water, and he sleeps in his wet clothes same as most of us; but he's not a strong chap, and it's settled him. He's as hard as a stone all round, and sometimes he's hot and sometimes he's cold."

"Has he sweated?"

"No, sir; and he's got cramps that double him up."

"Has he spoken lately?"

"Not a word."

"Well now, give me every blanket you can rake up or steal, or get anyhow."

When the blankets were brought, Ferrier said, "Now I'm going to make him sweat violently, and then I shall trap him up, as some of you say, and you must do your best to keep him warm afterwards, or else you may lose him. When he has perspired enough you must rub him dry, with some muslin that I'll give you, and then merely wait till he's well."

In that wretched, reeking hole Ferrier improvised a Russian bath with a blanket or two, a low stool, and a lamp turned down moderately low. He helped to hold up his man until the sweat came, first in beads, and then in a copious downpour; he wrapped him up, and did not leave till the patient professed himself able to get up and walk about. The men merely gaped and observed the miraculous revival with faith unutterable. Then our young man bade good-bye, merely saying, "You'll keep your berth for a couple of days, and then signal us if you want me."

The sky was ragged and wild with the tattered banners of cloud; the sea was inky dark, and the wind had an iron ring. The Mission vessel had dropped to leeward of the fishing smack, and the boat had about three hundred yards to go. But what a three hundred yards! Great black hills filled up the space and flowed on, leaving room for others equally big and equally black. The sides of these big hills were laced with lines of little jumping hillocks, and over all the loud wind swept, shearing off tearing storm-showers of spray. An ugly three hundred yards!

"Well, how is it now, skipper?"

"Neck or nothing, sir. You can stop here if you like."

"Oh, no! Mr. Lennard would have apoplexy. Let us try. It can't be worse than it was in coming."

"Good-bye, sir. I'm sorry my comrades hadn't the risk instead of you. I'll take good care you don't attend one of *them*."

Home, happiness, fame! The face of Marion Dearsley. Images of peace and love.--All these things passed through Lewis Ferrier's mind as he prepared for that black journey. A dark wave swung the boat very high. "Will she turn turtle?"

No. But she was half full. "Bale away, sir." Whirr, went the wind; the liquid masses came whooping on. One hundred yards more would have made all safe, though the boat three times pitched the oars from between the thole-pins. A big curling sea struck her starboard quarter too sharply, and for a dread half-minute she hung with her port gunwale in the water as she dropped like a log down the side of the wave. It was too cruel to last. Ferrier heard an exclamation; then a deep groan from the skipper; and then to the left he saw a great slate-coloured Thing rushing down. The crest towered over them, bent, shattered with its own very velocity, and fell like a crumbling dark cavern over the boat. There was a yell from both smacks; then the boat appeared, swamped, with the men up to their necks; then the boat went, sucking the men down for a time, and then Lewis Ferrier and his two comrades were left spinning in the desperate whirls of the black eddies.

"Run to them!" yelled Tom. "Never mind if you carry everything away. Only keep clear of the other smack." Ferrier found the water warm, and he let himself swing passively. His thoughts were in a hurly-burly. Was this the end of all--youth, love, brave, days of manhood? Nay, he would struggle. Had they not prayed before they set out? All must come right--it must. And yet that spray was choking. He could not see his companions. A yell. "Lewis, my son, I'll come over." But Tom was held back; the smack was brought up all shaking. First the skipper caught a rope. Good, noble old man! He was half senseless when they hauled him on board. Then Lewis heard, as in a torpid reverie, a great voice, "Lay hold, Lewis, and I *will* come if you're bothered." What was he doing? Mechanically he ran the rope under the sleeve of his life-jacket; a mighty jerk seemed likely to pull him in halves as the smack sheered; then a heavy, dragging pain came--he was being torn, torn, *torn*.

He woke in the cabin before the fire, and found Tom Lennard blubbering hard over him. "Warm it seems, Thomas? Reckon I almost lost my number that time."

"My good Lewis! No more. I had to strip you, and I've done everything.

The skipper's dead beat, and if Bob couldn't steer we should be in a pickle. Let me put you in a hot blanket now, and you'll have some grog." Then, with his own queer humour, Lewis Ferrier said, "Tom, all this is only a lesson. If we'd had a proper boat, a proper lift for sick men, and a proper vessel to lift them into, I should have been all right. We won't come back to have these baths quite so often. We'll have a *ship* when we come again, and not merely a thing to sail. And now give me just a thimble-full of brandy, and then replace the bottle amongst the other poisonous physic! I'm getting as lively as a grasshopper. A nautical--a nautical taste, Thomas!"

And then Ferrier went off to sleep just where he was, after very nearly giving a most convincing proof in his own person of the necessity for a hospital vessel.

Lennard brooded long, and at last he went to the skipper and asked, "Old man, shall Bob shove her head for home?"

The skipper nodded.

And now you may see why I purposely made this chapter so long.

You have an accurate picture of what goes on during all the snowy months on that wild North water!

CHAPTER III.

THE PLOTTER.

An old gentleman and a tall girl were walking in the secluded grounds of a great house that had once belonged to an unhappy Prince. The place was very near London, yet that suggestive hum of the City never seemed to pierce the deep glades of the park; the rooks talked and held councils, and tried culprits, and stole, and quarrelled as freely as they might have done in the wilds of Surrey or Wiltshire; the rabbits swarmed, and almost every south-country species of wild bird nested and enjoyed life in the happy, still woods and shrubberies. Modern--very modern--improvements had been added to the body of the old house, but there was nothing vulgar or ostentatious. Everything about the place, from the old red palace to the placid herd of Alderney cows that grazed in a mighty avenue, spoke of wealth--wealth solid and well-rooted. There was no sign of shoddy anywhere; the old gentleman had bought the place at an enormous price, and he had left all the ancient work untouched; but he would have stables, laundry, tennis-court, and so on through the offices and outside buildings, fitted out according to rational principles of sanitation, and, if the truth be told, he would rather have seen healthy ugly stables than the most quaint and curious of living-rooms that ever spread typhoid.

Mr. Cassall was a man of peculiarly modern type. From his youth upward he had never once acknowledged himself beaten, though he had known desperate circumstances; he saw that, as our civilization goes, money is accounted a rough gauge of merit, and a man's industry, tenacity, sobriety, self-control, and even virtue, are estimated and popularly assessed according to the amount of money which he owns, and he resolved that, let who will fail, he at

least would have money and plenty of it. He bent his mind on one end for forty years; he was unscrupulous in all respects so long as he could keep within the law; he established a monopoly in his business on the ruins of scores of small firms which he crushed by weight of metal; he had no pity, no consideration, no remorse, in business hours; and he succeeded just as any other man of ability will succeed if he gives himself up body and soul to money-making. He never was proud; he was only hard. To his niece, whom he passionately loved, he would say, "Never be ashamed, my dear, to tell people that your uncle was a wholesale draper and hosier. Your mother was a little ashamed of it, and I had some trouble to cure her. Don't you be so silly. People think all the more of you for owning frankly that you or your relations have risen from the ranks, as they call it."

When he retired his wealth was colossal. Smart men would say that Bob Cassall's name was good for a million anywhere; and indeed it was good for two millions, and more even than that. He never felt the burden of great riches; as soon as he was safe he seemed to change his nature, and became the most dexterously benevolent of men. He abhorred a cadger; he abhorred the very sight of the begging circulars which so appreciably increase the postman's daily burden. He was a sensible reader, and, when he heard of a traveller who was something more than a mere lion, he would make his acquaintance in the most respectful and unobtrusive way, and he managed to learn much. His shrewd innocence and piquant wit pleased those whom he questioned, and as he was always willing to place his house, horses, boats, and game, at the disposal of any traveller who pleased him, he was reckoned rather a desirable acquaintance. His prejudice against missions to the lower tribes was derived solely from men who had lived and worked among the negroes, and, like all his other prejudices, it was violently strong. He would say, "Have we not good white men here who are capable of anything? I don't want to assist your Polish Jew in the East, nor Quashee Nigger in Africa. Show me a plucky fellow that is ready to work at anything for any hours, and I'll help him. But instead of aiding our own kindly

white race, you fool away millions on semi-baboons; you send out men at £300 a year and ask them to play at being St. Paul, and you don't convert a hundred niggers a year--and those who are converted are often very shady customers. Your Indian men drive about in buggies, and the 'cute natives laugh at them. Do you know what a Bengali Baboo or a Pathan is really like? The one is three times as clever as your missionary; the other is a manly fanatic and won't have him at any price. You're a maritime nation, and you've got ten thousand good British seamen out of work. Why not assist *them*?"

So this quaint and shockingly heterodox millionaire would rave on, for he was a most peppery old person. One dark and terrible legend is current concerning him, but I hardly dare repeat it. An affable gentleman from a foreign mission called on him one day, and obtained admission (I am bound to add without any subterfuge). Bob heard the visitor's story, and knitted his beetling bushy brows. He said: "Well, sir, you've spoken very fairly. Now just answer me one or two questions. How much money have you per year?"

"Half a million."

"Good. Does any one supervise your missionaries?"

"We have faith in their integrity, and we credit them with industry."

"You trust them five hundred miles up country?"

"Certainly, sir."

"How many missionaries' wives died in the last ten years?"

"I think probably about eighty."

"Eighty sweet English girls condemned to death. Good."

The grizzled old fellow rose in dignified fashion, and said:

"You will perhaps lunch alone, and I shall be pleased if you will be good enough to make this your final visit."

Then the story goes on to say that Mr. Cassall placed a kennel on the lawn with a very large and truculent brindled bulldog as tenant; over the kennel he coiled a garden hose, and above the bulldog's portal appeared the words, "For Foreign Missions."

This seems too shocking to be true, and I fancy the whole tale was hatched in the City. Certainly Mr. Cassall was scandalously unjust to the missionaries--an injustice which would have vanished had he personally known the glorious results for God and humanity achieved by self-denying missionaries and their devoted wives who carry the gospel of Christ to far-off heathen lands--but then where is the man who has not his whims and oddities?

This man, according to his lights, spread his benefactions lavishly and wisely on public charities and private cases of need. He liked above all things to pick out clever young men and set them up in retail businesses with money lent at four per cent. Not once did he make a blunder, and so very lucky was he that he used to tell his niece that with all his enormous expenditure he had not touched the fringe of his colossal capital. If he assisted any advertised charity he did so in the most princely way, but only after he had personally held an audit of the books. If the committee wanted to have the chance of drawing ten thousand pounds, let them satisfy him with their books; if they did not want ten thousand pounds, or thought they did not deserve it, let them leave it alone.

This was Robert Cassall, who was Marion Dearsley's uncle. His grim, grizzled head was stooping a little as he bent towards his niece on this soft winter day, and he himself looked almost like the human type of a hard, wholesome, not unkindly Winter. His high Roman nose, penthouse brows, quick jetty eye, square well-hung chin, and above all his sturdy, decided gait--all marked him: for a Man every inch, and he did not belie his appearance, for no manlier being walks broad England than Robert Cassall.

He was listening a little fretfully to his niece, but her strength and sweetness kept him from becoming too touchy. The deep contralto that we know, said--

"Well then, you see, uncle dear, these men cannot help themselves. They are--oh! such magnificent people--that is the country-born ones, for some of the town men are not nice at all; but the East Coast men are so simple and fine, but then, you know, they are so poor. Our dear Mr. Fullerton told me that in very bad weather the best men cannot earn so much as a scavenger can on shore."

"Yes, yes, my girl. You know I listen carefully to everything you say. I value your talk immensely, but don't you observe, my pet, that if I help every one who cannot help himself I may as well shorten matters by going into the street and saying to each passer-by, 'Please accept half a crown as your share of my fortune'?"

"But the reasons are peculiar here, uncle. Oh! I do so wish Mrs. Walton could see you. She has logic, and she reasons where I dream."

"Hah! Would you? What? Turn Mrs. Walton loose at me? No ladies here, miss, I warn you."

"Now, please be good while I go on. I want to repeat Dr. Ferrier's reasoning if I can. You have fish every day--mostly twice?"

"Yes, but I don't give charity to my butcher. The rascal is able to tip *me*, if the truth were known."

"True, uncle, and you don't need to give anything to your fishmonger. Why, you silly dear, you think you are a commercial genius, and yet the fishmonger probably charges you ever so much per cent, over and above what the fishermen receive, because of the great expense of railway carriage and distribution of the fish. I know that, because Mr. Fullerton told me; so you see I've corrected you, even you, on a point of finance."

How prettily this stern, composed young woman could put on artful airs of youthfulness when she chose! How she had that firm, far-seeing old man held in position, ready to be twirled round her rosy finger!

Which of us is not held in bondage by some creature of the kind? Unhappy the man who misses that sweet and sacred slavery.

Mr. Cassall wrinkled his grim face not unpleasantly. "Go on; go on. You're a lawyer, neither more nor less. By the way, who is this--this what's-the-name--the Doctor, that you mentioned?"

"Oh! he is a very clever young man who has chosen to become a surgeon instead of being a university professor. He's now out on the North Sea in all this bad weather. He was so much struck with the need of a hospital, that he made up

his mind to risk a winter so that he may tell people exactly what he has seen. He doesn't do things in a half-hearted way.

"What a long, pretty description of Mr. Ferrier. You seem to have taken a good deal of notice of the fortunate youth. Well, proceed."

Marion was a little flushed when she resumed, but her uncle did not observe anything at all unusual.

"Where was I?--Oh, yes! You hold it right to give money in charity to deserving objects. Now these men out at sea were left for years, perhaps for centuries, to live as a class without hope or help. Dear good creatures like my own uncle actually never knew that such people were in existence. They were far worse off than savages who have plantains and pumpkins and cocoanuts, and they were our own good flesh and blood, yet we neglected them."

"So we do the East Enders, and the Lancashire operatives and the dock labourers."

"True. But we are doing better now. Then you see the East End has been discovered a long time, and visitors can walk; but the poor North Sea men were left alone, until lately, by everybody."

"Still, we haven't come to why *I* should help them."

"Oh! uncle, you are a commercial man. Look at selfish reasons alone. You know how much we depend on sailors, and you often say the country is so very, very ill-provided with them. And these men are--oh! such splendid seamen. Fancy them staying out for two months with a gale of wind per week, and doing it in little boats about eighty feet long. You should see a hundred of them moving about in mazes and never running into any trouble. Oh! uncle, it *is* wonderful. Well, now, these men would be all ready for us if we were in national danger. I heard Mr. Fullerton say that hundreds of them are in the Naval Reserve, and as soon as they learned their way about an ironclad, they would take to the work by instinct. There is nothing they don't understand about the sea, and wind and weather. Would any negro help us? Why, Lord Wolseley told your friend Sir James Roche that a thousand Fantees ran away from fifty painted men of some

other tribe; and Lord Wolseley said that you can only make a negro of that sort defend himself by telling him that he will die if he runs away. You wouldn't neglect our own men who are so brave. Why they might have to defend London, where all your money is, and they would do it too." (Oh! the artful minx!) "And we send missions to nasty, brutal Fantees who run away from enemies, and we leave our own splendid creatures far worse off than dogs."

"Well, if I'm not having the law laid down to me, I should like to know who ever had. But I'm interested. Let's go round by the avenue, through the kitchen garden, and then round to the front by road, and make the walk as long as you can. Why on earth didn't Blair tell me something of this before? Most wonderful. He talks enough, heaven knows, about anything and everything, but he never mentioned that. Why?"

"Now don't be a crusty dear. I don't know what good form is, but he told me he thought it would hardly be good form to bring up the subject in your company, as it might seem as though he were hinting at a donation. Now that's plain."

"Good. Now never mind the preaching. I understand you to say that's done good."

"Perfectly wonderful. You remember how we were both insulted and hooted at Burslem, only because we were strangers! Well, now, in all the time that we were away we never heard one uncivil word. Not only they were civil, and so beautifully courteous to us, but they were so kindly among themselves, and it is all because they take their Christianity without any isms."

That wicked puss! She knew how Robert Cassall hated the fights of the sects, and she played on him, without in the least letting him suspect what she was doing. He snorted satisfaction. "That's good! that's good! No isms. And you say they've dropped drink?"

"Entirely, uncle, and all through the preaching without any isms. It is such a blessed, beautiful thing to think that hundreds of men who used to make themselves and every one about them wretched, are now calm, happy fellows.

And they do not cant, uncle. All of them know each other's failings, and they are gentle and forgiving to each other."

"What a precious lot of saints--much too good to live, I should fancy."

"Don't sneer, you graceless. Yes it's quite true. Do you know, dear, the Early Christian movement is being repeated on the sea."

"Umph. Early Christians! The later Christians have made a pretty mess of it. Now, just give me, without any waste words, all you have to say about this hospital business. Don't bring in preachee-preachee any more."

"Very good, dear. Stop me if I go wrong. I'm going round about. You know, you crabby dear, you wouldn't neglect an old dog or an old pony after it had served you. You wouldn't say, 'Oh, Ponto had his tripe and biscuit, and Bob had his hay;' you would take care of them. Now wouldn't you? Of course you would. And these fishers get their wages, but still they give their lives for your convenience just as the dog and the pony do."

"Yes, yes. But come to the hospital ship. You dance round as if you were a light-weight boxer sparring for breath."

"Hus-s-sh! I won't have it. The fishermen, then, are constantly being dreadfully hurt: I don't mean by such things as toothache, though many hundreds of them have to go sleepless for days, until they are worn out with pain;--I mean really serious, violent hurts. Why, we were not allowed to see several of the men who came to Dr. Ferrier for treatment. The wounds were too shocking. Nearly eight thousand of them are already relieved in various ways every year. Just fancy. And I assure you I wonder very much that there are no more."

"What sort of hurts?"

Then Marion told him all about the falling spars, the poisoned ulcers, the great festers, the poisoned hands caused by venomous fishes accidentally handled in the dark, wild midnights; the salt-water cracks, the thousand and one physical injuries caused by falls, or the blow of the sea, or the prolonged fighting with heavy gales. The girl had become eloquent; she had *seen*, and, as she was eloquent as women generally are, she was able to make the keen old man see

exactly what she wanted him to see. Then she told how Ferrier stuck to the sinking smack and saved his patient, and Robert Cassall muttered, "That sounds like a man's doings;" and then with every modesty she spoke of Tom Betts's mistake. There never was such a fluent, artful, mock-modest, dramatic puss in the world!

"Hah! mistook you for an angel. Eh? Not much mistake when you like to be good, but when you begin picking my pocket, there's not much of the angel about that, I venture to say."

So spoke the old gentleman; but the anecdote delighted him so much that for two or three days he snorted "Angel!" in various keys all over the house, until the servants thought he must have turned Atheist or Republican, or something generally contemptuous and sarcastic. The girl had him in her toils, and the fascination was too much for him. She could look grand as a Greek goddess, calm and inscrutably imposing as the Venus of Milo; but she could also play *Perdita*, and dance with her enslaved ones like a veritable little witch. Robert Cassall was captured--there could not be much error about that. He asked, with a sudden snap of teeth and lips which made his niece start: "And how much do you want to coax out of me, Miss Molly. Give me an idea. Of course I'm to be the uncle in the play, and 'Bless you, me chee-ill-dren,' and the rest. Oh yes!"

"Oh, one vessel could be kept up for £30,000."

"What! Per year?"

"No. The interest on £30,000 in North Western Railway stock would support a vessel well. You could easily support two."

"This girl's got bitten by a money-spending tarantula. Why you'd dance a million away in no time. *Why*, in the name of common sense, why should I support two vessels and their hulking crews--who chew tobacco, of course, don't they? To be sure, and hitch their slacks! Why should I support all these manly tars!"

"Now! I'll be angry. I'll tell you why. You know you have more money than

you can ever spend. You promise me some, and you're very good, but I'd almost rather live on my own than have too much. Well, I can't bear to think of your dying--but you must die, my own good dear, and you will have to divide your money before you go. There will be a lot of heart-burning, and I'm afraid poor me won't come off very lightly if I am left behind you. You will want a memorial."

"You remember me and do as I would like you to do, and we sha'n't trouble our minds much about memorials. I thought of almshouses, though."

"Oh! uncle dear, and then the Charity Commissioners may come in, and give all your money to fat, comfortable tradesmen's children, or well-to-do professional men, instead of to your old people, and the clergyman will be master of your money; and the old people will not be grateful, and all will go wrong, and my dear uncle will be forgotten. Oh! no."

"I say, come, come; you're too knowing. You're trying to knock a pet scheme of mine on the head."

The old man was genuinely concerned, and he felt as if some prop had been knocked away from him. But his sweet niece soon brought him round. She had scared his vanity on purpose, and she now applied the antidote.

"Supposing you give us two ships, you give yourself a better memorial than poor Alleyn of Dulwich, or Roan of Greenwich. Dear uncle, a charity which can be enjoyed by the idle is soon forgotten, and the pious founder is no more than a weed round the base of his own monument; he has not even a name. But you may actually see your own memorial working good long, long before you die, and you may see exactly how things will go on when your time is over. When you make out your deed of gift, exact the condition that one vessel must always be called after you, no matter how long or how often the ships are renewed. Sir James Roche can advise you about that. Place your portrait in the ship, and make some such provision as that she shall always carry a flag with your name, if you want to flaunt it, you proud thing! Then something like, at any rate, three thousand sufferers will associate your name with their happiness and cure every

year; and they will say in every port in England, 'I was cured on the *Robert Cassall*,' or 'I should have lost that hand,' or 'I was dying of typhoid and our skipper thought I needed salts, but they cured me on the *Robert Cassall*.' And the great ships will pass your beautiful ship, and when people ask 'What is that craft, and who is Cassall?' they will say that Cassall gave of his abundance during his lifetime, so that seamen might be relieved of bitter suffering; and those brave men will be so very grateful. And oh! uncle, fancy going out to sea in your own monument, and watching your own wealth working blessedness before your eyes. Why, you will actually have all the pleasures of immortality before you have lost the power of seeing or knowing anything. Oh, uncle dear, think if you can only see one sailor's limbs saved by means of your money! Think of having a hundred living monuments of your goodness walking about in the beautiful world--saved and made whole by you!"

The girl frightened the plucky old gentleman. His voice trembled, and he said, "Why, we must send you to Parliament! You can beat most of those dull sconces. Why, you're a no-mistake born orator--a talkee-talkee shining light! But if you go in for woman's rights and take to short hair, I shall die, after burning my will! And now you kiss me, my darling, and don't scare me any more with that witch's tongue." Was ever millionaire in such manner wooed? Was ever millionaire in such fashion won? The gipsy's eyes glowed, and her heart beat in triumph. Was this the Diana of Ferrier's imagination? Was this the queen of whom that athletic young gentleman was silently dreaming as he swung over the pulsing mountains of the North Sea? This slyboots! This most infantile coax!

I wish some half-dozen of the most charming young ladies in England would only begin coaxing, and coax to as good purpose! I would go out next summer and willingly end my days in work on the water, if I thought my adorable readers would only take Marion Dearsley's hint, and help to blot out a little misery and pain from this bestained world.

While Mr. Cassall was standing, with his teacup, before the glowing wood fire, he said, "Be my secretary for half an hour, Molly, my pet. Write and ask

Blair, and that other whom I don't know--Fullerton. Yes; ask them to dinner. And, let me see, you can't ask Mr. Phoenix the Sawbones?"

"Who, uncle?"

"Why, the young doctor that performs such prodigies, of course."

"He's out on the sea now, dear, and I expect that he's in some abominable cabin----"

"Catching smallpox to infect cleanly people with?"

"No, dear. He is most likely tending some helpless tatterdemalion, and moving about like a clever nurse. He is strong--so strong. He pulled a man through a wave with one hand while he held the rigging with the other, and the man told me that it was enough to tear the strongest man to pieces----"

"Here, stop the catalogue. Why, Sawbones must be Phoebus Apollo! If you talk much more I shall ask him a question or two. Go on with your secretary's duties, you naughty girl."

So ended the enslavement of Robert Cassall, and so, I hope, began his immortality. Oh! Marion Dearsley; sweet English lady. This is what you were turning over in your maiden meditations out at sea. Demure, deep, delicious plotter. What a *coup*! All the mischievous North Sea shall be jocund for this, before long. Surely they must name *one* vessel after *you*! You are a bloodless Judith, and you have enchanted a perfectly blameless Holofernes. I, your laureate, have no special song to give you just now, but I think much of you, for the sake of darkened fishers, if not for your own.

Mr. Cassall invited Sir James Roche to meet the other men. Sir James was the millionaire's physician and friend, and Cassall valued all his judgments highly, for he saw in the fashionable doctor a money-maker as shrewd as himself; and, moreover, he had far too much of the insular Briton about him to undervalue the kind of prestige which attaches to one who associates with royal personages and

breathes the sacred atmosphere of money. Sir James was an apple-faced old gentleman, who had been a miser over his stock of health and strength. He was consequently ruddy, buoyant, strong, and his good spirits were infectious. He delighted in the good things of the world; no one could order a dinner better; no one could better judge a picture; no one had a more pure and hearty liking for pretty faces;--and it must be added, that few men had more worldly wisdom of the kind needed for everyday use. He could fool a humbug to the top of his bent, and he would make use of humbugs, or any other people, to serve his own ends; but he liked best to meet with simple, natural folks, and Cassall always took his fancy from the time of their first meeting onward.

Sir James spent the afternoon in driving with his host, and they naturally chatted a great deal about Mr. Cassall's new ideas. The physician listened to his friend's version of Miss Dearsley's eloquence, and then musingly said, "I don't know that you can do better than take your niece's advice. The fact is, my dear fellow, you have far too much money. I have more than I know how to use, and mine is like a drop in that pond compared with yours. If you leave a great deal to the girl, you doom her to a life of anxiety and misery and cynicism; she will be worse off than a female cashier in a draper's shop. If she marries young, she will be picked up by some embarrassed peer; if she waits till she is middle-aged, some boy will take her fancy and your money will be fooled away on all kinds of things that you wouldn't like. This idea, so far as it has gone in my mind, seems very reasonable. I'm not thinking of the fishermen at all; that isn't my business at present. I am thinking of you, and I fancy that you may do a great deal of good, and, at the same time, raise your position in the eyes of your countrymen. The most modest of us are not averse to that. Then, again, some plutocrats buy honours by lavishing coins in stinking, rotten boroughs. Your honours if they should come to you, will be clean. At any rate, let us both give these men a fair hearing, and perhaps our worldly experience may aid them. An enthusiast is sometimes rather a fiddle-headed chap when it comes to business."

"I don't want my money to be fought over, and I won't have it. If I thought

that people were going to screech and babble over my money, I'd leave the whole lot to the Dogs' Home."

"We'll lay our heads together about that, and I reckon if we two can't settle the matter, there is no likelihood of its ever being settled at all."

The harsh, wintry afternoon came to a pleasant close in the glowing drawing-room. Sir James had coaxed Marion until she told him all about the gale and the rest of it. He was very much interested by her description of Ferrier.

"I've heard of that youngster," he said. "He began as a very Scotch mathematician, and turned to surgery. I heard that he had the gold medal when he took his fellowship. He must be a fine fellow. You say he is out at sea now? I heard a little of it, and understood he wasn't going to leave until the end of December. But it never occurred to me that he was such a friend of yours. You must let me know him. We old fogies often have a chance of helping nice young fellows."

Mrs. Walton and Miss Ranken arrived with Blair and Fullerton, and everybody was soon at ease. Sir James particularly watched Fullerton, and at last he said to himself, "That fellow's no humbug."

The dinner passed in the usual pleasant humdrum style; nobody wanted to shine; that hideous bore, the professional talker, was absent, and the company were content with a little mild talk about Miss Ranken's seclusion at sea during the early days of the autumn voyage. The girl said, "Well, never mind, I would go through it all again to see what we saw. I never knew I was alive before."

Instinctively the ladies refrained from touching on the business which they knew to be nearest the men's minds, and they withdrew early.

Then Cassall came right to the point in his usual sharp, undiplomatic way.

"My niece has been telling me a great deal about your Mission, Mr. Fullerton, and she says you want a floating hospital. I've thought about the matter, but I have so few details to go upon that I can neither plan nor reason. I mean to help if I can, merely because my girl has set her mind on it; but I intend to know exactly where I am going, and how far. I understand you have twelve

thousand men that you wish to influence and help. How many men go on board one vessel?"

"From five to seven, according to the mode of trawling."

"That gives you, roughly, say two thousand sail. Marion tells me you have now about eight thousand patients coming on board your ships yearly. Now, if you manage to cover the lot, you must attend on a great many more patients."

"We can only *dabble* at present. We have little pottering dispensaries, and our men manage slight cases of accident, but I cannot help feeling that our work is more or less a sham. People don't think so, but I want so much that I am discontented."

Sir James broke in, "Your vessels have to fish, haven't they?"

"They did at first. We hope to let them all be clear of the trawl for the future."

Mr. Cassall looked at Sir James. "I say, Doctor, how would you like one of your men to operate just after he had been handling fish? Do they clean the fish, Mr. Fullerton? They do? What charming surgeons!"

"We have gone on the principle of trying to do our best with any material. Our skippers are not first-rate pulpit orators, but we have been obliged to let them preach. Both their preaching and their surgery have done an incredible amount of good, but we want more."

"Exactly. Now, I'm a merchant, Mr. Fullerton, and I know nothing about ships, but I understand your vessels are all sailers. Is that the proper word? You depend on the wind entirely. How would you manage if you took a man on board right up, or down, the North Sea?--I don't know which is up and which is down; but, any way, you want to run from one end to the other. How would you manage if you had a very foul wind after your man got cured?"

"We must take our chance. As a matter of experience, we find that our vessels do get about very well. The temperatures of the land on each side of the sea vary so much, that we are never long without a breeze."

"Still, you depend on chance. Is that not so? Now I never like doing things

by halves. Tell me frankly, Mr. Fullerton, what *would* you do if you took off a small-pox case, and got becalmed on the run home?"

Fullerton laughed. "You are a remarkably good devil's advocate, Mr. Cassall, but if I had ever conjured up obstacles in my own mind, there would have been no mission--would there, Blair? And I venture to think that the total amount of human happiness would have been less by a very appreciable quantity." Besides, it is absolutely against rules to take infectious cases on board the mission vessels.

"Cassall isn't putting obstacles in your way," interposed Sir James. "I know what he's driving at, but strangers are apt to mistake him. He means to draw out of you by cross-examination the fact that quick transport is absolutely necessary for your hospital scheme. Take an instance. Miss Dearsley tells me the men stay out eight weeks, and then run home. Now suppose your cruiser meets one of the home-going vessels, and the captain of this vessel says, 'There's a dying man fifty miles N.W. (or S.W., or whatever it is) from here. You must go soon, or he won't be saved. What are you going to do if you have a foul wind or a calm?'"

"But that dying man would probably be in a *fleet*, and what I wish to see is not a single cruising hospital, but that *all* our mission vessels in future should be of that type, i.e., one with every fleet."

Cassall broke in, "Yes, yes, by all means but, I say, could you not try steam as well? Why not go in at once for a steamer as an experiment, and then you can whisk round like a flash, and time your visits from week to week."

Blair rose in his seat wearing a comic expression of despair and terror.

"Why, we're driven silly now by people who offer us ships, without saying anything about ways and means for keeping the ships up. My dear Cassall, you do not know what a devourer of money a vessel is. Every hour at sea means wear and tear somewhere, and if we are to make our ships quite safe we must be constantly renewing. It's the *maintenance* funds that puzzle us. If you give us a ship without a fund for renewals of gear, wages, and so on, it is exactly as though you graciously made a City clerk a present of a couple of Irish hunters,

and requested him not to sell them. The vessel Fullerton has in his mind will need an outlay of £1,200 a year to keep her up. Suppose we invest the necessary capital in a good, sound stock, we shall get about 4 per cent. for money, so that we require £30,000 for a sailing ship alone. As to the steamer, whew-w-w!"

"A very good little speech, Blair, but I think I know what I'm talking about. After all, come now, the steamer only needs extra for coal, engineers, and stokers. You don't trust to chance at all; you don't care a rush for wind or tide, and you can go like an arrow to the point you aim at. Then, don't you see, my very good nautical men--Blair is an absolutely insufferable old Salt since he came home--you can always disengage your propeller when there is a strong, useful wind, and you bank your fires. Brassey told me that, and he said he could always get at least seven knots' speed out of his boat if there was the least bit of a breeze. Then, if you're in a hurry, down goes your propeller, and off you go. The wards must be in the middle--what you call it, Blair, the taffrail?--oh, amidships. The wards must be amidships, and you must be able to lay on steam so as to work a lift. You shove down a platform in a heavy sea, lower a light cage, put your wounded man in it, and steam away. There you are; you may make your calls like the postman. Bill Buncle breaks his leg on Sunday; his mates say, 'All right, William, the doctor's coming to-morrow.' You take me? Tell me, how will you manage if you have a vessel short of hands to work her?"

"We propose to have several spare hands on board our hospital vessels. Hundreds will be only too glad to go, and we shall always have a sound man to take the place of the patient."

"Exactly. Well, with steam you can deposit your men and take them off with all the regularity of an ordinary railway staff on shore."

"But the money. It is too colossal to think of."

The falcon-faced old merchant waved his hand. "Blair and I, and you too, Mr. Fullerton, not to mention Roche, are all business men, and we don't brag about money. But you know that if I fitted out and endowed ten steamers, I should still be a fairly comfortable man. If you can't keep a steamer going with

£4,000 a year, you don't deserve to have one, and if I choose to put down one hundred thousand, and you satisfy me as to the management, why should I not gratify my whimsy?"

"And I don't mean to be behindhand if I satisfy myself as to the quality of the work to be done," added Sir James. "Cassall and I will arrange as to how many beds--Roche beds, you understand--I shall be permitted to endow."

Fullerton sat dumb; a flush came and went over his clear face, and his lips moved.

Cassall proceeded: "My idea is to have a sailing vessel *and* a steamer. You have told us, Mr. Fullerton, that you must, in time, fit up half a dozen cruisers, if you mean to work efficiently, and our preliminary experiment will decide whether sail or steam is the better. Now, Blair, you must let me fit up your boat for a cruise."

"And pray why, Croesus? You talk as if you meant going a-buccaneering."

"I don't know what you call it, but I'm going round among those fleets with my niece, and I shall start in a week. If I'm satisfied, you shall hear from me."

"And I'm going to play truant and go with you, Cassall," said Sir James.

"All right; that being so, we'll join the ladies."

Henry Fullerton and Blair walked to the station together that night, and the enthusiast said, "I pray that my brain may be able to bear this."

"Your fiddlestick, bear this! I wish some one would give me £150,000 to carry out my pet fad. I'd bear it, and go on bearing it, quite gallantly, I assure you, my friend."

A very happy pair of people were left to chat in Cassall's drawing-room as the midnight drew near. Sir James had retired early after the two good old boys had addressed each other as buccaneers and shellbacks, and made all sorts of nautical jokes. The discussion as to who should be admiral promised to supply a month's fun, but Cassall pretended to remember that Phoenix Sawbones would certainly wish to be commander, on account of the young puppy's experience.

Marion whispered to her uncle, "I do believe you will make yourself very

happy;" and the old gentleman answered, "It really seems to be more like a question of making *you* happy, you little jilt."

The little jilt, who was not much shorter than her uncle, looked demure, and the *séance* closed very happily.

Next day, Mr. Cassall began fitting out in a style which threatened an Arctic voyage of several winters at least; he was artfully encouraged by the little jilt, and he was so intensely pleased with his yachting clothes that he wore them in the grounds until he went away, which proceeding raised unfeigned admiration among the gardeners and the maids.

CHAPTER IV.

THE DENOUEMENT.

The stout-hearted old gentlemen ran out from the Colne in Blair's schooner, and Freeman had orders to take the Schelling, Ameland, Nordeney, and all the other banks in order. I need not go over the ground again in detail, but I may say that Sir James was never unobservant; he made the most minute notes and sought to provide against every difficulty. The bad weather still held, and there were accidents enough and illness enough, in all conscience. Cassall proposed to hang somebody for permitting the cabins of the smacks to remain in such a wildly unsanitary state; but beyond propounding this totally unpractical suggestion he said little, and contented himself with steady observation. One day he remarked to Sir James, "A lazy humbug would have a fine time in our cruiser if he liked. Who, among us landsmen, durst face weather like this constantly?"

"Yes; I've been thinking of that. You must have a regular masterful Tartar of a surgeon, and make him bear all responsibility. Pick out a good man, and give him a free hand; that seems the best thing to be done."

The two observers saw all that Ferrier had seen, and suffered a little of what he had suffered. Before they had their vessel's head pointed for home, Cassall remarked: "That young Sawbones must have a reasonable pluck, mind you, Roche. I find it hard enough to keep my feet, without having to manage delicate operations; and you notice that we've heard at least fifty of the men talk about this Ferrier's skill with his hands."

"That's your man, Cassall, if you only knew it. I shall make a point of meeting him. You haven't seen my plans, have you? Well, I've employed myself since we came out in trying to design every kind of fitting that you're likely to need. I used to be very good at that kind of thing, and I'm very glad my hand hasn't forgot its cunning. I shall test young Ferrier's judgment over my drawings, and that will be a good pretext for meeting him."

"The spring is on us now, Roche. We must use that youngster to get at people. He must have some kind of personal magnetism. Did you notice how that fellow choked and sobbed when he told us how the youngster refused to leave him during the gale? A good sign that. We must have parties to meet him, and let him do the talkee-talkee lecturing business. I shouldn't wonder if my girl found the nerve to speak. If you had only heard her oration delivered for my private gratification, you would have been pretty much amazed. She shall spout if she likes."

"I see you've set up a new hobby, my friend, and I can back you to ride hard. Seriously speaking, I never knew any cause that I would assist sooner than this. That fellow Fullerton was once described to me by a Jew as 'hare-brained.' It needed a curious sort of hare-brain to build up such an organization as we have seen. I may tell you a little secret, as we are alone. When I was fighting my way up, I was very glad to attend a working man, and I starved genteelly for a long time in a big fishing-port. I assure you that in those days a fisherman was the most ill-conditioned dog on God's earth. He knew less of goodness than a dog does, and I think you could see every possible phase of hoggishness and cruel wickedness on a Saturday night in that town. It used to be a mere commonplace

to say that no one should venture into the fishermen's quarter after dark. There is a big change. You snarl at parsons a good deal, I know, but you can't snarl at what we have seen. You are quite right, and I mean to help spur your new hobby as hard as I can."

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After Robert Cassall had been some days at home, Mr. Fullerton received the following letter:--

DEAR SIR,--As arranged at our last meeting, I went out to view your work among the North Sea fishermen, and I am satisfied that I may assist your admirable efforts. In this letter I merely sketch my proposals in an informal manner, but my solicitors, Messrs. Bowles and Gordon, Gresham Buildings, will be ready at any time to meet a deputation from the Council of the Mission, so that my wishes may be accurately stated, and all business settled in strict legal form.

1. I propose to build a steam cruiser of 350 tons, and I am now engaged in consulting with practical men concerning those technical details of which I have scanty knowledge.

2. This cruiser I wish to support entirely at my own expense; and, after my decease, the capital sum set aside for the maintenance of the vessel will pass into the hands of the Council.

3. I should naturally desire to have some voice in the appointment of trustees, and also in the selection of the medical staff; but no doubt my solicitors will arrange that to the satisfaction of all parties.

4. My niece, Miss Marion Dearsley, is intensely interested in your work, and, as a very large sum of money belonging to that lady remains at my disposal as her trustee, I have, with her approval, transferred to the Mission £30,000 Great Northern Railway ordinary shares, with which we desire to found a maintenance fund for a vessel of 200 tons. This transaction has been carried out at the urgent desire of my niece. I am informed that this sailing cruiser must be schooner-rigged on account of her tonnage, which would require an unworkable spread of canvas if she were rigged as a ketch. These matters I leave entirely to

the experts whom I have retained.

5. Should you agree to my terms, and should you also come to a thoroughly clear understanding with my legal representatives, the building of the vessels may proceed at once. I will have nothing but the *best*, and therefore I will ask you to let me act directly and indirectly as superintendent of the construction of the ships. I have already taken the liberty of engaging a practical and scientific seaman--a merchant captain--who will, with your permission, watch over the building of the vessels to the last rivet.

6. We learn that Mr. Ferrier has returned. Could you and he make it convenient to come to us from Saturday next until Monday? In that time we may have much useful talk.

7. In conclusion, you will perhaps not be displeased if an old man, who has not your strong faith, ventures nevertheless to ask God's blessing on you and your Mission. With much admiration and regard,

I am, dear sir,

Your obedient servant,

ROBERT CASSALL.

H. Fullerton, Esq.

Committees of charitable organizations are not usually wanting in complaisance toward gentlemen who can spare lump sums of £130,000; so Mr. Cassall and his lawyers had very much of their own way. On the day when the last formal business was completed, Fullerton and our young savant, both in a state of bewildered exaltation of spirit, paid their visit to Mr. Cassall. Ferrier was strangely dumb in presence of Miss Dearsley, but he made up amply for his silence when he was alone with the men. Robert Cassall observed, however, that

the youngster never spoke of himself. Once or twice the old man delicately referred to certain little matters which had occurred during the January gales--the amputation, the rescue of Lennard, the rough trips from smack to smack, the swamping of the small boat: but Ferrier was too eager for other people's good; he had so utterly forgotten himself that he hardly recognized Mr. Cassall's allusions. On the first evening at dinner Mr. Cassall said: "Now, Marion, you and Miss Lena must stay with us. She's not an orator like you; she was meant for a mouse, but you can do all the talk you like. And now, gentlemen, let me lay a few statements before you. I shall talk shorthand style if I can. First, I want Mr. Ferrier to be our first medical director, and I wish him to take the steamer on her first cruise. After that, if he likes to be a sort of inspector-general, we can arrange it. Next, I want to draw some more people into Mr. Fullerton's net. Excuse the poaching term. Mr. Ferrier and Mr. Fullerton can teach us, and I wish to begin with a big party here as soon as possible. After that, our young friend must go crusading. I'll provide every kind of expense, and we'll regard his engagement as beginning to-day if he likes. Next, I may tell you that I have already arranged for men to work night and day in relays on both my vessels--or rather your vessels. Mr. Director-General must see his hospital wards fitted out to the last locker, and I've taken another liberty in that direction. There's your cheque-book, and you are to draw at Yarmouth or London for any amount that you may think necessary. And now I fancy that is about all I need say."

Then Mr. Cassall smiled on his dumbfounded hearers.

Ferrier said, "I must eventually stay on shore, I fear. I have resigned the professorship which I had hoped to keep; but I do not need to practise, and I am ready to see your venture well started."

Then the host finally insisted on hearing all about the cruise; he could understand every local allusion now, and the narrative touched him far more than any romance could have done. The girls dropped in a word here and there, for they claimed to be among the initiated, and thus an evening was spent in piling fresh fuel on the old gentleman's new-born fire of enthusiasm.

There never was such an elderly tornado of a man. After church on Sunday he packed the girls off in the pony-carriage, and then took his guests for a most vehement walk, during which he asked questions in a voice as vehement as his gait, and set forth projects with all the fine breadth of conception and heedlessness of cost which might be expected from an inspired man with a practically inexhaustible fund at his disposal.

The good Henry Fullerton had long walked in darkness; doubts had been presented to him; jibes and sneers had hailed upon him; all sorts of mean detractors had tried to label him as visionary, or crackbrain, or humbug, or even as money-grub: and now the clouds that obscured the wild path along which he had fared with such forlorn courage were all lifted away, and he saw the fulfilment of the visions which had tantalized him on doleful nights, when effort seemed vain and hope dead. He maintained his serenity, and calmly calculated pounds and shillings with all the methodic coolness of a banker's clerk. On the Sunday evening he was asked to confer privately with Mr. Cassall, and Ferrier was left free. Of course Lewis proposed a stroll in the grounds--what young man would have missed the opportunity?--and he listened delightedly to that musical, girlish talk for which he had longed during his tremendous vigils on the Sea of Storms.

Miss Ranken was in a flutter of exultation. "Did you ever know any one so clever as Marion?" she inquired, with quite the air of an elderly person accustomed to judge intellects. "We knew she could do anything with Mr. Cassall, but we never expected this. And now, Mr. Ferrier, you won't go and get drowned in nasty cabins any more, and you'll have your sailors all under your eye, and no more degenerate sea-sick ladies to plague you. Why, now we've made a start, we must capture some more millionaires, and we'll have a vessel with every fleet, and no sick men lying on grimy floors. By the way, what a capital association that would be--The Royal Society for the Capture of Millionaires. President and Organizing Director, Marion Dearsley; Treasurer, Lena Ranken; General Agent for Great Britain and the Colonies, Lewis Ferrier!

Wouldn't that be splendid? I begin to feel quite like an administrator."

This was the very longest speech that Miss Ranken was ever known to make, and she was applauded for her remarkable excursion into practical affairs.

"You must tell us a little more about your winter, Mr. Ferrier. Lena hasn't heard half enough," observed the stately "little jilt" when the cataract of Miss Ranken's eloquence had ceased flowing.

"Better wait until the meeting, Miss Dearsley. Then, if you are satisfied, I may be able to do something in different places."

"But you will tell us how Tom Betts fared in the end?"

"He was well and at work when we left his fleet, and he had established a sort of elaborate myth, with you as central figure. I'm afraid you would never recognize your own doings if you heard his version of them. Tom's imagination is distinctly active. We had no bad mishaps with our men, but it was a dreadful time."

"I think you seem to be more solemn and older than when you went away first, Mr. Ferrier," remarked the Treasurer of the Capturers.

"One ages fast there; I really lived a good deal. One life isn't enough for that work. I suppose the Englishmen began working on the Banks two hundred years ago, and we have all that time of neglect to make up."

"Yes. I wonder now what was the use of our ancestors. My brother says that no philosopher has ever discovered the ultimate uses of babies; I wonder if any one can tell the uses of those blundering, silly old ancestors of ours. As far as I can see, we have to put up with all sorts of horrid things, and you have to go and get wet on dirty fishing-boats, just because our ancestors neglected their proper business and stayed lazy at home."

"You mustn't start a Society for the Abolition of Ancestors, Miss Ranken. We have to make up all lost ground, and we can't help it. I'm sorry almost that I take it all so seriously. I feel so very much like a middle-aged prig. Perhaps, Miss Dearsley, we may grow more cheerful when your uncle and I (and you) are fairly at work and clear of brooding. At present I seem to exude lectures and

serious precepts."

"You go to Yarmouth after the meeting, Mr. Ferrier?"

"Yes; we must all of us copy you, and humour your uncle. I can see he feels time going very fast, and I shall play at being in a hurry all the time I am looking after the new vessels."

"My uncle says I must speak to our meeting."

"Why not? If you like, I can bring some good lady orators to keep you in countenance."

"I shall consider. I don't think we ought to talk; but we cannot afford to neglect any fancy of uncle's."

Ferrier never heard so queer a speech from a girl before. She had evidently made up her mind to face an ordeal which would stagger the nerves of the "young person" of the drawing-room; and her deliberate acceptance of a strained and unnatural situation pleased him. He thought, "If she ever does take to the platform, the capture of the millionaires is sure to begin."

Cassall and Fullerton looked very solemn and satisfied during the evening, and both of them were just a little tiresome in recurring to their new and exhaustless topic.

The old man was off to Yarmouth long before his guests were astir, for a fever of haste was upon him. He returned in the evening, and until Saturday he was employed with his beautiful secretary in making the most lordly preparations for the great meeting--the first of the series which was to revolutionize rich people's conceptions of duty and necessity.

A very brilliant company assembled; the old man was an artist in his way, and he had spread his lures with consummate tact. How on earth he got hold of eminent pressmen, I cannot tell; but then, eminent pressmen, like the rest of our world, are distinctly susceptible to the blandishments of amiable millionaires. Sir John Rooby, the ex-Lord Mayor, appeared in apoplectic importance; Lady Glendower, who had expended a fortune on the conversion of the Siamese, also waited with acute curiosity; every name on every card there was known more or

less to Secretaries, to Missionary Societies, to begging-letter writers--to all the people who run on the track of wealth. The great saloon, which reached from the front, right across the mansion to the windows that overlooked the park, was filled fairly; and Ferrier was not a little perturbed by the sight of his audience.

Mr. Cassall soon ended all suspense by coming to the point in his quick fashion. (He would not have succeeded as a parliamenteer, for he had a most uncultivated habit of never using forty words where five would serve.) "Sir John, my lords, ladies, and gentlemen,--I have lately returned from a voyage in the North Sea among the Fishing Fleets. That was perhaps a foolish trip for an old man to make, in a world of rheumatics and doctors' fees; but I'm very glad I made it. Most people are very ready to point out the faults of others: I have to point out my own. I learned that I had been unwittingly neglecting a duty, and now I blame myself for remissness. It's very pleasant to blame yourself, because it gives you such a superior sense of humility, and I am enjoying the luxury to the full. I saw a great deal of beautiful and promising work going on, and I saw ever so much pain, and squalor, and unnecessary unhappiness. I needn't tell you that I've made up my mind to assault that pain and squalor and unhappiness, and try to drive them out of the field; I needn't tell you, because the newspapers have done that for me. They always know my business as well as I know it myself. Now it struck me that many men are as ignorant as I was. I know that some people continually go about imagining evil; but there are others who are constantly seeking for chances of doing good, and they jump at their chance the moment they clap eye on it. That is why I arranged this meeting. I cannot describe things, nor put out anything very lucidly--except a balance-sheet; but I have a young friend here, who has been at sea all winter in those ugly gales that made us so uncomfortable on shore, and he will tell us something. Then we have also Mr. Fullerton, who has been working and speechifying to some purpose for years. While I was purblind, this gentleman was clear-sighted; and, if you could go where I have been, and see the missionary work that I have seen, you would never speak ill of a missionary again. I do not believe ill of men. Some one

among our statesmen summed up his ideas of life by saying, 'Men are very good fellows, but rather vain.' I should say, 'Men are mixtures; but few can resist the temptation to do a good action if they are shown how to do it.' Now, we're all very comfortable here--or I hope so, at all events; and it will do us good to hear of strong, useful men who never know what comfort means--and that through no fault of their own, but only through the strange complications of civilized society. I call on Mr. Fullerton to address this meeting."

Fullerton rose and faced his audience like a practised hand. His trance-like intensity of gaze might have led you to think that he was going to pour out a lengthy speech: but he had tact; he knew that he would please Cassall and the audience by letting them hear the words of a new man, and he merely said: "For years I have addressed many meetings, and I have worked and prayed day and night. Help has risen up for me, and now I am content to be a humble member of the company who have agreed in their hundreds to aid in my life's work. I am but an instrument to be laid aside when my weary day is over and my Master's behests fulfilled. I see light spreading, darkness waning, kindness growing warmer, purity and sobriety become the rule in quarters where they were unknown; and I am thankful--not proud, only thankful--to have helped in a work which, I believe, is of God. We are now near the attainment of a long dream of mine, thanks to Robert Cassall; and, when the fulfilment is complete, I care not when I may be called on to say my 'Nunc dimittis.' And now I will not stand longer between you and Mr. Ferrier."

Thus, with one dexterous push Ferrier found himself projected into the unknown depths of his speech. He was easy enough before students, but the quick whispers, the lightning flash of raised eye-glasses, the calm, bovine stare of certain ladies, rather disconcerted him at first. But he warmed to his work, and in deliberate, mathematical fashion wrought through his subject. He told of the long Night; the dark age of the North Sea. The little shivering cabin-boy lay on his dank wooden couch, and curled under the wrench of the bitter winter nights; he had to bear a hard struggle for existence, and, if he were a weakling, he soon

went under. Alas! there had been instances, only too well authenticated, of boys being subjected to the most shocking treatment--though we would not saddle upon the majority of fishermen the responsibility for this cruelty on the part of a few. "What could a boy know of good?" said the speaker, with a sharp ring of the voice. "Why, the very name of God was not so much as a symbol to him; it was a sound to curse with--no more; and it might have seemed to a man of bitter soul that God had turned away His face from those of His human works that lived, and sinned, and suffered and perished on the grey sea." Then Ferrier showed how the light of new faith, the light of new kindness, had suddenly shot in on the envenomed darkness, like the purifying lightning that leaps and cleans the obscured face of a murky sky. He told of the incredulity which greeted the first missionaries, and he explained that the men could not think it possible that any one should care to show them human sympathy; he traced the gradual growth of belief, and passionate gratitude, and he then turned dexterously off and asked, "But how could you touch men's souls with transforming effect, where the poor body--the humble mask through which the soul gazes--was torn with great pain, or perplexed with pettier ills? My lords, ladies, and gentlemen, I have seen, in one afternoon, suffering borne with sombre acquiescence, suffering the very sight of which in all its manifold dreariness would have driven you homeward shuddering from this beautiful place. Till this good man--I will say this great man--carried his baffling compound of sacred zeal and keen sense into that weary country, those toiling sailors were hopeless, loveless, comfortless, joyless, and--I say it with awe--heavenless; for scarcely a man of them had knowledge or expectation of a life wherein the miseries of this one may be redressed in some far land where Time is not." Then the youngster coldly, gravely told of his surgical work, and it seemed as if he were drawing an inexorable steel edge across the nerves of his terrified hearers. He watched the impression spread, and then sprang at his peroration with lightning-footed tact. "We English are like barbarians who have been transferred from a chilly land to a kind of hot-house existence. We are too secure; no predatory creature can harm us, and we

cultivate the lordlier and lazier vices. Our middle class, as Bismarck says, has 'gone to fat,' and is too slothful to look for the miseries of others. The middle-class man, and even the aristocrat, are both too content to think of looking beyond their own horizon. And yet we are good in essentials, and no tale of pity is unheeded--if only it be called forth loudly enough. Let us wake our languid rich folk. They suffer from a surfeit--an apoplexy--of money. An eager, wakeful, nervous American plutocrat, thinks nothing of giving a large fortune to endow a hospital or an institute for some petty Western town. Are we meaner or more griping than the Americans? Never. Our men only want to know. Here is a work for you. I do not call our fishermen stainless; they are rude, they are stormy in passions, they are lacking in self-control; but they are worth helping. It is not fitting that these lost children of civilization should draw their breath in pain. Help us to heal their bodies, and maybe you will see a day when their strength will be your succour, and when their rescued souls shall be made in a glory of good deeds and manly righteousness."

There was no mistake about the effect of this simple speech. I cannot give the effect of the timbre of Ferrier's voice, but his virility, his majestic seriousness, just tintured by acuteness, and his thrill of half-restrained passion, all told heavily.

Slowly the party dispersed to the tents on the lawn, and many were the languidly curious inquiries made about the strange young professor who had turned missionary. The man himself was captured by Lady Glendower, who explained her woe at the perfidious behaviour of Myung Tang, the most interesting convert ever seen, who was now in penal servitude for exercising his imitative skill on my lady's signature. "And I expended a fortune, Mr. Ferrier, on those ungrateful people. Is it not enough to make one misanthropic?"

"Your ladyship must begin again on a new line."

"After hearing you, and all about those charmingly horrid accidents, I am almost tempted to take your advice."

Ferrier was invited to address at least a dozen more drawing-room

meetings, and Sir John Rooby grunted, "Young man! I'm ready to put a set of engines in that boat of Cassall's, and you can have so much the more money for her maintenance."

Before Ferrier went to Yarmouth he heard that Fullerton was astounded at the number of financial sheep who had followed the plucky bell-wether. Said he, "We shall never turn our backs now. There will be three hospital cruisers on the stocks before the autumn, and your steamer will serve to supply them when we have them at work. If I were not fixed on God's firm ground, I should think I had passed away and was dreaming blissfully."

Oh! the fury and hurry around that steamer! Men were toiling without cessation during all night and all day; one shift relieved another, and Cassall employed two superintendents instead of one. The way the notion came to him was this:--he had an abrupt but most essentially pleasant way of getting into conversation with casual strangers of all ranks, and he always managed to learn something from them. "Nice smack that on the stocks," he remarked to a bronzed, blue-eyed man who was standing alert on a certain quay.

"Yes, sir. That's honest oak. I like that. But that other's not so honest."

"You mean the steamer?"

"Yes, sir. I don't like the way things goes along. The surveyor's been down. He and the manager are having champagne together now, and you may bet there's some skulking work going on in the dark corners. I know the ocean tramps, sir. Many's the time I've seen the dishonest rivets start out of 'em like buttons of a woman's bodice if it's too tight. If I was an owner, and building a vessel, I'd test every join and every rivet myself. You force a faulty plate into place, and the first time your vessel gets across a sea she buckles, and there's an end of all."

"You understand shipbuilding?"

"Only a sailor does, sir. He has the peril; the builders have the money."

"What are you?"

"Merchant captain, sir," said the stout man, turning on the questioner a clear, light blue eye that shone with health and evident courage.

"Are you in a situation?"

"My vessel's laid up, sir, and I'm waiting to take her again."

"I'm not impertinent, but tell me your wages."

"Ten pound a month, and good enough too, these bad times."

"Then if you'll superintend the building of a vessel for me, I'll give you £150 a year--or at that rate, and you shall have a smaller vessel afterwards, if you care to sail a mere smack."

And so the bargain was struck, and Captain Powys was employed as bulldog, a special clause being inserted in the contract to that effect.

"Men won't like it," said the builder. "They'll lead him a life."

"Tell them, if they do, you lose your contract and they lose their work."

So the splendid little steamer grew apace; she was composite, and Cassall took care that she should be strong. The most celebrated living designer of yachts had offered to make the drawings for nothing, out of mere fondness for Cassall, but the old gentleman paid his heavy fee. If any one can design a good and safe vessel it is the yacht-builder, whose little thirty tenners are expected to run quite securely across the Bay in the wild autumn. The *Robert Cassall* had not a nail or bolt in her that was not scrutinized by a stern critic. "Never mind fancy work or fancy speed. Give me perfect collision bulk-heads; perfect water-tight compartments; make her unsinkable, and I don't care if you only make her travel ten knots--that's good enough for the North Sea."

Powys asked and obtained an assistant to take a turn on the day or night shifts, and the British workmen were held hard in hand by two acute and most critical mariners.

Robert Cassall had value for every penny of his money, but he certainly did not spare the place. His friend the yacht-builder twice came to see how the work was going on, and he said, "You'll be able to run her round the Horn if you like."

You see I took care that she shouldn't kick like those steam-carriers. You'll find her as stiff as they make them."

Sir John Rooby resolved that the peerless engines which he provided should be fitted under cover, so, as soon as the hull was completed, the engineers began their work; and as it turned out, the experiment of launching a boat with all engines complete was an entire success. Sir James Roche came and watched the fitting of all the appliances designed by him, and it seemed that he was as exquisite in mechanical skill as he was sagacious in treatment of disease. Ferrier was afraid that the vehement old man would wear him out, but he bottled his impatience, and sought repose in the gentle society of Sir James. The two medicos pottered on with pulleys and wheels and inclined planes with much contentment, and they satisfied themselves at last that a man might be picked up in any sea, and swiftly placed under cover, without sustaining a jar severe enough to hurt even a gouty subject.

Cassall did not like the workmen to be discontented over his incessantly vigilant superintendents, so, with his inexhaustible good-humour and resolution, he hit on a mode of conciliation. He met both shifts on a Friday, and said, "Now, men, I'm not a bad sort even if I *am* determined not to have a scamped nail in my vessel. Now you're working hard, and we'll show the prettiest vessel in England presently, so to-morrow we'll have two brakes here at eleven o'clock, all who like will drive to a certain little place that I know of, and we'll have a rare good dinner together, and come home in the evening. We'll have no spirits, and no shaky hands for Monday. Plenty of good, pure spring water with orange champagne for those who like it."

This was a very successful announcement, and Robert presided at table with extreme satisfaction on account of his own Machiavellian astuteness. Oh! those millionaires. What chances they have!

The scene at the launch of the *Robert Cassall* was imposing. The Queen, it was thought, would be present; but an intensely exciting and close general election had just taken place, and Her Majesty was occupied with relays of the

gentlemen who are good enough to carry on the operation known as Governing the Country; so that the bunting and the manifold decorations served to grace the progress of a Royal Duke, who brought his August Mother's message.

I have nothing to do with the speeches this time; I only know that the steamer looked superb, with her gay stripe, and her beautiful trim on the water. The town was in a state of excitement until nightfall, and the people who had tickets to view the Fisherman's Palace passed in a steady and orderly procession over the broad deck; through the smart main ward with its polished oak floor; through the operating-room, and through the comfortable, unostentatious club-room, which had been designed by Lewis Ferrier. Robert Cassall was silently ecstatic now that the pinch of his work was over; and he had good reason to be proud, for no prettier or more serviceable piece of work was ever bought with money, and no man on earth need have grudged to exchange the costly obscurity of the monumental stone, for this beautiful memorial which promised to be the pride of the North Sea.

The riggers went hard at work; the captain and crew were sent on board to assist, and thus before the autumn storms broke once more, the *Robert Cassall* was ready for sea.

The whole fabric seemed to have risen like a vision, and the most hopeful of those who endured that cruel gale the year before could hardly believe that they were not deceived by some uneasy, uncanny dream.

The steamer surged away past the pier on her first trip, and a dense black crowd cheered and shouted blessings after her.

"Ah! they jeered me the first time I sailed from here under that flag. Thank God for the wonderful change," said Fullerton.

"Never mind bygones. There's a good stiff sea outside. Let us watch how she takes it."

The sturdy old man was triumphant, satisfied with himself and his work, and he only wished to see how the contrivance of his audacious, teeming brain would succeed. Tom Lennard was on board again; and he only recovered from a

congestion of adjectives on the brain, after he had fairly freed his nerves by smoking a pipe. He was still subdued, and he never let loose that booming laugh of his except on supremely important occasions. He attached himself much to Miss Dearsley, and, as he was passionately fond of talking about Lewis Ferrier, his company was surprisingly grateful to the young lady. Blair could not be with them, but he religiously promised to give Ferrier a lively time in the spring. The party of five were enough in themselves, and they watched with all the pride of successful people as their vessel, the offspring of dreams, flew over the seas without plunging or staggering.

The captain came aft.

"Well, sir, this is better than wind-jamming. I think she's doing elevens easily, and, if the wind comes round a bit, she shall have the try-sails, and I warrant she does twelve."

"You'll go right for the Short Blues, as we arranged?"

"We shall pick them up in eighteen hours from now, sir, and I'll be glad if we haven't to work your patent sling, though I'd like to see it tried."

When the night came, and the men were smoking in Ferrier's room, the young man suddenly said, "Mr. Cassall, I hope you'll live to see at least six of these ships knocking about. In the meantime I'd sooner have your memorial than that awful, costly abortion of Byron's. I mean the one with a cat, or a puppy or something, sprawling at the man's feet."

Cassall slowly smiled.

"Not bad; not bad. But wait till I'm done, my lad; wait till I'm done. I've managed a beginning; I've designed a scheme for a ship, and now I'm bent on something bigger. Wait. I mean to move the conscience of your plutocrats, and I shall do it the hard, City style; see if I don't."

"Hah-h! Meantime this, sir, is, as I may say, *recherché*, unique, fahscinating."

"I must set *my* watch now," laughed the surgeon, and he whistled for the male nurses. He had drilled them to perfection in a week or two, and they had no

easy time with him, for he was resolved to have naval precision and naval smartness on board the *Cassall*; and Tom was thankful that a man whose cheek showed chubby signs of containing a quid of tobacco, was not instantly suspended from the gaff. That was what he said, at any rate.

The *Robert Cassall* picked up the fleet just when the boarding was at its height, and her arrival caused a wild scene. Work and discipline were forgotten for a while: men set off flares which were absurdly ineffective in daylight; they jumped on the thofts of boats, ran up the rigging, and performed all sorts of clumsy antics out of sheer goodwill, as the beautiful steamer worked slowly along, piling up a soft, snowy scuffle of foam at her forefoot. The spare hands who had been brought out for the cruise yelled salutations to friends, and one of them casually remarked: "If this had happened before the drink was done away with, there would have been a funny old booze in some o' them ar smacks, just for excitement like." There were no patients from the first fleet excepting one man with that hideous poisoned hand which, like death, cometh soon or late to every North Sea fisher. He was sent back for his kit; one of the *Cassall's* hands was sent in his place, and the steamer rushed away after leaving a stock of tobacco with the Mission smack.

In the next fleet the same scenes made things in general lively. The skipper of the ordinary Mission smack came on board, and joyously cried: "I'm main glad you're come, sir. We've got one case that beats me. I can't do anything at all." Sir James Roche's boat with the balanced stretcher was sent, and a crippled man was whipped up and slid along the boarding-stage before he had time to recover from his surprise. He had a broken patella--a nasty case--and he had gained the distinction of being the first man put to bed in that airy, charming ward. He will probably claim this honour with more or less emphasis during the rest of his lifetime. I fear that curiosity of an aggravated kind caused one or two gentlemen to be suddenly afflicted with minor complaints; but Ferrier had a delightful way of dealing with doubtful martyrs, and the vessel was soon cleared of them.

So the *Robert Cassall* scoured the North Sea like a phantom, sometimes crawling in the wake of fleet when the gear was down, sometimes flying from one bank to another. In the course of two long, sweeping rounds she proved that she was worth all the other cruisers put together--for medical and surgical purposes alone. Danger was reduced to a minimum, and the sick men were, one by one, returned safely to their own vessels. When, on a rather calm day, a tubular boat was tried, and a prostrate man was seen flying over the water with what intelligent constables call "no visible means of support," the general opinion of the smacksmen was that no one never knowed what would come next. Some gentlemen threatened to be gormed if they did not discover a solution of this new and awful problem; others, more definite, were resolved to be blowed; and all the oldsters were agreed that only a manifest injustice could have caused them to be born so soon.

Robert Cassall was at length assured by experience that his enterprise had quadrupled the power of the Mission, and he only longed to see how his little miracle would succeed in winter. As for Lewis, he set himself to make a model hospital; his men were made to practise ambulance work daily; they had practical lectures in the evening, and, in a month, before the coals had given out, the mere attendants could have managed respectably if their adored martinet had given in from any cause.

One last picture before the *Robert Cassall* makes her brief scurry home.

The long sea was rolling very truly; the sick men in the wards were resting--clean, quiet, attentive; the nurses lounged at the dispensary door; Tom Leonard leaned his great bulk against the elaborately solid machinery which Ferrier had designed for purposes of dentistry, and the grim, calm old man sat with a tender smile in his eyes which contrasted prettily with the habitual sternness of his mouth.

A deep contralto voice was intoning a certain very noble fragment of poetry from a book that, the men loved to hear when its words were spoken by that stately dame, who now read on from psalm to psalm: "For I said in my haste, I

am cut off from before Thine eyes; nevertheless, Thou heardest the voice of my supplications when I cried unto Thee."

"Amen," said Fullerton. "Amen," added the other three men. "Amen," said the sick sailors; and the Amen rustled softly above the lower rustle of the water that fled past the sides of the swift vessel. We shall see this brave hospital ship again, for I want to dream of her for long and many a day. Meantime, adieu, sweet lady; adieu.

APPENDIX A.

Since I set down a picture of my North Sea dream, I have passed through a valley of shadows. The world of men seemed to be shut out; the Past was forgotten, or, through the dark, vague trouble, Death smiled on me coldly, as if to warn me that my pulses must soon be touched with ice. In that strange trance my petty self was forgotten, and I waited quietly till I should be bathed in the flood of bliss to which Death is but the Portal. As from some dim, far land there came echoes of storm and stress, and then swift visions of the sea flitted past my eyes. While gazing languidly on the whirl of the snow, or listening to the thunder of winds in the clamorous night, I thought, as it were in flashes, about the fishermen who people the grey country that I used to know. Nevermore, oh! nevermore shall I see the waves charging down on the gallant smacks. All is gone: but my little share of a good work is done; I have warmed both hands before the fire of Life; it sinks, and I am ready to depart.

The dream has begun to come true in a way which is rather calculated to astound most folks: a hospital vessel, the *Queen Victoria*, is actually at work, and has gone out on the wintry sea just at the time when the annual record of suffering reaches its most intense stage; a scheme at which grave men naturally

shook their heads has been shown to be practicable, and we see once more that the visionary often has the most accurate insight into the possibilities of action. To those who do not go to sea I will give one hint; if a man is sent home on the long journey over the North Sea, he not only suffers grievously but he loses his employment, and his family fare badly. *If he be transferred to the hospital ship his place is filled for a little while by one of the spare hands whom the Mission sends out, and his berth is saved for him.* I do not deny that the scheme is rather impressive in the magnitude of its difficulty; but then no man breathing--except its originator--would ever have fancied, five years ago, that the Mission would become one of the miracles of modern social progress. If comfortable folks at home could only see how those gallant, battered fishermen suffer under certain circumstances of toil and weather, they would hardly wonder at my putting forward the hospital project so urgently. By rights I ought to have spoken about other branches of the Mission's work, but the importance of the healing department has overshadowed all other considerations in my mind. To Dare, and Dare again, and Dare always, is the one plan that leads to success in philanthropy as surely as it leads to success in politics or war. Those who have undertaken to civilize our Deep Sea fishermen must continue to dare without ceasing; they must educate the thousands of good men and women whose sacred impulses lead them to aim at bettering this blind and struggling world; spiritual enthusiasm must be backed by material force, and the material force can only be gained when the great, well-meaning, puzzled masses are enlightened. We all know the keen old saying about the man who makes two blades of grass grow where one grew before. How much more worthy of thankfulness is the man who gives us a harmless, devout citizen in place of a ruffian, a hale and capable seaman in place of an agonized cripple, a quiet abstainer in place of a dangerous debauchee, a seemly well-spoken friend of society in place of a foul-mouthed enemy of society? Up till very recent years the fishermen were a rather debauched set, and those who had money or material to barter for liquor could very easily indulge their taste. Sneaking vessels--floating grogshops--crept about

among the fleets, and an exhausted fisherman could soon obtain enough fiery brandy to make him senseless and useless. The foreigners could bring out cheap tobacco, and the men usually went on board for the tobacco alone. But the shining bottles were there, the sharp scent of the alcohol appealed to the jaded nerves of men who felt the tedium of the sea, and thus a villainous agency obtained a terrible degree of power. I have, in a pamphlet, explained how the founder of the Mission contrived to defeat and ruin the foreign liquor trade, and I may do so again in brief fashion. Our Customs authorities at that date would not let the Mission vessels take tobacco out of bond, and Mr. Mather was, for a long time, beaten. But he has a somewhat unusual capacity for mastering obstacles, and he contrived to sweep the copers off the sea by the most audacious expedient that I have heard of in the commercial line. A great firm of manufacturers offered tobacco at cost price; the tobacco was carried by rail from Bristol to London; it was then sent to Ostend, whence a cruiser belonging to the Mission cleared it out, and it was carried to the banks and distributed among the fleets. A fisherman could buy this tobacco at a shilling per pound. The copers were undersold, and they found it best to take themselves off. No one can better appreciate this most dashing and beneficial action than the smack-owners, for their men are more efficient and honest; the fishermen themselves are grateful, because few of them really craved after drink, and the general results are obvious to anybody who spends a month in the North Sea. We know the Six Governments most intimately concerned have seen the wisdom of this action, and one of the best of modern reforms has been consummated. The copers did a great amount of mischief indirectly, apart from the traffic in spirits. If some of our reformers at home could only see the prints and pictures and models which were offered for sale, they would own, I fancy, that if the Mission had done no more than abolish the traffic in literary and other abominations, it has done much. A few somewhat particular folk object to supplying the men with cheap tobacco, but any who know what intense relief is given to an overworked man by the pipe will hardly heed the objection much. After a heavy spell of work, a

seaman smokes for a few minutes before the slumberous lethargy creeps round his limbs, and he is all the better for the harmless narcotic.

In this land of plethoric riches there are crowds of people who treat philanthropy as a sort of investment; they place money in a sinking fund and they forego all interest. We want to show them one line of investment wherein they may at least see plenty of results for their money. Speaking for myself, I should like to see money which is amassed by Englishmen concentrated for the benefit of other Englishmen. Looking at the matter from a cool and business-like point of view, I can see that every effort made to keep our fishermen in touch with the mass of their countrymen, is a step towards national insurance--if we put it on no higher ground. In the old days the fisher had no country; he knew his own town, but the idea of Britain as a power--as a mother of nations--never occurred to him; the swarming millions of inland dwellers were nothing to him, and he could not even understand the distribution of the wares which he landed. The Mission to Deep Sea Fishermen has brought him into friendly contact with much that is best among his countrymen; he is no longer exiled for months together among thousands of ignorant celibates like himself; he finds that his fortunes are matters for vivid interest with numbers of people whose very existence was once like a hazy dream to him; and, above all, he is brought into contact during long days with sympathetic and refined men, who incidentally teach him many things which go far beyond the special subjects touched by amateur or professional missionaries. A gentleman of breeding and education meets half a dozen smacksmen in a little cabin, and the company proceed to talk informally. Well, at one time the seamen's conversation ran entirely on trivialities--or on fish. As soon as the subject of Fish was exhausted, the exiles growled their comments on Joe's new mainsail, or the lengthening of Jimmy's smack; but nowadays the men's horizon is widened, and the little band of half a dozen who meet the missionary are eager to learn, and eager to express their own notions in their own simple fashion. The gentleman, of course, shows his fine manners by granting attention to all his rough friends when they talk, and

the smacksmen find that, instead of a preacher only, a man who withdraws himself to his private cabin when his discourse has been delivered, they have among them a kindly fellow-worker, who enters with the true spirit of *camaraderie* into all that interests or concerns them, and gives counsel and cheery chat without a sign of patronage. Then, after the little meeting is over, and the evening begins to fall, the fascinating landsman will stroll on the deck for a few minutes, until the smack's boats come over the great seas to bear away the visitors; all his gossip is like a revelation to the rude, good-hearted creatures, and his words filter from vessel to vessel; his very accent and tone are remembered; and when the hoarse salute "God bless you!" sounds over the sea, as the boats go away, you may be sure that the fishers utter their blessing with sincere fervour. Then there are the great meetings on calm, happy Sundays, when the cultured clergyman who has snatched a brief rest from his parochial duties, or five or six amateurs (many of them University men) stroll about among the congregation before the formal service begins. The roughs who come on board for the first time are inclined to exhibit a sort of resentful but sheepish reserve, until they find that the delicate courtesy of these Christian gentlemen arises from sheer goodwill; then they become friendly and confidential. Well, all this intercourse is gradually knitting together the upper and middle classes on shore and the great sea-going population; the fishers feel that they are cared for, and the defiant blackguardism of the outcast must by and by be nearly unknown.

I feel it almost a duty to mention one curious matter which came to my notice. An ugly morning had broken with half a gale of wind blowing; the sea was not dangerous, but it was nasty--perhaps nastier than it looked. I was on board a steam-carrier, a low-built, powerful iron vessel that lunges in the most disturbing manner when she is waiting in the trough of the sea for the boats which bring off the boxes of fish. The little boats were crashing, and leaping like hooked salmon, and grinding against the sides of the steamer, and I could not venture to walk about very much on that reeling iron deck. The crowd of smacksmen who came were a very wild lot, and, as the breeze grew stronger,

they were in a hurry to get their boxes on board. Since one of the trunks of fish weighs 80 lbs., I need hardly say that the process of using such a box as a dumb-bell is not precisely an easy one, and, when the dumb-bell practice has to be performed on a kind of stage which jumps like a bucking broncho, the chances of bruises and of resulting bad language are much increased. The bounding, wrenching, straining, stumbling mob in the boats did not look very gentle or civilized; their attire was quite fanciful and varied, but very filthy, and they were blowzy and tired after their wild night of lashing rain and chill hours of labour. A number of the younger fellows had the peculiar street Arab style of countenance, while the older men were not of the very gentle type. In that mad race against wind and tide, I should have expected a little of the usual cursing and fighting from a mob which included a small percentage of downright roughs. But a tall man, dressed in ordinary yachtman's clothes, stood smoking on deck, and that was the present writer. The rough Englishmen did not know that I had been used to the company of the wildest desperadoes that live on earth. They only knew that I came from the Mission ship, and they passed the word. Every rowdy that came up was warned, and one poor rough, who chanced to blurt out a very common and very nasty Billingsgate word, was silenced by a moralist, who observed, "Cheese it. Don't cher see the Mission ship bloke?" I watched like a cat, and I soon saw that the ordinary hurricane curses were restrained on my account, simply because I came from the vessel where all are welcome--bad and good. For four hours I was saluted in all sorts of blundering, good-humoured ways by the men as they came up. Little scraps of news are always intensely valued at sea, and it pleased me to see how these rude, kind souls tried to interest me by giving me scraps of information about the yacht which I had just left. "She was a-bearing away after the Admiral, sir, when we passed her. It's funny old weather for her, and I see old Jones a-bin and got the torps'l off on her"--and so on. Several of the fellows shouted as they went, "Gord bless you, sir. We wants you in the winter." No doubt some of them would, at other times, have used a verb not quite allied to bless; but I could see that they were making an

attempt to show courtesy toward an agency which they respect, and though I remained like a silent Lama, receiving the salutes of our grimy, greasy friends, I understood their thoughts, and, in a cynical way, I felt rather thankful to know that there are some men at least on whom kindness is not thrown away. The captain of the carrier said, "I never seen 'em so quiet as this for a long time, but that was because they seed you. They cotton on to the Mission--the most on 'em does."

This seems to me a very pretty and significant story. Any one who knows the British Rough--especially the nautical Rough--knows that the luxury of an oath is much to him, yet here a thorough crowd of wild and excited fellows become decorous, and profuse of civilities, only because they saw a silent and totally emotionless man smoking on the deck of a steam-carrier. On board the steamer, I noticed that the same spirit prevailed; the men treated me like a large and essentially helpless baby, who must be made much of. Alas! do not I remember my first trip on a carrier, when I was treated rather like a bundle of coarse fish? The reason for the alteration is obvious, and I give my very last experience as a most significant thing of its kind. Observe that the roughest and most defiant of the irreligious men are softened by contact with an agency which they regard as being too fine or too tiresome for their fancy, and it is these irregular ruffians who greet the Mission smacks with the loudest heartiness when they swing into the midst of a fleet.

Now, I put it to any business man, "Is not this a result worth paying for, if one wants to invest in charitable work?" I repeat that the Mission is indirectly effecting a national insurance; the men think of England, and of the marvellous army of good English folk who care for them, and they are so much the better citizens. We hear a dolorous howl in Parliament and elsewhere about the dearth of seamen; experts inform us that we could not send out much more than half our fleet if a pinch came, because we have not enough real sailors. Is it not well for us, as Britons, to care as much as we can for our own hardy flesh and blood--the finest pilots, the cleverest seamen, the bravest men in the world? They would

fight in the old Norse fashion if it came to that, and they would be the exact sort of ready-made bluejackets needed to man the swarms of *Wasps* which must, some day, be needed to defend our coasts.

So far for purely utilitarian considerations. Again, supposing you take on board a hospital ship a man who is enduring bitter suffering; supposing you heal him, bring him under gentle influences, lead him to know the Lord Jesus Christ and to follow Him, and send him away with his personality transformed--is not all that worth a little money, nay, a great deal? I am fully aware that it is a good thing to convert a Jew or a Bechuana, or even a Fantee--their rescue from error is a distinct boon; but, while honouring all missions to savage nations, I like to plead a little for our own kindly breed of Englishmen. Already we see what may be done among them; good-hearted amateurs are willing to work hard, and the one hospital cruiser--One! among so many!--is succeeding splendidly. Give the English seamen a chance, then.

The interesting West African is clearly a proper object for pity as to his spiritual condition, but, to my mind, he has, in some respects, the jolliest, easiest life imaginable. Give him enough melon, and he will bask blissfully in the sun all day; you cannot get him to work any more than you can get him to fight for his own safety:--he is a happy, lazy, worthless specimen of the race, and life glides pleasantly by for him. Spend thousands on the poor Fantee by all means, but think also of our own iron men who do not lead easy lives; think of the terror of the crashing North Sea; think of the cool, imperturbable, matchless braves who combat that Sea and earn a pittance by providing necessaries (or luxuries) for you and for me. Save as many souls as you can--"preach the gospel to *every creature*;" heal as many bodies as you can; but, since the world's resources are narrow, consider carefully which bodies are to have your first consideration.

Years ago I had no conception of the amount of positive suffering which the fishermen endure. I was once on board a merchant steamer during a few months, and I was installed as surgeon-in-chief. We had a few cases which were pretty tiresome in their way, but then the utmost work our men had to do was the trifle

of pulling and hauling when the trysails were put on her, and the usual scraping and scrubbing and painting which goes on about all iron ships. But the smacksmen runs the risk of a hurt of some kind in every minute of his waking life. He must work with his oilskins on when rain or spray is coming aboard, and his oilskins fray the skin when the edges wear a little; then the salt water gets into the sore and makes a nasty ulcer, which eats its way up until you may see men who dare not work at the trawl without having their sleeves doubled to the elbow. Then there are the salt water cracks which cut their way right to the bone. These, and toothache, the fisherman's great enemy, are the ailments which may be cured or relieved by the skippers of the Mission smacks. In a single year nearly eight thousand cases have been treated in the floating dispensaries, and I may say that I never saw a malingerer come on board. What would be the use? It is only the stress of positive pain that makes the men seek help, and their hard stoicism is very fine to see. A man unbinds an ugly poisoned hand, and quietly lets you know that he has gone about his work for a week with that throbbing fester pain; another will simply say that he kept about as long as he could with a broken finger. Then there are cases of a peculiarly distressing nature--scalp wounds caused by falling blocks, broken limbs in various stages of irritation, internal injuries caused by violent falls in bad weather, and for all these there is ready and hearty help aboard the Mission vessel.

Scarcely one of the North Sea converts has turned out badly, for they usually have the stern stuff of good men in them; they have that manly and passionate gratitude which only the true and honest professor, free from taint of humbug or hypocrisy, can maintain, and I say deliberately that every man of them who is brought to lead a pure, sober, religious life, represents a distinct gain to our best national wealth--a wealth that is far above money.

I know that my dream may be translated into fact, for have we not the early success of the superb hospital smack to reassure us? Let us go a little farther and complete the work; let us make sure that no poor, maimed seaman shall be without a chance of speedy relief when his hard fate overtakes him on that

savage North Sea. The fishers are the forlorn hope in the great Army of Labour; they risk life and limb every day--every moment--in our behoof; surely the luckier children of civilization may remember their hardly entreated brethren? No sentiment is needed in the business, and gush of any sort is altogether hateful. God forbid that I should hinder those who feel led to aid the members of an unknown tribe in a dark continent, for in so doing I should be contravening the Divine injunction to evangelize all nations: but, on the other hand, I will discharge myself of what has lain as a burden on my conscience ever since I first visited the smacksmen; I will cry aloud for *help* to our own kith and kin, more, *more* HELP than has ever yet been given to them!

These men are splendid specimens of English manhood; their country is not far away; you can visit it for yourself and see what human nerve and sinew can endure, and if you do you will return, as I did, filled with a sense of shame that you had spent so many years in ignorance of your indebtedness to the fine fellows in whose behalf my tale is written. I am as grateful as our brave souls on the sea for all that has been done, but I incontinently ask for more, and I entreat those to whom money is as nothing to give the Mission to Deep Sea Fishermen its hospital ship, for every fleet that scours the trawling grounds, but especially a fast or steam cruiser--a *Robert Cassall*--so that the wounded fisherman, in the hour of his need and his utter helplessness, may be as sure of relief as are the Wapping labourer or the Mortlake bargeman.

JAMES RUNCIMAN.

APPENDIX B.

Mission to Deep Sea Fishermen.

Instituted in August, 1881.

The Mission was designed, in humble dependence upon the blessing of Almighty God,--

1. To carry the Glad Tidings of God's Love, Mercy, and Salvation in our Lord Jesus Christ to the thousands of Fishermen employed in trawling and other modes of fishing in the North Sea and elsewhere, and in every possible way to promote and minister to their spiritual welfare.

2. To mitigate the hard lot, and improve the condition of the Fishermen, physically and mentally, by all practicable means, and meet many urgent needs for which, heretofore, there has been no provision, especially in supplying medicine and simple surgical appliances, books, mufflers, mittens, &c.

For the above purposes Medical Mission vessels are stationed with ten fishing fleets, and numerous Clerical and Lay Missionaries and Agents have visited the Smacksmen. It is, however, generally conceded that the time has arrived for effecting a large development of the Medical work. No fewer than 7,485 sick and injured fishermen received assistance during 1888 at the hands of the sixteen surgeons in the service of the Society, or from the Dispensaries in charge of the Mission Skippers, and the experience of this and previous years warrants the substitution in every fleet of a cruising Hospital, carrying a resident Surgeon, for the type of vessel hitherto in use.

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