H. B. Marriott Watson

Hurricane Island



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"'May the Lord help you,' says he in his voice of suet."

Hurricane Island

By H. B. MARRIOTT WATSON

Author of "CAPTAIN FORTUNE," Etc.



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TO

RICHARD BRERETON MARRIOTT WATSON

MY KEEN YET APPRECIATIVE CRITIC,
WHO PLEADED
ON BEHALF OF THE VILLAINS,
THIS TALE OF ADVENTURE BY SEA
IS DEDICATED WITH LOVE BY
ITS AUTHOR AND HIS

[**Transcriber's Note:** The dedication is incomplete.]

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HURRICANE ISLAND

CHAPTER I

"The Sea Queen"

Pember Street, E., is never very cheerful in appearance, not even in mid-spring, when the dingy lilacs in the forecourts of those grimy houses bourgeon and blossom. The shrubs assimilate soon the general air of depression common to the neighbourhood. The smoke catches and turns them; they wilt or wither; and the bunches of flowers are sicklied over with the smuts and blacks of the roaring chimneys. The one open space within reach is the river, and thither I frequently repaired during the three years I practised in the East End. At least it was something to have that wide flood before one, the channel of great winds and the haunt of strange craft. The tide grew turbid under the Tower Bridge and rolled desolately about the barren wilderness of the Isle of Dogs; but it was for all that a breach in the continuity of ugly streets and houses, a wide road itself, on which tramped unknown and curious lives, passing to and fro between London and foreign parts.

Unless a man be in deadly earnest or very young, I cannot conceive a career more distressing to the imagination and crushing to the ambition than the practice of medicine in the East End. The bulk of my cases were club cases which enabled me to be sure of a living, and the rest were for the most part sordid and unpleasant subjects, springing out of the vile life of the district. Alien sailors abounded and quarrelled fiercely. Often and often have I been awakened in

the dead hours to find drunken and foreign-speaking men at my door, with one or more among them suffering from a dangerous knife-wound. And the point of it that came nearly home to me was that this career would not only lead to nothing, but was unprofitable in itself. I had taken the position in the hope that I might make something of it, but I found that it was all I could do to maintain my place. I made no charge for advice in my consultations, but took a little money on the medicine which I made up. Is any position to be conceived more degrading to a professional man? The one bright time in my week was of a Saturday, when I donned my best coat and gloves, took down my silkiest hat, and, discarding the fumes and flavours of the East, set out for Piccadilly. I still remained a member of a decent club, and here I lunched in my glory, talked with some human creatures, exchanged views on the affairs of the world, smoked and lolled in comfortable chairs—in short, took my enjoyment like a man-about-town, and then went back to earn my next week's holiday.

Punctually to a minute I must be in the surgery in Pember Street at six o'clock, and the horrid round must begin to circle again. I will confess that there was a time when I could have loved that career as a saunterer in West End streets. It appealed to me at five-and-twenty almost as a romantic profession. Other young men whom I had known, at school and college, had entered it, and some were, or appeared to be, signal stars in that galaxy of wealth and beauty. My means, however, denied me access, and at thirty I would have been content, after my experience of hardships and poverty, to settle in

some comfortable suburb, not too distant from the sphere of radiance. As it was, I was in chains in the slums of Wapping, and re-visited the glimpses of Piccadilly once a week.

When I rose on an evening in November to go down to the river almost for the last time, it was not a Saturday, but a Thursday, and the West End seemed still a long way off. I had finished my round of cases, and had sat waiting in my dingy surgery for patients. But none had come, and in the enforced meditation that ensued, as I reviewed my past and my prospects, my soul sickened in me. I wanted to breathe more freely—I wanted more air and something more cheerful than the low surgery lamp and the dismal lights that wagged in the street. I put on my hat and passed down to the river.

It was quite dark, and the easterly drift had obscured and dirtied the sky, so that when I came out by a landing which I knew now familiarly, I could see only the lights across the water, and some tall spars and funnels in the foreground. But the river at full tide champed audibly against the wharves, and the various sounds of that restless port assailed my ears —the roar of the unseen traffic behind me, the fluting and screaming of whistles, the mingled shouts, oaths, and orders in the distance, and the drone of that profound water under all.

I had stood for some minutes, drinking in the better air, when there were voices near, suddenly risen out of the flood, and I perceived two men had landed. They paused by me for one to relight his pipe, and in the flash of the match I gathered from the dresses that they were stevedores, newly come, no doubt,

from unloading some vessel. But my attention was taken off them unexpectedly by a great flare that went up into the sky apparently in mid-channel. It made a big bright flame, quite unusual in that resort of silent lights, and one of the stevedores commented on it.

"That'll be her," he said; "she was coming up round the Dogs in a la-di-da fashion. Maybe she'll fly rockets in another minute."

"Them steam-yachts are the jockeys to blue the money," responded his companion. "Nothink's good enough for them."

"What is it?" I asked.

"Only a Geordie brig straight from winning the America Cup, sir," said the first man with a facetious smile. "What did they make her out, Bill?"

Bill hesitated. "I think it was the *Sea Queen*," he said doubtfully, and added, in harmony with his companion's mood:

"They don't want to make themselves known, not by a long chalk."

With which, the flare having died down, they tramped away into the night with a civil leave-taking.

I followed them presently, moving along the road in the direction of the docks. When I reached the entrance I paused, and the gatekeeper addressed me.

"Going in, doctor? Got a call?"

I recognised him in the dimness of his lamp as a man whom I had attended for an accident, and I gave him good evening.

"No," said I, "but I want some air. I think I will, if you don't mind."

"Welcome, sir," said he cheerily, and I found myself on the other side of the gateway.

I walked along the vacant stretch of ground, lit only by dull gas-lamps, and, passing the low office buildings and storing sheds, came out by the water-basins. Here was a scene of some bustle and disorder, but it was farther on that the spectators were engaged in a knot, for the caisson was drifting round, and a handsome vessel was floating in, her funnel backed against the grey darkness and her spars in a ghostly silhouette. The name I heard on several sides roused in me a faint curiosity. It was the stranger I had observed, the *Sea Queen*, the subject of the stevedores' pleasantries.

"A pretty boat," said I to my neighbour. "What is she?"

He shook his head. "*Sea Queen* out of Hamburg," he said, "and a pleasure yacht from the look of her. But what she does here beats me."

The caisson closed, and the steam-yacht warped up slowly to the pier. There was little or no noise on her, only a voice raised occasionally in an authoritative command, and the rattling of chains that paid out through the donkey-engine. Idly I moved to the stone quay when the gangway was let down, but only one man descended. The passengers,

if there had been any, had long since reached town from Tilbury, saving themselves that uninteresting trudge up the winding river-lane.

I moved on to where a steamer was being loaded under the electric lights, and watched the same for some time with interest; then, taking out my watch, I examined it, and came to the conclusion that if I was to see any patients that evening at all I must at once get back to my unpalatable rooms. I began to go along the pier, and passed into the shadow of the *Sea Queen*, now sunk in quiet, and drab and dark. As I went, a port-hole in the stern almost on the level of my eyes gleamed like a moon, and of a sudden there was an outbreak of angry voices, one threatening volubly and the other deeper and slower, but equally hostile. It was not that the altercation was anything astonishing in human life, but I think it was the instantaneous flash of that light and those voices in a dead ship that pulled me up. I stared into the port-hole, and as I did so the face of a man passed across it 'twixt the light and me; it passed and vanished; and I walked on. As I turned to go down to the gates I was aware of the approaching fog. I had seen it scores of times in that abominable low-lying part of the town, and I knew the symptoms. There was a faint smell in the air, an odour that bit the nostrils, carrying the reek of that changeless wilderness of factories and houses. The opaque grey sky lost its greyness and was struck to a lurid yellow. Banks of high fog rolled up the east and moved menacingly, almost imperceptibly, upon the town. For a moment there were dim shadows of the wharves and the riverside houses, with a church tower dimmer still behind them, and then the billows of the fog

descended and swallowed up all.

I moved now in a blackness, but bore to the right, in which direction I knew were the dock sheds and safety. I seemed to have been feeling my way for a long time—quite ten minutes—and yet I did not come upon anything. I began to be seized with the fear of a blind man who is helpless in vacancy. Had I left the basin in my rear, or had I somehow wandered back towards it, and would another step take me over into the water? I shrank from the thought of that cold plunge, and, putting out my stick on all sides, tapped and tapped, and went on foot by foot. I was still upon the stone, when I should have reached the sheds, or at least have got upon the earth again, with the roadway running to the gates. Angry at my own folly for lingering so long about the ships, I continued cautiously forward, trying each step of the way. Presently I heard a sound of footsteps before me, and then a voice raised in a stave of song. There followed a loud oath and the splash of a heavy body in water.

Plainly the basin was, then, in front of me, and some one had fallen in. The poor wretch was doomed to drown in that horrid and impenetrable darkness. I shuddered at the thought of that fate, and moved faster under the whip of impulse. The next moment I brought sharply up against a stone post by which ships were warped in and fastened. Below was the water, and now I could hear the sound of splashing, and a voice raised in a cry of terror. Round the post was coiled a heavy rope which I loosened as rapidly as was possible and began to lower over the edge of the basin.

"This way," I called; "make this way. Here is the pier," but the splashing continued, and a smother of sound came to me, as if the swimmer were under water, and his voice stifled. Almost without thinking, I gripped the thick, tarry rope and let myself over the basin, until I had reached the surface of the water.

"This way," I called; "if you can get here, I can save you."

The noise seemed to come from some little distance out, and now I was in the water myself, with the cable in my hand, striking out feverishly and awkwardly in the direction of the struggling man. I came upon him in a dozen strokes, and the first news I had of him was a kick in the shoulder that almost tore me from my rope. The next moment I had him by the collar and without more ado was retracing my way, towing a violent mass of humanity behind me. It was only by dint of hard work and by propping him in my arms that I at last landed him on the pier, and then I succeeded in following myself, very sore and stiff and cold.

The first words that sprang from the prostrate figure on the quay were some incoherent oaths, which ultimately took form. "Curse Legrand, curse him!"

"Come," said I; "if you are well enough to swear you are well enough to travel, and we are both of us in a case for treatment."

"I can't see you," said a voice, in a grumbling way, "but you saved me. Pull along, and I'll do my best to follow. Where the dickens are we?"

I groped and helped him to his feet. "Give me your

arm," said I; "we can't afford to go in again, either of us."

"Were you in too?" he asked stupidly.

"Well, what do *you* think?" I replied with a little laugh, and began to walk, this time, determinately at right angles from the basin.

He said nothing more, but hung on my arm pretty limp, as we struggled through the darkness, and presently we both fell over a bale of goods.

"So far so good," I said, picking him up; "we must be in the neighbourhood of the sheds. Now to find them, and creep along in their protection."

We struck the buildings immediately after, and I had no difficulty in working my way to the end. That took us to dry ground, or, at least, to the sloppy ground at the bottom of the docks. By good fortune we now hit upon the roadway, and it was to me a delight to hear the ring of the hard macadam under our squelching boots. I was now almost cheerful, for I was sure that I could not wander from the road, and, sure enough, we were advertised of our position and heralded all the way by the meagre lamps at intervals. Soon after we reached the gates, which were opened by my friend.

He peered into our faces. "It was a call, sure enough," said I, laughing. "And here's my patient."

When we got into the road the fog had slightly lifted, and I had less difficulty in picking my way home than I had anticipated. Once in the surgery, I turned up the lamp and poked the fire into a blaze, after

which I looked at my companion. It was with a sense of familiarity that I recognised his face as that which I had seen flitting across the port-hole of the *Sea Queen*. He sat back in the chair in which I had placed him and stared weakly about the room. The steam went up from both of us.

"Look here," said I, "if we stay so, we are dead or rheumatic men"; and I went into my bedroom, changed myself, and brought him some garments of my own. These he put on, talking now in the garrulous voice I had heard on the yacht, but somewhat disconnectedly.

"It's awfully good of you ... a Good Samaritan," and here a vacant laugh. "I wonder if these things.... How did I go over? I thought I was going straight. It must have been that infernal fog.... Where the dickens are we?"

"You are in my house," said I, "but you might be at the bottom of the basin."

"Good heavens!" he said, with a laugh. "I feel mighty shivery. Don't you think a drop of something——"

I looked at him closely. "I think it wouldn't be a bad idea in the circumstances," I said.

"Oh, I know I had too much to carry!" he said recklessly. "It made me quarrel with that wretched Legrand, too—a fat-headed fool!"

I rang for water, and mixed two hot jorums of whisky, one of which he sipped contentedly.

"You see, we had a rousing time coming over," he

observed, as if in apology. I looked my question, and he answered it. "Hamburg, in the *Sea Queen*. The old man skipped at Tilbury, and Barraclough's a real blazer."

"Which accounts for the blaze I saw," I remarked drily.

"Oh, you saw that. Yes, it was that that made Legrand mad. He's particular. But what's the odds? The boss has to pay."

His eyes roamed about the shabby room—shabby from the wretched pictures on the walls to the threadbare carpet underfoot, and, though he was not a gentleman, I felt some feeling of irritation. Perhaps if he had been a gentleman I should not have been put out at this scrutiny of my poverty.

"You saved me, and that's certain," he began again. "Say, are you a doctor?"

I admitted it.

"Well, can you recommend another glass of toddy?" he asked, smiling, and his smile was pleasant.

"In the circumstances again—perhaps," I said.

"Oh, I know I played the fool," he conceded. "But it isn't often I do. I must have gone off in the fog. How did you get at me?"

I told him.

"That was plucky," he said admiringly. "I don't know two folks I'd risk the same for."

"There wasn't much risk," I answered. "It was only a question of taking a cold bath out of season."

"Well!" he said, and whistled. "There's white people everywhere, I guess. Business good?"

The question was abrupt, and I could not avoid it. "You have your answer," I replied, with a gesture at the room, and taking out my cigar-case I offered him one.

He accepted it, bit off the end, and spat it on the floor, as if preoccupied. His brow wrinkled, as if the mental exercise were unusual and difficult.

"The *Sea Queen* is a rum bird," he said presently, "but there's plenty of money behind. And she wants a doctor."

"Well," said I, smiling at him.

"We left a Scotch chap sick at Hamburg," he continued. "The boss is a secret beggar, with pots of money, they say. We chartered out of the Clyde, and picked him up at Hamburg—him and others."

"A pleasure yacht?" I inquired.

"You may call it that. If it ain't that I don't know what it is, and I ought to know, seeing I am purser. We've all signed on for twelve months, anyway. Now, doctor, we want a doctor."

He laughed, as if this had been a joke, and I stared at him. "You mean," said I slowly, "that I might apply."

"If it's worth your while," said he. "You know best."

"Well, I don't know about that," I replied. "It depends on a good many things."

All the same I knew that I did know best. The whole of my discontent, latent and seething for years, surged up in me. Here was the wretched practice by which I earned a miserable pittance, bad food, and low company. On the pleasure yacht I should at least walk among equals, and feel myself a civilised being. I could dispose of my goodwill for a small sum, and after twelve months—well, something might turn up. At any rate, I should have a year's respite, a year's holiday.

I looked across at the purser of the *Sea Queen*, with his good-looking, easy-natured face, his sleek black hair, and his rather flabby white face, and still I hesitated.

"I can make it a dead bird," he said, wagging his head, "and you'll find it pretty comfortable."

"Where are you going? The Mediterranean?" I asked.

"I haven't the least idea," he said with a frank yawn. "But if your tickets are all right you can bet on the place."

"I'm agreeable," I said, in a matter-of-fact voice.

"Good man!" said he, with some of his former sparkle of interest. "And now we'll have another to toast it, and then I must be off."

"Don't you think you'd better stay here the night?" I asked. "I can put you up. And the fog's thicker."

"Thanks, old man," he replied with easy familiarity, "I

would like a roost, only I've got an engagement. I wired to some one, you know." And he winked at me wickedly.

"Very well," said I. "If you have an appointment, I would suggest that we leave over the toast."

"You're right," he said ingenuously. "But it was a nasty bath. All serene. I'll fix that up. By the way," he paused on his road to the door, "I haven't your name."

"Nor I yours," I answered. "Mine's Richard Phillimore."

"Mine's Lane," he said. "Qualified?"

"M.B. London," I replied.

"Good for you. That'll make it easier. I suppose I can go in your togs."

"You're welcome," I said, "though they don't fit you very well."

"Oh, I'm a bit smaller than you, I know, but all cats are grey in the dark, and it's infernally dark to-night! Well, so long, and I'm much obliged to you, I'm sure."

He swung out of the door with his free gait, and I stopped him.

"One word more. Who's your owner?"

"The boss? Oh, Morland—Morland, a regular millionaire."

With that he was gone.

CHAPTER II

In the "Three Tuns"

The next day I had a full round of visits to make, so that I had little time to think over the adventure of the previous evening. On Saturday I made my way, as usual, to the West End, and spent the afternoon in luxury, basking in the renewal of my self-respect. I had leisure then to reflect, and, although the more I considered the less appeared the likelihood of any advantage to myself derivable out of Lane's promise, yet I allowed myself the satisfaction of certain inquiries. No one in the club had heard of Morland, the millionaire, and the *Sea Queen* was unknown to my yachting friends. Moreover, no Morland appeared in the "Court Guide." Still, it was quite possible, even probable, that he was an American; so that omission did not abash me. It was only when I rehearsed the circumstances in bald terms that I doubted to the point of incredulity. I had fished up a tipsy fellow, of a loose good-nature, who, under the stimulus of more whisky, had probably at the best offered more than he was entitled to do, and who, at the worst, had long since forgotten all about his Good Samaritan. The situation seemed easy of interpretation, and in the warmth of my pleasant

intercourse with my companions I presently ceased to ponder it.

Yet, when I arrived at my house and opened the letter that awaited me, I will confess that I experienced a thrill of hope. It was from Hills, a firm of solicitors in Lincoln's Inn Fields, and, premising that I was a candidate for the post of doctor in the SS. *Sea Queen*, requested me to call on Monday at three o'clock. This looked, so to speak, like business, and I attended at the address with my mind made up and clear. If I was offered the position I would take it, and so cut my cable.

I had to wait some time in an ante-room, but presently was ushered into the presence of one of the partners, an amiable, business-like man, with the air of a country squire.

"Dr. Phillimore?" he queried introductively, and I assented.

"Please sit down, will you. You are anxious to take position of doctor on the *Sea Queen.*" He consulted some note before him. "I see. Your name has been mentioned to my client in this connection. I assume you are fully qualified?"

I told him the facts and referred him to the "Medical Year-Book." "Moreover," I added, "I have no doubt, if a recommendation were necessary, Sir John Wemyss, of Harley Street, would be willing to write to you."

"Sir John Wemyss," he echoed reflectively. "Oh, yes, the cancer man. Let me see, he was President, wasn't he, of the College of Surgeons?"

"Yes, some years ago," I answered.

"A good man," he declared with a friendly air of patronage. "Well, I don't suppose there would be any difficulty on that score if Sir John will write. My client is a prudent man, and would naturally like to have the best advice available. Moreover, he is quite willing to pay for it. There is, of course, that question," and he looked at me as if inviting my suggestion.

I laughed. "Really I have no views, only that naturally I should like as large a salary as is compatible with the circumstances."

"Very well, Dr. Phillimore," said he, nodding. "I daresay we can arrange that too. You are young yet, and the position might lead——" He broke off, as the baize door on his left opened noiselessly. "What is it, Pye?"

The clerk bent down and whispered to him. "Oh, very well! It's opportune in a way. Will you ask Mr. Morland to be good enough to come in?"

The little clerk went out with his neat walk, and the solicitor rose. "I shall be able to introduce you to my client, who is the owner of the *Sea Queen*," he said, with a certain change of voice, and quickly went forward to the outer door.

"How do you do, Mr. Morland?" he exclaimed, with a cheerful deference, such as was due to the presence of wealth. "I was just engaged on a little matter of yours. I hope you came right up. These dull offices go so much by routine. It was the question of a doctor, sir."

As he spoke he indicated me, and for the first time I saw Mr. Morland.

He was a man of thirty-five, of middle height, slightly disposed to stoutness, but with a fine carriage, and with a bronzed, good-looking face, rendered heavier for the dull expression of his blue eyes. His hair, which was short and worn *en brosse*, after a foreign fashion, was straw-yellow.

"Is it the doctor?" he asked, after a glance at me, and though he spoke excellent English, there was also something a little foreign in his accent.

"Well, sir, we haven't reached that point yet," said the lawyer, smiling. "This is Dr. Phillimore, whom you wished me to——"

"Ah, yes," said Mr. Morland, and he put out a hand mechanically. "You will arrange it," he said to the other, with an air of command.

"Most certainly, sir, but I thought you would like to see, being on the spot——"

"No, there is only one thing. You know anything of throats?" he asked suddenly.

I told him I had studied under a specialist at the hospital, as it happened. In these days we doctors are compelled to take special courses in order to keep march with the times.

"That is right," he said, nodding, and the smile that came upon his face turned the eyes bluer. He looked quite handsome. "We must all keep step with the times. I will look to you to arrange it," he added

again to the lawyer, and seemed to wait for my dismissal. The solicitor bowed me sharply from the room, for was not his millionaire client in waiting? And I went down the stairs.

It was now past four, and as I came out into the Square I saw before me the little lawyer's clerk who had entered the room and had been called Pye. He was talking amiably to another man, and as I passed smiled at me through his pince-nez.

"You saw Mr. Morland?" he asked in a friendly way.

"Yes," I said, and looked at the stranger. There seemed no necessity to say more.

"It is odd that you should encounter here, gentlemen," said Pye, adjusting his glasses, "and yet I suppose it isn't. Mr. Holgate, this gentleman is the future doctor of the *Sea Queen*."

"Oh, dear me, it isn't settled," said I, with a laugh.

Pye beamed at me. "I think I know my chief's face," he said. "It's my business to interpret him, particularly when he can't interpret himself."

The other man laughed lazily. He was a man with a big body, and a face round and gross in proportion, heavy-lidded eyes, and an imperturbable expression.

"This is Mr. Holgate, the third officer," said Pye, by way of introduction, and somehow or other we began to walk in the direction of Holborn. When we had threaded the Great Turnstile the little clerk hesitated and swung round. "I was going to drink a glass of wine with Mr. Holgate. Perhaps you would

join us, sir?"

"Gladly," said I, for I had made up my mind to take tea before returning to Wapping, and somehow my interview had inspirited me. I took a sanguine view of my chances, for all my words to Pye. Moreover, I have always been interested in my fellow-creatures, and, finally, I was in the mood for a glass of something. Enters this trio, then, into the "Three Tuns" presently, and sits to a table in comfortable chairs, with the clatter of the street falling, like rain, on the senses, and the bright flare of gas among the dark barrels. There was about the place an odour of good-fellowship and of peace that pleased me who had not visited these haunts for years.

Little Pye turned his pince-nez on me as the attendant advanced.

"What'll you have, doctor?" he asked.

I hesitated.

"I suppose it must be port," said I; "port is more palatable and no more noxious in such places than any other wine."

"Any port in a storm, in fact," said the little man, looking at me quizzically.

"For my part——" said Holgate, in his stuffy, fat voice.

"Port, you should say," interposed Pye with brisk wit. He smiled at his smartness and his eyes seemed to challenge me to respond.

"There's nothing to beat spirits—and sound rum for

choice, but as they won't have it here, I'll take brandy," continued the third officer.

He lighted a cigar and began to smoke, examining everything within eyeshot attentively but with indifference. I think, except for the first glance he had bestowed upon me, that he had completely ignored my presence.

Little Pye put up his glass. "I drink," said he, "to a prosperous voyage, Mr. Holgate, and to pleasant companions."

"Prosperous voyage," said the third officer wheezily, and I murmured something to the same effect.

"You say the old man's velvet," said Holgate, resuming his puffing.

"Well," said Pye, beaming through his glasses, "I wouldn't go so far as to say it, but he looks it. He looks kid-glove."

"I hate 'em," growled Holgate. "I've seen that kind on the ferry—all airs and aitches, and frosty as a berg."

"Well, of course, it would be much more satisfactory to be sailing under a real Tartar," remarked the little man with mild pleasantry.

Holgate cast him a glance which inquired, but was indifferent. "What's your idea, doctor?" he asked.

"I have none," said I, smiling. "I am much more interested in third officers."

His masklike face relaxed, and he stroked his black moustaches, and took a long pull of his cigar.

"That was very nice of you, doctor," he said, nodding with more cordiality.

Pye drew an apple from his pocket, and carefully bit into it. I don't know why, but it struck me as comical to see him at this schoolboy business, his ears alert, his glasses shining, and his white teeth going to and fro. He reminded me of a squirrel, a fancy to which the little tufts of whiskers by his ears lent themselves. He eyed both of us brightly.

"After all," said the third officer heavily, "it's more important in the end to know your owner, let alone his travelling with you. I wouldn't give two straws for the old man, velvet or iron, so long as I could get the lug of my owner."

"You'll find them both all right," said Pye reassuringly. "Captain Day I have seen and Mr. Morland I know."

"He is very rich?" I asked.

"I'll trouble you for a two and a half commission on it," said the clerk cheerfully, "and then I'd live like a fighting-cock. At least, that's what we all believe. There's no knowing."

The shadows of the November afternoon had gathered in the streets without, and a thin scant rain was flying. Into the area of warmth and brightness entered more customers, and shook the water from the umbrellas. They stood at the bar and drank and talked noisily. Round about us in the loom of the great barrels the shadows lurched from the wagging gas-flames. The clerk had finished his apple.

"We will have another," said Holgate.

"This is mine," I said. He shook his head. I protested.

"Doctor, you confess you live in doubt," he said, "whereas I have my appointment in my pocket. Plainly it is my right."

"I think that's a fair argument, doctor," said Pye.

"I am in both your debt," said I lightly. "For company and wine."

"I'm sure we shall owe you both many a time yet," said the third officer civilly.

At the table near us two men had sat and were talking even as we, but one had a half-penny paper, and turned the flimsy thing about, I fancy in search of racing news.

"You see there is no doubt about you——," began Pye amiably, and suddenly dropped his sentence.

In the unexpected silence I caught some words from the other table.

"Well, it's good pluck of him if he wants to marry her. What's the odds if he is a Prince? Live and let live, I say."

Pye's little squirrel head turned round and he stared for a moment at the speaker, then it came back again.

"You are uncommonly polite," said Holgate irritably.

"I'm sorry. I thought I recognised that voice," said the little man sweetly. "One gets echoes everywhere. I

was going to say we took you for granted, doctor."

"It's good of you," said I. "But will Mr. Morland?"

"I can practically answer for my employer; I can't say anything about Mr. Morland, who has, however, authorised us to appoint."

"The yacht is from Hamburg?" said I.

"I believe so," said he.

"And its destination?"

"That knowledge is quite out of my province," said the squirrel briefly.

When one came to think of it, it was almost a snub, and I had never any patience for these legal silences. As he shut his jaws he looked a man who could keep a secret, and knew his own mind. Yet he had been so easily familiar that I flushed with resentment. Confound these little professional tricks and solemnities! We were meeting on another ground than lawyer and client.

"I dare say it will be within the cabin-boy's province to-morrow," said I, somewhat sharply.

"Very likely," he assented, and Holgate, who had turned at my tone, exchanged a glance with him.

"Mr. Pye is fond of keeping his own counsel," said the third officer in his slow voice, "and I'm not sure he isn't right, being a lawyer."

"But he isn't a lawyer here," I protested.

Pye smiled. "No; I'm not," he said, "and please don't

remind me of it"; at which we all laughed and grew friendly again. "Well, this is a funny sort of tea for me," said the clerk presently. "I generally patronise the A.B.C.," and he rose to go.

Holgate did not move, but sat staring at the fire, which shone on his broad placid face. "I knew a man once," he observed, "who kept his own counsel."

"I hope he was a lawyer," said Pye humourously.

"No; he was a steward—the steward of an estate in the North. In the hills was the wealth of a millionaire; coal, doctor," Holgate looked at me. "And he kept his counsel and held his tongue."

"With what object?" I asked.

"Oh, a little syndicate succeeded in buying it from the owner, and now it's a seven-figure affair."

His face had no expression of inquiry or of inviting comment. He had simply stated history, but I was moved to say flippantly,

"What luck!"

"The steward got it?" asked Pye.

"He romped in," said the third officer.

"And will presently be a baronet," said I lightly.

"Stranger things have happened," he remarked, and began to smile. I fancy we all smiled, though it was not, of course, altogether humourous.

"Is that called robbery?" asked Holgate.

"I doubt if the law covers it," said Pye. "No; it's quite an innocent transaction."

"What is robbery?" I asked cynically. "Lawyers may feel their way amid the intricacies, but no one else can hope to. I'm stealing now when I take these matches."

"I will follow your example," said Holgate, and did so.

"I'm not sure that that's not perks," said little Pye with his quizzical glance.

"Well, is it perks if I buy a picture from you for ten bob which I know to be worth £1,000?" inquired Holgate.

Pye considered. "I give it up," he said.

"Which only proves," said I, continuing my mood, "that it takes a good capercutter to move in and out moral sanctions."

"I don't believe I know what that means quite," said Holgate, giving me the full charge of his steady eyes.

I stooped and warmed my fingers, for the cold blast of the streets was forbidding. "Well, the most famous people have been those who have successfully performed the egg dance between commandments," I remarked.

"I suppose they have," said Holgate thoughtfully.

I rose abruptly, and in the glass above the mantelpiece the two figures behind me came into vision. The little clerk's eyebrows were elevated in a

question, and the men faced each other. Holgate's lips were pursed and he nodded. I saw this in the flash of rising, and then I turned about.

"I shall get a wigging," said Pye, seizing his umbrella.

We walked out and I bade them good-bye after a civil exchange of amenities; then I took an omnibus down Chancery Lane and made for the Underground. As I travelled back, my thoughts circled about the situation; I was glad to have made the acquaintance of one or more of my shipmates, if, of course, I was to join the company. Holgate puzzled me for a third officer, until I reflected that in these days every officer had a master's licence. Yet that this man should not by the force of his evident individuality take higher rank in life surprised me. What, however, was of most immediate concern to me was the extreme friendliness of my two companions. Lane was well enough in his way, and certainly had shown his goodwill; but Holgate was more than this to a lonely man with an appetite for society. Holgate was intelligent.

I found a few patients waiting, and disposed of them by eight o'clock, after which I strolled down to the docks, in spite of the drizzle. I have said that I am interested in my fellows, and, in addition, I confess to a certain forethought. I walked down to the docks with the deliberate intention of acquiring some information about the *Sea Queen*, if that were possible. I knew the name of the owner, or at least of the man who had chartered her; I had the name and acquaintance of one or two of the company; but I knew nothing as to her destination, her properties as a boat, or her time of sailing. Some of this ignorance

I hoped to remedy by my visit. And it seemed that I was in the way to do so from the start. For no sooner was I on the quay in the neighbourhood of the yacht than I came upon a handsome young man in the dress of a superior sailor, with whom I fell into talk. He was outspoken as a child, but volunteered nothing of his own initiative—an amiable, sluggish, respectful fellow who was, as he stated, quartermaster on the *Sea Queen*.

I confessed my interest in her, at which he indulgently supplied me with information.

"I signed on at Glasgow, sir—and most of us too—and we picked up Mr. Morland at Hamburg—him and the ladies."

"The ladies!" I echoed, for here was a surprise.

"Yes; two ladies what came with him—Miss Morland and another lady, a dark one," said my friend.

"Oh!" said I. "Then you're off for a pleasure cruise."

"I hardly know, sir," said he. "They do say New York, but I haven't heard definite."

That looked in favour of my theory of Mr. Morland as an American. He was perhaps a Trust King, and Miss Morland a vivacious "beauty" from Chicago.

Here my companion suggested that I might care to have a look at the yacht.

"My friend," said I, "you mustn't let me take you on false pretences. I may be your doctor, and I may be not."

"Oh, that's all right, sir," said he easily. "It can't do no harm. We're only loading up with provisions, and there's no mess about."

We ascended the gangway, and entered the dark ship, which was singularly silent. He had already the sailor's affection for his floating home, and pointed me out one or two points for admiration which I understood but ill, as they were technical. As we were peeping into the saloon, a man passed us and stopped sharply.

"That you, Ellison?" he asked in a harsh voice. "Who's that?"

"Only a gentleman having a look round. He's to be doctor," said the quartermaster.

The man made no reply, but stared at me, and then went on swiftly.

"Rather abrupt," I commented, smiling.

"Oh, that's nothing. It is only his way," said the good-natured fellow. "He's the boatswain."

"Is Mr. Morland an American?" I asked.

"I don't know, sir. I've hardly seen him. We signed on at Glasgow with a little slip of a fellow representing Mr. Morland—glasses and side-whiskers."

"That would be Mr. Pye," I said.

"Very likely. Would you like to take a squint at the engines? Mr. McCrae is on board."

He led me, without waiting for answer, towards the

engine-room, and called out, "Mr. McCrae!" which brought presently a little, red-faced, bearded man from the depths. "This gentleman wants to know what you can do," said my friend, by way of introduction. The engineer nodded towards me. "We can make eighteen," he said, wiping his hands on a greasy piece of rag. "Eighteen at a pinch, but I keep her going steady at fourteen."

"A good boat!" said I.

"Aye, tolerable," he said, and pulled out a sheet of paper, which he began to peruse under the slender light. "This now's another slap in the eye for the Emperor," said McCrae, "this business of the Prince."

"What is it?" I asked. "I haven't seen the papers to-night."

He rapped his knuckles on the newspaper. "This Prince Frederic of Hochburg kicking over the traces. I tell ye I'm real sorry for the old man. I pity him, Emperor though he be. He's had his sup of troubles."

"But I don't understand what this new one is," I said.

McCrae was not above explaining. "Well, y'see, this Prince Frederic is the heir to the Duchy of Hochburg, and he has taken up with some singer, and swears he'll resign his inheritance and marry her. That's where the mischief is. Not that the man's not right," proceeded the Scotchman, warming, evidently, to his opinions. "For why should Princes be exempt from the disposition of Providence. Let him come forward like a man, and, ye'll see, he'll gain the univairsal sympathy of Europe for his honesty."

"It certainly increases the Emperor's difficulties," I said. "For with a vacancy at Hochburg, and the Pan-German movement in full swing——"

"Aye, ye're a student of political affairs," broke in the engineer in his broad Glasgow accent. "And I'll not say there isn't something to be said at the present juncture of European politics. But, man, the principle's all wrong. Why is a man, no better than you or me, to ride over us, whether it be riches, or kings, or emperors? It's the accident of birth, and the accident of riches, that dictates to us, and I'm thinking it ought to be set right by legislation."

"Well, we are getting along to the Millennium famously," said I, jestingly.

"The Millennium!" he said, with a contemptuous snort.

I think Ellison was pleased to see us getting on so pleasantly in argument, as he was responsible for the introduction, and he now ventured on a statement in the hopes, no doubt, of cementing the acquaintanceship.

"This gentleman's coming along with us, Mr. McCrae," he said.

The engineer looked at me.

"I have put in for doctor, but it's by no means certain," I explained.

"Oh, well, we'll hope it is," he said affably, and to the quartermaster: "Ellison, this gentleman'll, maybe, take a finger of whisky to his own health—and ours,"

he added, with a relaxation of his grim face at his jest. "Ye'll find a bottle in my cabin."

So when the quartermaster had returned, once more I had to drink to the success of my application. It appeared that the *Sea Queen* was peopled with amiable spirits, if I excepted the boatswain; and as I went over the side I congratulated myself on having already made the acquaintance of two more of my shipmates on a friendly footing—if I were destined to the appointment.

On my way home it struck me that I had already heard of the affair of Prince Frederic. The remark of the man at the next table in the "Three Tuns" must have referred to the scandal, and as I reflected on that, I could see in my mind's eye the little clerk's head go round in a stare at our neighbours.

CHAPTER III

Mademoiselle Trebizond

Pye had interpreted his employer's face correctly, and Lane had not boasted unduly. On Wednesday evening I received a letter appointing me to the position of doctor, and at the same time informing me of my remuneration. This was well enough, as it

chanced; though not on too liberal a scale, it was yet sufficient to meet my wants, and mentally I cast myself adrift from Wapping with a psalm of thankfulness. The *Sea Queen* was to sail on Friday, and so I had little time left; yet by a lucky chance I was enabled to dispose of my practice "on the nail," to use a convenient colloquialism, and, with that adventitious sum of money, equipped and fortified myself for my voyage. I paid two preliminary visits to the yacht, but found no one of importance on board, and it was not until the actual afternoon of our departure that I made the acquaintance of any more of my shipmates.

We warped out of the docks, and dropped down the river unexpectedly, the captain on his bridge at intervals, and the pilot all the time, and at ten o'clock we reached Gravesend, where we anchored in the stream. It was blowing hard of a cold night, and the wind was peppered with sleet; a depressing proem to our unknown voyage. We swung at anchor there until Mr. Morland came aboard with his friends, and we left on the turn of the tide about midnight. I did not see Mr. Morland arrive, as I was busy in the forecastle with a man who had met with a trivial accident. It was Lane who informed me that the "butterflies were come" and we might spread our wings. Lane I had encountered for a few minutes in the afternoon, when he smilingly saluted me.

"Well, what price me?" and hurried off ere I could answer him or thank him, as this form of salutation seemed to require. But he had more leisure at supper, to which he invited me in his cabin.

"We chaps have the benefit of a pleasure yacht,

doctor," said he, winking, "and you bet I'm not purser for nothing. Blame me if I sup with that crew until they shake down a bit. Barraclough's all right, and a gentleman, but I can't stand Legrand or Holgate."

"I've met Mr. Holgate, and thought him intelligent," I ventured.

Lane emitted scorn. "Intelligent! He's a bladder of peas, and thinks himself a monarch. Precious little swank about him, if he can help it. He's fly enough there. Well, a tot won't hurt us now. I can tell you I've been hustled." He had recourse to a decanter of whisky. "This is the real stuff. I took care of that. Legrand can do on two-bob vitriol for all I care. He don't know the difference. Well, the boss's aboard and his crowd, and we're off, and here's fortune, doctor."

The toast was irreproachable, and I put down my glass and reverted to his phrase. "His crowd?"

"Yes, his sister and the other lady—rippers both. I saw them when they came aboard at Hamburg."

"And now can you tell me where we're going?" I asked.

"I don't know," said Lane carelessly. "I hope we're running out of this beastly weather—that's all."

"I merely engaged for twelve months," I put in.

"Same here, and that's good enough," said Lane. "I'll ask the old man to-morrow if his prickles don't stand up too thick. Here she goes, doctor."

When I left the purser I turned in, for the night was

shrewd and discomfortable enough to bar romantic thoughts on leaving the English coast. Besides, we were bound down channel, and should keep company with our native cliffs the whole of the next day. It would be time to wave a farewell when we passed the Lizard.

The quarters in the *Sea Queen* were roomy. I was berthed aft with the other officers, and Mr. Morland's rooms and the cabins of the two ladies were on the upper deck, ample in appearance from the outside, and no doubt furnished luxuriously. The guests had the run of a fine saloon also, on the lower deck, as well as a music-gallery which ran round it, and there was a boudoir, as I heard, attached to the ladies' compartments, as well as a private room to Mr. Morland's. Breakfast was mainly interesting as introducing me practically for the first time to my companions. We were then abreast of the Isle of Wight, and were keeping well away towards France. The chief officer I now, to my astonishment, discovered to be a man of title. Sir John Barraclough was a tall, loose-limbed, good-looking man of thirty something, with a blue eye, and a casual manner. He nodded at me amiably and continued his talk with Legrand, the second officer, who was dark and high-coloured, with a restless expression of face. Lane threw a jocular greeting across the table to me, and I shook hands cordially with Holgate, whom I now saw for the first time since I had come aboard. Presently Barraclough turned to me.

"Glad to see you, doctor," he said in an indifferent manner. "Hope it's goin' to be a fine cruise."

I had just echoed his wish formally when the captain

made his appearance from the deck. Captain Day was a most fastidious-looking man, with a brown Vandyke beard and a flow of good manners. Seeing me and Holgate there as the only strangers, he singled us out at once with quite the right degree of friendliness.

"Glad to make your acquaintance, Dr. Phillimore. This your first voyage? I hope we'll make a happy family."

But having thus condescended briefly, he relapsed into silence and shortly afterwards left us.

"There's too much condemned R.N.R. about the old man," confided Lane as we went on deck, "but he's all right."

It was on deck that I met with my surprise, for the first person my eyes fell on was no other than Pye, the little lawyer's clerk.

"I never expected to see you here," I told him.

"Well, you see, I did expect to see you," he replied in his self-satisfied little way. "I'm here to represent Mr. Morland for the time being."

"Oh," said I, "then you can tell us all where we are bound for, for no one seems to know."

He considered a little. "I shall be able to tell you shortly, I have no doubt," he said at last. "At present Mr. Morland alone knows. Perhaps even he doesn't," he added with his smile.

"I don't like that little buffer," declared Lane grumpily as we walked on. "He is too fussy and by-

your-leave-please for me. Made me get out all my books yesterday, as if I were an office-boy."

"He feels responsible, I suppose," I ventured.

"Well, who's responsible if I'm not?" demanded the purser hotly. "I've been at sea fifteen years, and this brat hasn't so much as been sick in the *Marguerite*, I'll lay. Let him look after his own books. I'm all right."

It was quite manifest that Lane was decided in his likes and dislikes, as his unreasonable objection to the second officer had already discovered to me. The passengers were not visible during the morning, but in the afternoon I received a message calling me to Mr. Morland's cabin. I found him seated before a bureau with a docket of papers before him, and he was civil and abrupt.

"Is there anything you can recommend for sea-sickness, Dr. Phillimore?" he asked bluntly.

I told him of several remedies which had been tried, and mentioned cocaine as probably the best, adding that I had little faith in any of them. He thought a moment.

"Prepare me some cocaine," he said, and with a bow intimated that he had done with me.

It was civil as I have said, but it was also abrupt. He had the air of a martinet and the expression of a schoolmaster who set his pupil a task. But I made up the doses forthwith and let him have them.

Later I saw two figures walking upon the hurricane promenade, one of which I easily made out as Mr.

Morland, and the other was a woman heavily cloaked in fur. A strong breeze was beating up channel, and as they stood and faced it the woman put her hand to her hat. But for the most part they walked to and fro, sometimes in conversation, but often in silence. Once, at eight bells, I noticed, from my point of observation, the woman stop, lean across the railing, and point towards the coast of France, which was fast fading into the gathering mists. She seemed to speak, her face turned level with her shoulders towards the man. He put out a hand and snapped his fingers, and they presently resumed their promenade. The sun had gone down, and darkness was settling on us; the *Sea Queen* ploughed steadily westward, her lights springing out one by one, and the figures on the hurricane deck were presently merged in shadow. As I leaned over the stern, reflecting, and contemplating now the dull wash of the water about the screw, I was conscious of some one's approach.

"Well, doctor," said the cheerful voice of Pye, "have you had a good look at our passengers?"

"Mr. Pye," said I, pleasantly enough, "I am a man of moods. And I have lived long in silence and routine as no doubt you yourself also. I find occupation even in my own thoughts."

"You are well equipped for the sea," he rejoined. "I'm not sure about myself. You see, I'm a Londoner, and I shall miss those peopled spaces. Here there's nothing but——" he waved his hand.

"At all events. I see you're a respectable sailor," I said, "which, apparently, others are not." His silence

seemed to inquire of me. "I gave Mr. Morland a prescription for sea-sickness this afternoon."

"That would be for one of the ladies," he made answer; "he is evidently firm on his legs, and—and his companion. I suppose I may tell you that his companion is his sister," he said after a pause.

"Well, yes," I replied drily, for his precautions jarred on me. "For I suppose we shall discover the mystery in the course of the next twelve months."

"Mystery!" he repeated musingly. "I suppose I am by training somewhat circumspect. It's difficult to get out of it. But there's no mystery. Mr. and Miss Morland have brought a friend with them."

"If there's no mystery," I said, "the friend?"

"I have not heard her name," he replied, "or at least, if I have, I have forgotten. It is a friend of Miss Morland's. I believe she is a French lady."

The dusk had enclosed us, but through it I perceived some one hurriedly approaching. "Is it the doctor?" said the steward's voice, and I answered in the affirmative.

"You're wanted at once, sir. Mr. Morland has sent for you."

I moved off quickly, and had got half-way down the deck when a woman came forward noiselessly through the gloom.

"Dr. Phillimore," she said, "I want you to see to Mlle. Châteray at once. She is very ill."

I entered the state rooms without further question, hurried down the handsome corridor, and under Miss Morland's guidance found the cabin. Certain constitutions are peculiarly affected by the sea, and it is even undertaking a risk for some people to travel on that element. Clearly it was, as Pye hinted, for the French lady that my prescription had been required. Outside the cabin in the corridor I encountered Mr. Morland, who exhibited a troubled face unusual to one of such apparent equanimity. But he said nothing, only looked at his sister and turned away.

Inside I found a blue chamber, roomy and well lighted by electricity, an elegant broad bed affixed to the one wall, and upon it, stretched in the most wonderful *déshabille*, my patient. Mlle. Châteray was of middle height, of a pleasant fulness, and dark of feature. She had large eyes that, as I entered, were roaming in a restless way about the room, and her voice was lifted sharply abusive of her maid, a mild Frenchwoman who stood by her.

"She is in a state of collapse, Dr. Phillimore," said my guide's voice in my ear.

I knew better than that. It was hysteria, or I had never seen hysteria, and the *mal-de-mer* had been merely provocative. I took her hand without ceremony, and, wheeling on me her lustrous eyes, she broke out in torrential French.

She would die if she remained there. They were beasts to keep her there. Why was she not put ashore at Havre? Havre was a port, as every one knew, and there were ports not only in England. I had a kind face and would do as she bade me.... Very well, then,

let her be put ashore. She began to tear at her elaborate dressing-gown, and I was afraid of one of those outbreaks which are known as *crises des nerfs*. I took her hands firmly.

"You shall be put ashore as you wish," I said, "and in the meantime, while the yacht is going about, you will drink what I give you. It will comfort you."

She gazed into my eyes, ceasing to struggle, and then said more quietly: "Yes—yes, give it me quick."

It was a case for bromide, and I turned away at once to go to my surgery.

"You will lie exactly as you are, mademoiselle," I said peremptorily, "until I return."

I left the cabin and descended, and I think I was not gone more than ten minutes. When Mlle. Châteray had taken the draught, I turned to her maid: "She will be quieter now," I said. "Let me know if anything further develops," and I moved towards the door. Miss Morland stood in my way.

For the first time I observed her. Her cloak had fallen from her, leaving her fine figure in the full illumination of the light. Her head was set well back above the eloquent lines of a strong throat and the square shoulders underneath. The lace over her bosom stirred with her breathing, and to my fancy at the moment she was as a statue into which life was flowing suddenly. I saw this before I met her gaze, and the calm beauty of that confirmed my fancy. She moved then and opened the door for me.

"You have promised she shall be landed?" she said in

a low voice.

"Madam, I would promise anything in such a case," I answered.

A faint smile passed over her face, for we were now outside the cabin and in the ladies' boudoir.

"You can promise relief, then, I understand?" she queried.

"She will probably be all right to-night, though I cannot say the hysteria will not recur," I replied.

An expression flitted over her face, but whether it was of pity or annoyance I could not have said.

"My brother will not put the yacht about," she said.

"I'm not going to ask him," I rejoined.

"I thank you, doctor," said she simply, "and so will he."

"It is my business," I responded indifferently.

She had spoken with distance, even coldly, and with the air of condescension. There was no necessity to thank me at all, and certainly not in that way.

Bidding her good evening, I went down again, and as I went a problem which had vaguely bothered me during my administrations recurred, now more insistently. There was something familiar in Mlle. Châteray's face. What was it?

I spent some time in the surgery, and later joined the officers at dinner. Captain Day wore a short dinner-jacket like my own, but the others had made no

attempt to dress. Perhaps that was the reason why the captain devoted his attention to me. His voice was that of a cultivated man, and he seemed to converse on the same level of cultivation. He made a figure apart from the rest of the company, to which little Pye was now joined, and as I looked down and across the table (from which only Holgate was absent on duty) their marvellous unlikeness to him struck me. Even Sir John Barraclough and Lane seemed by comparison more or less of a piece, though the first officer ignored the purser quite markedly. Captain Day, I discovered, had some taste in letters, and as that also had been my consolation in my exile in Wapping, I think we drew nearer on a common hobby. I visited my patient about nine o'clock, and found her sleeping. As she lay asleep, I was again haunted by the likeness to some one I had seen before; but I was unable to trace it to its source nor did I trouble my head in the matter, since resemblances are so frequently accidental and baffling.

Pye had invited me to his room earlier in the day, and I went straight to him from the deck cabin. To find Holgate there was not unpleasing, as it seemed in a way to recall what I almost began to consider old times—the time that was in the "Three Tuns." Pye mixed the toddy, and we smoked more or less at our ease. I spoke of my patient, in answer to a question, as one suffering from sea-sickness.

"What's she like?" inquired Holgate.

"I should say handsome," I rejoined. "I understood from Mr. Pye that she is French."

"I think I heard so," said Pye, "but you could tell."

"Well, she spoke French," I said with a smile.

Pye's smile seemed to commend my reticence, but Holgate, ignoring the obvious retort on me, pursued a different subject.

"Upon my soul, I envy people like those millionaires. Here am I working like a navvy for a bare living, never been able to marry; Pye probably in the same case; and you, doctor?"

"No; I'm a bachelor," I answered.

"Well, take us three—no doubt in our different walks every bit as capable as Mr. Morland on his Wall Street, or wherever it is. It isn't a righteous distribution of this world's goods."

"It is odd," said I, speaking my thoughts, "how you came to take up this life."

"The sort of blunder," said Holgate, "that is made in three cases out of four. I hankered after it in my teens, and once out of them it was too late. Who is going to adapt a youth of twenty-one, without capital, to a commercial life, or a legal life, or a medical life? There is no changing the dice. When the hands are dealt you must abide by them."

"Yes, we are all waifs," said I sententiously, not being greatly interested in the argument.

"When I came back from my last voyage," pursued Holgate, "I was in Paris for a bit, and went into the Comédie one night, and——"

I never heard the rest of Holgate's reminiscence, for the word regarding the theatre suddenly sent a message to my memory and lighted it up instantaneously. I said aloud, and with some excitement,

"Trebizond!"

Holgate ceased talking, and Pye removed his cigarette hastily.

"What, may we venture to ask, is Trebizond?" he said presently.

I smiled foolishly. "Oh, it is only that I have made a discovery," I said, "a small discovery."

Again there was silence.

"Perhaps we are worthy to hear it," suggested Holgate equably.

Pye still held his cigarette between his fingers and looked at me out of his gold-rimmed glasses.

"Oh, nothing much," said I, and glanced at my watch. "I'm sorry, I must see my patient safe for the night. I'll look in again."

I left them and went upstairs, knocking on the boudoir door. Miss Morland opened it.

"Mlle. Châteray is still sleeping," she said formally.

"I will leave a dose with her maid," I replied, "so that if it be necessary it may be given in the night."

"You will, of course, be in attendance if required," she said coldly.

I bowed.

"I am paid for it, madam," I answered, though I must confess to a hostile feeling within my heart.

"I think, then, that is all," she said, and I took my dismissal at the hands of the arrogant beauty with an internal conflict of anger and admiration.

I did not return to Pye, but went to my own cabin in an irritable condition. It ought not to have mattered to me that the sister of a millionaire, my employer, should treat me more or less as a lackey; but it did. I threw myself on my bunk and took down a book at random from my little shelf. Out of its pages tumbled an evening news-sheet which I now remembered to have bought of a screaming boy as I hurried into the dock gates on the previous afternoon. I had not had time to look at it in my various preoccupations, but, after all, it was the last news of my native land I should have for some time, and so I opened it and began the perusal.

It was one of those half-penny journals which seem to combine the maximum of vulgarity with a minimum of news. But I passed over the blatant racing items and murder trials with less than my customary distaste, and was rambling leisurely through the columns when I was arrested by a paragraph and sat up briskly. It was the tail that interested me.

"... It is stated that Prince Frederic is in London. The name of the lady who has so infatuated him is Mlle. Yvonne Trebizond, the well-known prima donna."

I had recalled the name Trebizond during Holgate's

talk, and it seemed strange now that this second discovery should fall so coincidently. The face of Mlle. Châteray had taken me back, by a sudden gust of memory, to certain pleasant days in Paris before I was banished to the East End. I had frequented the theatres and the concert-rooms, and I remembered the vivacious singer, a true *comédienne*, with her pack of tricks and her remarkable individuality. Mlle. Châteray, then, was no other than Yvonne Trebizond, and——

I looked down at the paper and read another sentence, which, ere that illumination, had had no significance, but now was pregnant with it.

"The prince has the full support and sympathy of his sister, Princess Alix."

I rose abruptly. I can keep my own counsel as well as a lawyer's clerk, but I saw no reason in the world for it now. I had left my glass untouched and my cigar unlit in Pye's cabin. I went back forthwith to finish both.

The pair were still seated as if expecting me.

"Patient all right, doctor?" inquired Holgate.

I nodded. "Mr. Pye," I said, "I find my discovery has amplified itself. When I was here it was of small dimensions. Now it has grown to the proportions of a —well, a balloon," I ended.

Both men gazed at me steadily.

"Out with it, man," urged the third officer.

"I have your permission?" I asked the lawyer's clerk,

smiling.

"When you have told me what it is, I will tell you," said he, gravely jocose.

I put the paper in Holgate's hands, and pointed to the paragraph. He read it slowly aloud and then looked up.

"Well?" he asked.

"I am going to tell you something which you know," I said, addressing Pye. "The lady in the deck cabin is Mlle. Trebizond."

Holgate started. "Good Heavens!" he exclaimed, but Pye was quite silent, only keeping his eyes on me.

"I recognized her, but couldn't name her," I went on. "Now it has come back to me."

"Which means, of course," said Pye unemotionally, "that Mr. Morland is——"

"The Prince," said Holgate with a heavy breath.

Pye resumed his cigarette. "With all these sensations, my dear Holgate," he remarked, "I have forgotten my duty. Perhaps you will help yourself."

Holgate did so. "Good Heavens!" he said again, and then, "I suppose, if you're right, that we carry Cæsar and his fortunes. He has got off with the lady and the plunder."

"The plunder!" I echoed.

He indicated the paragraph, and I read now another sentence which I had overlooked.

"The prince has expressed his intention, according to rumour, of marrying as he chooses, and as he inherits more than a million pounds from his mother, he is in a position to snap his fingers at the Empress. In that case, no doubt, he would follow precedent, and take rank as an ordinary subject."

I looked up at Holgate.

"We carry Cæsar and his fortune," he said with a smiling emphasis on the singular, and then he waved his arm melodramatically. "And to think we are all paupers!" and grinned at me.

"It is inequitable," said I lightly; "it's an unjust distribution of this world's goods," echoing therein his own remark earlier in the evening.

Pye sat still, with an inexpressive face. His admirable silence, however, now ceased.

"So we shall have this gossip all over the ship to-morrow."

"No," said I curtly, for the suggestion annoyed me. "It is nothing to me. I told you because you knew. And I told Mr. Holgate——" I paused.

"Because I'm your chum," said the third officer.

I did not contradict him. I had spoken really out of the excitement of my discovery. Certainly I had not spoken because Holgate was my chum.

CHAPTER IV

An Amazing Proposition

As I had said, it was no business of mine, and, having divulged my news, I was in no haste to go about with it like a common gossip. That Prince Frederic of Hochburg was Mr. Morland, and that Miss Morland was Princess Alix, I was as assured as that I had identified in my patient the well-known Parisian singer Yvonne Trebizond. But, having made the discovery, I promised myself some interest in watching the course of the rumour. It would spread about the ship like fire and would be whispered over taffrails, in galleys, and in stokehole. But, to my surprise, I could observe no signs of this flight of gossip. No one certainly offered me any communication on the subject, and I observed no curiosity and no surprise. The mess conducted itself with equanimity, and nothing was hinted of princes or of emperors, or of mysterious secrets. No facts ever hid themselves so cunningly as these obviously somewhat startling facts, and I wondered at the silence, but still held my tongue.

Mademoiselle continued to give me trouble during the next day, but that was more in the way of unreasonable demands and petulance than through hysteric exhibitions. She did not repeat her request to be landed, which was now quite impracticable, as we were well out in the Atlantic, but she referred to it.

"Where are we, doctor?" she inquired languidly, and I told her; at which she considered. "Well, perhaps it is worth it," she said and smiled at me confidingly.

Of Mr. Morland I saw little, for he was shut in his cabin a great part of the day, reading or writing, and smoking without cessation. And he walked regularly on the hurricane deck with his sister. Once I encountered him in mademoiselle's room, and he nodded.

"She is getting well, doctor; is it not so?" he asked in a pleasant way, and exhibited a tenderness in his words and manner to mademoiselle which I should not have associated with him.

Of his sister I saw even less, except in the distance, but her, too, I met in her friend's room. Mademoiselle was talkative that day, the second of my attendance on her, and spoke of things with a terrifying frankness, sometimes in bad English, but oftener in her own tongue. She rehearsed her sensations during sea-sickness, criticised Miss Morland, and asked me about Barraclough, whom she had seen passing by her window once or twice.

"Sir John," she said, speaking pretty broken English. "Then he is noble. Oh, comme il est gentil, comme il est beau!" and as quickly fell to cross-questioning me on my parentage and history.

It was in the thick of this that Miss Morland made her entrance. I do not know if it be a confession of weak-mindedness, or even of snobbishness (I hope not), but the fact was that since I had discovered Miss Morland's identity I did not judge her coldness

and aloofness so hardly. I am disposed to think it was merely a reasonable attitude on my part produced by the knowledge of her circumstances, and what I set down as her trials. She bowed to me, and addressed some words to mademoiselle which, sympathetic in their import, were yet somewhat frigid in tone. Mademoiselle replied laughing:

"You are very good, my dear, but I am progressing. We are sailing into the land of romance and will find what we shall find there."

I lingered beyond what was necessary, and thus it happened that Miss Morland and I left the cabin together. Outside she spoke: "Is there any likelihood of a recurrence of the attack?"

"I don't think so," I answered. "But Mlle. Trebizond is a nervous subject."

It was the look in her eyes that made me suddenly realise my indiscretion. A light flashed in them, almost as if she would have struck me.

"Mlle. Châteray is almost well enough to dispense with a doctor's services," she said with an accent on the name.

"You must allow me to be the judge of that," I replied flushing. She was silent.

"Naturally," she said at last, and turned away.

The newspaper had stated that Princess Alix was sympathetic to her brother's attachment, but was she altogether so? I could not but attribute her coolness and her reticence to some scruple. She walked daily

with her brother, and it was evident that she was fond of him, or why was she here? But how much of personal prejudice and of private conviction had she sacrificed on that pious altar?

I was sure that if the news of our passengers were bruited about at all I should hear of it from Lane, who was a gossip at heart; and as he said nothing I knew that Holgate had been silent—why, I could not conceive, unless Pye had gagged him. But in any case it appeared that Holgate also could keep his own counsel and hold his tongue. That he could speak I had yet to realise, as the astonishing narrative I am now approaching demonstrates.

It was the evening of our fifth day out, and the long swell of the Atlantic was washing on our port side, so that the *Sea Queen* heeled over and dipped her snout as she ran. I had misgivings for my late patient, whom I had not seen for the last thirty-six hours, although she had made an appearance on the hurricane deck in a chair.

Holgate asked me to his cabin with his customary urbanity, saying that he wanted a few words with me. Once the door was shut he settled down on his bunk and lit a cigar.

"Help yourself, doctor," he said.

I declined and remained standing, for I was anxious to get away. He looked at me steadily out of his dark eyes.

"Do you know where we're going, doctor?" he asked.

"No," said I, "but I should be glad to."

"I've just discovered," he replied; "Buenos Ayres."

I told him that I was glad to hear it, as we should run into better weather.

"I couldn't just make up my mind," he went on, "till to-day. But it's pretty plain now, though the old man has not said so. Any fool can see it with the way we're shaping." He puffed for a moment or two and then resumed: "I've been thinking over things a bit, and, if your theory is correct, Mr. Morland is to marry the lady at Buenos Ayres and probably make his home there, or, it may be, in some other part of America. A capital place for losing identity is the States."

I said that it was quite probable.

"But as the yacht's chartered for a year," pursued Holgate evenly, "the odds are that there's to be cruising off and on, may be up the west coast of America, may be the South Seas, or may be Japan. There's a goodly cruise before us, doctor."

"Well, it will be tolerable for us," I answered.

"Just so," he replied, "only tolerable—not eighteen carat, which seems a pity."

"Shall we strike for higher wages?" I asked drily.

"I've been thinking over what you said, doctor," said the third officer, taking no heed of this, "and it's gone home pretty deep. Prince Frederic has cut himself adrift from his past—there's no getting behind that. The Emperor has thrown him up, and there's no one outside a penny-a-liner cares two pinches for him or

what becomes of him. He's done with. The Chancelleries of Europe won't waste their time on him. He's negligible."

"Well?" said I, for I was not in the mood for a political discussion.

"Well, suppose he never turned up?" said Holgate, and leaned back and stared at me.

"I don't understand," said I. "I don't suppose he will turn up. As you say, he's done for."

"I mean that the ship might founder," said Holgate, still holding me with his eye.

I was perplexed, and seeing it, he laughed.

"Let us make no bones about it," he said, laying down his cigar. "Here's a discarded prince whom no one wants, sailing for no one knows where, with his fortune on board and no one responsible for him. Do you take me now?"

"I'm hanged if I do," I replied testily, for indeed I had no thought of what the man was driving at. But here it came out with a burst.

"Doctor, all this is in our hands. We can do what we will. We're masters of the situation."

I opened my mouth and stared at him. The broad swarthy face loomed like a menace in the uncertain light before us. It was dark; it was inscrutable; a heavy resolution was marked in that thick neck, low brow, and salient chin. We eyed each other in silence.

"But this is monstrous," I said with a little laugh. "You have not brought me here for a silly jest?"

"It's God's truth I haven't, doctor," he replied earnestly. "I mean what I say. See, the prince carries away a million, and if the prince disappears the million belongs to those who can find it. Now, we don't want any truck with dismounted princes. We're playing for our own hand. I know you take sensible views on these matters. I admit it makes one blink a bit at first, but stick on to the idea, turn it round, and you'll get used to it. It spells a good deal to poor devils like you and me."

"You must be mad," I said angrily, "or——" He interrupted me.

"That's not my line. I'm in dead sober earnest. You hold on to the notion, and you'll come round to it. It's a bit steep at first to the eye. But you hang on to it like a sensible man."

"Good Heavens, man," said I, "are you plotting murder?"

"I never mentioned that," he said in another voice. "There are several ways. It don't do to take more risks than you want. A ship can be cast away, and parties can be separated, and one party can make sure of the boodle. See?"

"I only see that you're an infernal ruffian," I replied hotly.

His countenance did not change. "Hang on to it," he said, and I could have laughed in his face at the preposterous suggestion. "You'll warm to it by

degrees."

"You are asking me to join in wholesale robbery at the least?" I said, still angrily struggling with my stupor.

"I am," he answered, and he leaned forward. "D'you think I'm entering on this game wildly? Not I. I mean to carry it out. Do you suppose I haven't laid my plans? Why, more than half the men are mine. I saw to that. It was I got 'em." He placed a large hand on my shoulder and his eyes gleamed diabolically in his set face. "They'll do my bidding. I command here, sir, and damn your Captain Day. I'll take 'em to Hell if I want to." I shook off his hand roughly.

"I may tell you," I said in as cool a tone as I could assume, "that I am going straight on deck to the captain to retail this conversation. You have, therefore, probably about ten minutes left you for reflection, which I hope will bring you consolation."

Holgate got up, and without undue haste threw open the large port, through which streamed the clamour of the water.

"I guess I've misunderstood you," said he quietly, "and it isn't often I make a mistake." He lifted his lip in a grin, and I could see a horrid tier of teeth, which seemed to have grown together like concrete in one huge fang. "It is in my power, Dr. Phillimore, to blow your brains out here and now. The noise of the sea would cover the report," and he fingered a pistol that now I perceived in his hand. "Outside yonder is a grave that tells no tales. The dead rise up never from the sea, by thunder! And the port's open. I'm half in

the mind——" He threw the weapon carelessly upon the bunk and laughed. "Look you, that's how I value you. You are mighty conscientious, doctor, but you have no value. You're just the ordinary, respectable, out-of-elbows crock that peoples that island over yonder. You are good neither for good nor ill. A crew of you wouldn't put a knot on a boat. So that's how I value you. If you won't do my work one way you shall another. I'll have my value out of you some way, if only to pay back my self-respect. You're safe from pistol and shark. Go, and do what you will. I'll wait for you and lay for you, chummie."

I stood listening to this remarkable tirade, which was offered in a voice by no means angry, but even something contemptuous, and without a word I left him. I went, as I had promised, at once to the captain, whom I found in his cabin with a volume of De Quincey.

"Well, doctor," said he, laying down the book, "anything amiss? Your face is portentous."

"Yes, sir," I answered. He motioned me to a chair, and waited. "I suppose you're aware, sir, that you have on board Prince Frederic of Hochburg and his sister," I began.

"Indeed, I'm nothing of the sort," said he sharply. "What on earth is this nonsense?"

If I had not had such important information to lay before him I might have been abashed. As it was, I proceeded.

"Well, sir, it's a fact. Mr. Morland is the prince. I have known it some days, and would have held my tongue

but for imperative necessity. Mr. Pye knows it, and Mr. Holgate."

"This is most astounding," he began, and paced nervously about the cabin.

"I say Mr. Holgate because I come about him," I pursued. "He has just made the most shameless and barefaced proposal, which amounts to a plot to wreck the ship and make off with the prince's property, which is supposed to amount to a great deal."

Captain Day sat down heavily. "Upon my soul, Dr. Phillimore," he said, "I shall begin to ask myself whether it is you or I who is mad."

"That is exactly the sort of question I asked myself a few minutes ago," I replied. "And I've been able to answer it only on the supposition that your third officer is an amazing scoundrel."

There was the pause of some moments, during which he studied my face, and at last he went to the bell.

"Very well," he said more calmly, "we can settle it one way, I suppose." And when the steward appeared, "Ask Mr. Holgate to come to me at once."

He sat down again, fidgeted with his book, opened it, endeavoured to read, and glanced at me in a perplexed fashion, as if he distrusted his eyesight; and so we remained without a word until a knock announced some one at the door, and the next moment Holgate, large, placid and respectful, was in the cabin.

"Mr. Holgate," said Captain Day in his most particular voice, "I have just heard the most remarkable statement by Dr. Phillimore. Perhaps you will be good enough to repeat it, Dr. Phillimore," and he glanced askew at me.

I did so bluntly. "This man," I said, "has proposed to me within the last ten minutes that I should join a plot to cast away the ship and seize the property of—of Mr. Morland."

Day looked at his third officer. "You hear, Mr. Holgate?" he said. "What have you to say?"

A broad smile passed over Holgate's fat face. "Yes, sir," he said coolly, "it is just as Dr. Phillimore says, but the whole thing was a mere spoof."

"I should be glad if you would explain," said Day icily.

"Well, the doctor's not exactly correct," said Holgate, still smiling, and he had the vast impudence to smile at me. "For what I proposed was to seize the property of Prince Frederic of Hochburg, I think it is."

"Ah!" said Day, letting the exclamation escape softly through his lips, and he cast his nervous glance at me.

"You see, sir, the doctor has got some cock-and-bull tale into his head," went on Holgate easily, "about Mr. Morland being Prince Frederic, and the ladies I don't know whom, and so I suggested that, that being so, we should take care of the prince's millions for him, and get a tidy sum all round. I daresay it wasn't a very funny joke; indeed, I thought he would have

seen through it all along. But I suppose he didn't. The doctor's rather serious."

I started up. "Captain Day," said I, "this man lies. The proposal was serious enough, and he knows it. Mr. Morland is Prince Frederic. I should advise you to ask Mr. Pye."

"So be it," said Day, with a gesture of helplessness, and thus Pye was summoned to the strange conclave. Day took up his book again. "Pray sit down, Mr. Holgate," he said politely; "this is not the criminal dock yet," which seemed to augur badly for my case.

The little clerk, on entering, fixed his glasses on his nose more firmly with two fingers and cast an inquisitive look at us.

"Mr. Pye," said the captain, in his impeccable distant voice, "I am informed that Mr. Morland is not Mr. Morland, but some one else, and I have been referred to you. Is this so?"

Pye glanced at me. "Mr. Morland is the name of the gentleman for whom my firm is acting," he said suavely.

"And not any one else?" said Day.

"Not according to my knowledge," said the clerk.

"Not according to his instructions, sir," I burst out indignantly. "He knows the facts, I'm certain. And if not, I can prove my point readily enough."

"The point is," said Day drily, "whether Mr. Holgate is guilty of the extraordinary charge you have preferred."

"Well, sir, it is material that I acquainted him with the identity of Mr. Morland in Mr. Pye's presence," I replied hotly, feeling my ground moving from under me.

Day looked at Pye. "That is true, sir," said the clerk. "Dr. Phillimore stated in my presence that he had discovered that Mr. Morland was—I think he said Prince Frederic of Hochburg."

Day was silent. "I think this is pretty much a mare's nest," said he presently, "and I really don't know why I should have been bothered with it."

I was furious with Pye and his idea (as I conceived it) of legal discretion.

"Very well, sir," said I somewhat sullenly, and turned to go, when the door of the cabin opened and there entered Sir John Barraclough with his customary *insouciance*.

"It seems, Sir John," said Day, in his ironic tones, "that not only have I the honour of a distinguished baronet as first officer, but also a prince as cargo."

There was, as I had gathered, little love between the captain and his first officer. Barraclough laughed.

"Oh, you've just tumbled to it," he said. "I wonder how. But it was bound to leak out some time."

I never saw a man more astonished than Day. He leapt to his feet.

"Good God!" he said. "I seem to be the only one who doesn't know what's going on in my ship. Is this part of the jest?"

Barraclough in his turn showed surprise, but it was Holgate spoke.

"Is it true, Sir John? It can't be true," he cried, opening his mouth so that the horrid tooth demonstrated itself.

Barraclough looked at Pye, who was mum. "I suppose this gentleman is responsible for the news," he said.

"No, sir, I have said nothing," retorted Pye.

"I can't pretend to judge other professions than my own," said the captain stormily, "but I'm inclined to think I might have been taken into the confidence. Think where it places me. Heavens, man, what am I in my ship?"

"I think the—Mr. Morland perhaps had better answer that question," suggested Barraclough with a little sneer. Day moved some papers with a hand that trembled.

"That will do then," he said shortly. "Good evening, gentlemen. I've no desire to detain you any longer."

"But——" said I.

"Silence, Dr. Phillimore. I command this ship," he cried angrily, "or at least I'm supposed to. You can settle your differences with Mr. Holgate elsewhere."

I shrugged my shoulders and left the cabin, a very angry man. In his vanity the fool had refused to consider my charge. And, yet, when I looked at this business more deliberately and from a little distance, I could not deny that Day had some excuse. Holgate's story was remarkably natural. The captain would

judge of the third officer's incredulity by his own, and would be therefore willing to accept the story of the "spoof." But then he had not seen Holgate's face, and he had not heard Holgate.

Even I was staggered by the turn things had taken, though infuriated by my treatment. And it did me no good to see Holgate's face smiling at me as I went down the gangway.

"Oh, doctor, doctor, are you a Scotchman?" he whispered; at which I would have turned on him savagely, but held myself in and passed on and was silent. I have always found the value of caution.

CHAPTER V

The Wounded Man

Well, the whole affair had been a considerable farce, in which I had played the most humiliating part. Indeed, but for the interposition of Barraclough I must have come out of it the butt of all shafts. As it was, I was sensitive in regard to my position, and more than once was tempted to see myself as I must have appeared to others. But after all they had not gone through the scene with Holgate, and were not witnesses to his astounding perfidy. I was angry with

every one, with myself, with the captain, and, above all, with little Pye. In the universal surprise that came of the discovery of Mr. Morland's identity, my shame, so to speak, was covered, but I felt myself the mark of ridicule, from Holgate's cynical smile to the captain's open neglect of me. I turned on the lawyer's clerk in my fury, and gave him some home truths about solicitors and their ways; to which, however, he listened unabashed.

"Doctor," said he, "do you suppose a man in my position is his own master? You are welcome to know what you will about my own affairs, but I have my professional secrets to guard. What would be thought of me had I come aboard blabbing of my firm's clients fore and aft? It would have been a betrayal of confidence."

There was, of course, something in this, but the argument did not allay my irritation; it merely directed it elsewhere, so that I began upon the third mate. He heard me quietly.

"Mr. Holgate can answer for himself," he replied, "but it seems to me, if I may say so without offence, doctor, that you are misinterpreting a somewhat elaborate joke. Mr. Holgate's explanation is reasonable enough, and besides, the only other explanation is monstrous—inconceivable!"

"I agree with you," I said shortly, "and so I say no more."

He cast a shrewd glance at me, but made no comment.

Now, it was quite conceivable that Holgate should

have made me a derisive object in the ship, but, on the contrary, he did nothing of the sort. The charge I had made against him did not leak out at the mess-table. Day, Holgate and Pye were aware of it, and so far as I know it went no further. This somewhat astonished me until I had some light thrown upon it later. But in the meantime I wondered, and insensibly that significant silence began to modify my attitude. Had he known me in the fulness of my disposition he would probably have spoken; but as it was he had other plans to follow. One of these seemed to include a reconciliation with myself. His quizzical smile disappeared, and he shook his head at me solemnly at table.

"Doctor," said he, "that Scotchman's head!"

"I am not a Scotchman," I retorted impatiently.

"Well," he breathed heavily, "I will admit it was a very bad joke."

I was on the point of replying that it was not a joke at all, when I recovered my temper. After all, it is trying to the temper to sit opposite to a man whom you know to be a prime ruffian, however impotent his aspirations may be. Since I had unveiled his plot, even though no credence was given it, still Holgate was harmless. But, as I have already said, I am a man of precautions and I held my tongue. I think he had taken me only for a man of impulse.

"I must confess I do not see the joke," I answered.

"Now you come to insist on it, and shed the cold light of reason on it, no more do I," he said with a laugh. "Jokes are very well behind the footlights."

I shrugged my shoulders. "Think what a fool I look!" I said coldly.

His friendliness increased. "My dear fellow," he said, bending over to me, "I give you my word I've held my tongue. I thought of that. I didn't know you'd take it so seriously."

"Your profession should have been the stage," I answered.

He nodded. "Low comedian. I wish I had. They make good salaries, I believe, instead of beggarly——"

"Oh, you have the prince's boodle," I said lightly. He laughed. "So I have."

"And I'll be hanged if I apologise," I said. "I have suffered enough from the mistake."

"Quite right, doctor," said he gravely, "I would not apologise to a bishop, let alone a third officer."

With that apparent advance to an understanding we parted, and I did not set eyes on him again until the abrupt events that brought about the conference in the cabin.

If my personal appearance on the matter did not get out, at least the tale of the prince's identity passed swiftly from mouth to mouth. The whole ship's company was agog with interest, an interest which increased during the next two days. Sir John Barraclough expressed to me his opinion of Day's behaviour very roundly, for the captain had icily withdrawn into himself, and spoke as little as possible to his first officer.

"The man's a fool to take it this way, Phillimore," he said. "Does he suppose it was my doing? I happened to know, but, of course, it was not my secret."

This, too, was Pye's excuse for silence, and it was obviously adequate. But as the baronet's evidence of friendliness was thus betrayed in his confidence to me, I ventured on a question, which was not really inquisitive.

"Oh, well, you see I've known the prince off and on some time. He and I yachted together before I lost my money, and he gave me this chance. He's a good sort." With which bluff and British indifference he terminated the conversation.

I think that the mysterious aloofness of our passengers served to keep the interest warm. Had Mr. Morland and his party descended and been on show, so to say, before the company, it is probable that the bloom of surprise would have worn off with the contact. But they kept to themselves and the hurricane deck. Every morning and afternoon the prince and his sister took a prolonged walk together, and at times they were joined by my patient, who, however, in the better weather we were enjoying, reclined in her chair and took the sun. On these occasions Mr. Morland and his sister ceased their promenade and sat with their guest. Sometimes the full voice of Mlle. Châteray, or Trebizond, would come to us below, and occasionally her light laughter was heard, very musical to the ears.

Speculations, it is not necessary to say, were rife among us. It was known we were set for Buenos Ayres, and it was taken for granted that there the

Prince was to effect his morganatic marriage. But what was to happen afterwards? We were chartered for twelve months. That bespoke a cruise, and guesses flew about the ship. Lane, the purser, was the most in evidence in these discussions. He was an excitable man with a passion for talk and company, and he offered to lay me a certain sum that we should pull up in Yokohama.

"As like as not paid off there. We've no contracts against it," he said in a fume.

It was the attitude of McCrae, the chief engineer, that interested me in view of his professed opinions. He unfolded his mind to me one evening when we had been out some ten days.

"It's like this, doctor. The man's sheer sick of courts and barbarisms, and he's in search of a healthy, independent life, which he needs, I'm thinking. That's to his credit altogether. But it's a wonderful thing, when you come to think of it, that one man like that should upset the politics of Europe, and a man that does not achieve it, mind you, but gets it by mere birth and chance. The paper said he had a million of his own. A fool could be independent on that, aye, and live healthy, too, if he weren't too much of a fool. But what right has a man with wealth like that, I ask you? As Mr. Holgate was saying yesterday, it's an insult to decent, hardworking men like you and me."

"So that's Mr. Holgate's idea, is it?" said I, and mused. The engineer was proceeding in the strain when I saw the face of the boatswain jump suddenly into the dimness of the engine-room. It was a thin-lipped,

gaunt face, lacking eyebrows, which added to the gauntness, and the general complexion was red to the shade of crimson. When his jaw was in repose it appeared as if the lower part of his face had been sucked up into the upper like a lid into its box. But now his jaw was open, disclosing a plentiful lack of teeth.

"You're wanted, doctor," he said, in his abrupt voice. "There's been an accident forward."

I left at once and followed him, asking some necessary questions.

"I don't know exactly how it occurred," he said in answer.

"One of the men, Adams, fell on something and it's drilled a hole in him."

When we reached the man's berth he was surrounded by a number of the crew, whom I ordered off.

"If I've got anything to do I don't want to be hampered," I said, "so clear out and leave Adams to me and the boatswain."

When the place was clear, I made an examination, and found a wound under the shoulder-blade. It was not dangerous, but might well have been so. I sent for my bag and dressed it, the boatswain looking on. All the time I made no comment, but when I had finished I turned and met the boatswain's eyes.

"That's a knife wound," I said, shortly.

"Is it, sir?" he replied, and stared down at Adams. "How did it come about, Adams?" he inquired

authoritatively.

"I was larking along with Gray and ran up agen him," said the man, in a sullen voice. "I didn't see what he 'ad in his 'and."

"More fool you!" said the boatswain angrily. "D'ye think I can go short of men for a lot of horse-play? All right, doctor? Nothing serious?"

"No," said I, deliberating. "If the knife was clean there's not much harm done except that you go short of a man, as you say, for some days."

The boatswain swore as politely as an oath can be managed.

"I'll come in again later," I said. "Meanwhile keep him in bed."

But on my next visit it was manifest that the wound was not such a simple affair, for the man's temperature had risen and he was wandering. He gave tongue to a profusion of oaths, which seemed to be directed, in the main, against Gray, but also included the boatswain, raised himself on his arm, and shook his fist in my face, muttering "my share," and "not a brown less," and something about "blowing the gaff."

It was with difficulty that I completed my ministrations; but I did so, and gave the boatswain a dose to be given to the wounded man at once and another four hours later. It was entirely an involuntary omission on my part that I said nothing of returning.

Nevertheless I did return only two hours later, and just before midnight. I had had the man removed to a disused cabin, and when I got there the door was locked. Angrily I went on deck and found the boatswain.

"Pierce," I said, "the door of the sick-room is locked. What on earth does this mean? I want to see my patient."

"Oh, he's all right, sir. He went to sleep quite easy. I asked one of the hands to keep an eye on him, and I suppose he's shut the door. But it isn't locked."

"But it is," I said angrily.

"The blockhead!" said the boatswain. "I'll get the key for you, sir, if you'll wait a minute."

But I was not going to wait. I was making for the hatchway when I was hailed through the darkness by a voice:

"Dr. Phillimore!"

I turned, and little Pye emerged from the blackness.

"I've been trying to get to sleep, but I've got the most awful neuralgia. I wish you'd give me something for it," said he.

"In a moment," I said. "I've got to see one of the hands, and then——"

"Oh, come, doctor, give us a chance," said Pye. "If you tell me what, I'll get it myself. Look here, would a dose of chloral do any good?"

"My dear sir," said I drily. "Every man in these days seems to be his own doctor. Try it, and if it's only satisfactory enough, we'll have a beautiful post-mortem to-morrow."

"Well," said little Pye, with a return of his native repartee, "it's precisely because I don't want to be my own doctor that I've come to you."

That naturally was unanswerable, and I acknowledged the hit by prescribing for him. Then I went on my way.

The door was open and the boatswain was waiting. He covered a yawn as I approached.

"It was that fool, Reilly, sir," he explained. "He mucked my instructions."

I nodded and proceeded to examine my patient. The boatswain seemed to have spoken the truth, for the man was as quiet as a log, save for the movement of the clothes when he respired. But it was that very respiration that arrested my attention. I felt his pulse, and I took the temperature. As I moved to examine the glass, Pierce's thin crimson face, peeping over my shoulder, almost struck upon me. The jaw was sucked into its socket. The temperature was still high, too high to allow of that placid sleep. I contemplated the thermometer meditatively. The port was shut, and the only sounds that broke the night were the dull beating of the screw and the duller wash of the waves against the side of the *Sea Queen*. The boatswain stood motionless behind me.

"You are right," I said slowly. "He has gone off pretty comfortably, but I should like to see his temperature

lower. However, the sleep will do him good, and I've no doubt I'll find him all right in the morning."

As I spoke I turned away with a nod and passed out of the cabin. Once on deck, I paused to consider what I should do. Two things I knew for certain: firstly, that the knife-wound was no accident, for no mere horse-play could have resulted in such a deep cut; secondly, that Adams was under the influence of a narcotic. Who had administered it and why? I recalled the man's delirium and his wandering statements to which at the time I had paid little heed, and I thought I began to get the clue. I looked at my watch and found it half-past twelve. Every one, save those on duty, was abed, and the steamer ploughed steadily through the trough, a column of smoke swept abaft by the wind and black against the starlight. I sought my cabin, poured myself out a stiff glass of grog, and sat down to smoke and think.

At two bells I roused myself and went on deck. How singularly still was the progress of the vessel! I heard the feet of the officer on the bridge, and no other sound in all that floating house. A figure like a statue stood out in the dimness by the chart-house, and I came to a pause. It turned, and I thought I made out my friend the quartermaster.

"That you, Ellison?" I asked.

"Yes, sir."

"I want to look at that man Adams in the forecastle," I said. "Please accompany me, as I may need your assistance."

I descended the ladder and went forward till I

reached the cabin which I had used as a hospital, and turned the handle of the door. It opened, but the darkness was profound, and Ellison struck a match and lit the lamp. Adams lay in his bunk groaning faintly. I turned up his sleeve and examined him. The wound was inflamed, as I had expected, and it was not that which arrested me, but a mark on the arm above the elbow. It was the prick of the hypodermic syringe. My doubts were now certainties.

As we stood there Adams opened his eyes, and struggled into a sitting posture.

"No, my man," said I, "you must keep to your back."

He stared at me, but allowed me to force him backwards, and continued to stare.

"Adams, can you understand?" said I firmly. "Gray struck you with a knife?"

"Between the shoulders, damn him," he growled sulkily. "Doctor, my head's bad—give me something to drink."

I had come prepared, and I did so, and he fell back with a sigh, showing more signs of alertness.

"You quarrelled?" I suggested, but he made no answer. "Look you here, my man," I went on sternly, "I know a good deal about this, and what you quarrelled over. It would be wiser, believe me, to be candid. Pierce had a hand in this."

Still he was silent. I pulled from my pocket a syringe, and showed it to him.

"Do you know what that is?" I asked.

He shook his head, staring.

"Well," said I, "it came pretty near finishing you off. You have had a heavy dose. I want to know who did it." I caught up his arm, and thrust the puncture under his nose. He still stared.

"You were talking pretty wildly in your delirium, and had to be silenced. That was how it was done. If they can't silence you one way they will another. How much was your share to be?"

The man's face worked in an ugly fashion, and he was at any time a repulsive creature. The glitter in his eyes spoke of fever.

"The devil's own," he said hoarsely. "They wanted to cheat me of it, and I said I'd split. Damn Pierce, and Gray, and all!"

"So you were going for the prince's cash-box, were you?" I said equably.

"It's more than that," said he. "There's the treasure in the strong-room. That's their game."

"Now I see you are sensible," I said, "and I can undertake to make you well and sound and happy provided you tell the truth."

"Doctor, it burns like fire," he groaned.

"I will see to that," I said. "What is the plot?"

"I have cried off. That's why I got the knife," he said faintly. "But swear to God no harm'll come to me."

"I promise you that," I said, nodding.

"It's the boatswain's plot," he whispered, "and he has more'n half the men. They are going to rise ere ever we get to Buenos Ayres. But I was no party to their plans," he continued feverishly, and as if anxious to convince me, "that's why I've this knife, doctor, because I'm an honest man."

I had more than my doubts of that, but I nodded again.

"You have only done your duty in telling me, Adams," said I, "and I'll keep my promise, provided you hold your tongue about this. They have given you a dose of morphia, and it's lucky it wasn't bigger. If you do what I tell you, we'll have you right in a couple of days."

I made him drink a draught I had brought with me, and, closing the door, left him. A passage led from here to the men's quarters, and as I came out, I signed to Ellison to be noiseless, and put out the light. Then we moved towards the hatchway. When we reached it I happened to glance round at Ellison, and through that brooding darkness, lightened only by a dim swinging lamp, I thought I saw a flitting shadow. But the next swing of the boat threw the light clear into the corner, and there was nothing. We emerged on the lower deck, and thence regained the quarterdeck. There was a bright light in the chart-room, and I led the way thither. I closed the door and turned on the quartermaster. His face was grey, and his hand trembled.

"You heard?" said I.

"Yes, sir," he replied, and hesitated. "But he's

wandering, sir, ain't he?"

"My man," said I, "I'm a doctor—leave that much to me. I only want to know if you heard. That is all your part. No, there is one thing more. What about the hands?"

"They're a pretty mixed lot, sir, not exactly what I would call yacht hands, but——"

"Were you engaged with them?" I interrupted sharply.

"No, sir, Sir John he got me on. I've sailed with him before."

"Thank the Lord for that," I said heartily, for I had begun to suspect every one. The voyage was a nightmare, I thought.

"Who is the officer in charge?" I asked.

"Mr. Legrand, sir," said Ellison.

The second mate and I had had few exchanges. He was a reserved man, and devoted to his duty. Besides, as navigating officer he had his full share of responsibility for the safety of the ship. I moved out of the chart-house, leaving the quartermaster in a maze of bewilderment, and, I think, incredulity. The stars illumined the figure of the second officer on the bridge, and I stood in a little gust of doubt which shook me. Should I sleep over the new discovery? I had Ellison, a Didymus, for witness, but I was still sore from the reception of my previous news. I took the length of the deck, and looked over the poop where a faint trail of light spumed in the wake of the

ship. Suddenly I was seized from behind, lifted by a powerful arm, and thrown violently upon the taffrail. It struck me heavily upon the thighs, and I plunged with my hands desperately in the air, lost my balance, and pitched over head foremost towards the bubbling water.

As I fell my shoulder struck the bulge of the iron carcase of the vessel, and I cannoned off into the void, but by the merest chance my clutching hands in that instant caught in the hitch of a rope which had strayed overboard. The loop ran out with my wrist in it, and I hit the water. Its roar was in my ears, but nothing else, and when I rose to the surface the ship was thirty yards away. But the rope was still over my arm, and as soon as I recovered breath I began to haul myself slowly and painfully in. As it was, I was being torn through the water at the rate of from twelve to fourteen knots an hour, and in a very few minutes the chill which my immersion had inflicted on me passed away, giving place to a curious warmth that stole throughout my limbs, and enabled me to continue the onward struggle. I drew nearer foot by foot, the sea racing past me, and burying my face constantly in floods of salt water. But I was encouraged to observe the *Sea Queen* was now perceptibly closer, and I clung and hauled and hauled again. My danger now was the screw, and I could hear the thumping of the steel blades below, and see the boiling pit under the stern by the vessel. If I hauled closer should I be dragged into that terrible maelstrom, and be drawn under the deadly and merciless machinery? I could see the open taffrail, through which the stars glimmered away above me. It seemed that safety was so near and yet

so far. She rolled, and the lights of the port-holes flashed lanterns on the sea in that uprising. I raised my voice, helplessly, hopelessly, in a cry.

I repeated this shout three times, and then I saw a man come and hang over the taffrail. Was it the unknown murderer, and did he look for his victim to complete his abominable job? As the thought struck me I was silent, and then I saw him stoop and examine the iron stanchions at his feet. Next I felt the rope being pulled slowly in. At this I shouted again, and he ceased.

"The screw!" I called. "The screw!"

He moved away to the port side and once more the rope began to move. Gradually I reached the side of the ship, about a dozen feet to port, and five minutes later I was safe on deck.

"Good Lord, sir, what is it?" asked Ellison's voice in terror.

"My arm is cut through, and one leg is near broken," I gasped. "Don't ask me more, but get me brandy."

He returned in an incredibly short time, for if he was a man of leisurely British mind he was wonderful on his feet. I drank the raw spirit and felt better.

"Now, do you believe?" I asked him.

"You mean——"

"That I was knocked overboard. I knew too much," I said sharply. "Don't stand staring, man. We don't know where we are, or what is afoot. Give me your arm and let us get to the bridge. Stay, have you any

weapon?"

"No, sir."

"Any available?"

"No, sir, not without waking the carpenter."

"That is the usual British way," said I. "Believe nothing until it happens. Nothing does happen, does it? Nothing has happened, has it, Ellison? Well, we must chance it. At least we have stout fists. We made our way under the shelter of the saloon and smoking-room, and came to the steps of the bridge. I mounted with great difficulty, and Ellison followed. Legrand turned at our appearance and surveyed us under the gleam of his lamp with astonishment.

"Mr. Legrand," said I, "I need not ask if you have weapons available, for I'm sure you have not. But you will need them."

"What is't you mean?" he said sharply.

"Mutiny and murder," said I.

He went straight to the speaking-tube without a word, and called down to the engineer's room, "Mr. McCrae, will you personally bring me a couple of pistols, or any offensive weapon at hand. Iron bars will do—at once, please."

This was a man after my own heart. I could have embraced him. He came back to me.

"And now, doctor?"

I told him. He was silent, and then brought out a

string of expletives. "I mistrusted the filthy pack from the first," he said. "See what they give us to work with, sir—the scum of Glasgow and London; and none of us to have a say in the matter. I'd sooner go to sea with Satan than scum like that," he said fiercely. "As soon as I set eyes on them I knew we were in for it—but not this," he added, "not this by a long chalk."

"There's one thing to be done," said I.

"We'll do it now," he replied, his fury gone as suddenly as it came, and we descended the ladder.

At the foot we met McCrae, very angry and sarcastic, wanting to know since when the deck was allowed to order the engine-room about like pot-boys, but a few words put him in possession of the facts, and I think, if any argument had been needed, my exhausted and dripping body would have sufficed.

"The old man?" said he. Legrand nodded.

CHAPTER VI

The Conference in the Cabin

We opened the captain's door without knocking, but he was awake at once, and turned on the electric light.

"What is this, gentlemen? Is it a raree show?" he inquired in his particular voice.

"It is some information Dr. Phillimore has to impart, sir," said Legrand.

Day's eyes narrowed. "Oh, I see Dr. Phillimore is taking part in some more theatricals," he said grimly. "And his costume seems suited to them."

"I beg your pardon, sir," said I hotly. "If you would only listen instead of passing judgment we might get on."

"I'm learning a lot this voyage," said Day with a sneer; "pray proceed."

Again I told my story. Day got up in his pyjamas, an insignificant figure of a man without his important uniform. He might have been merely a member of

Parliament, or a minor poet. But he had, with all his defects, the courage of his position and responsibilities.

"This is a matter I feel unequal to alone. It has gone on too long," he said sharply. "It is time I knew where I stand." He left the cabin abruptly, and returned in a few minutes.

"I have taken the liberty of inviting Mr. Morland's attendance," he said, "and have sent for Sir John Barraclough and Mr. Holgate. I will know once for all where I stand."

"I beg you not Mr. Holgate, captain," said I.

"And why not Mr. Holgate, sir?" he asked peremptorily. "Here is a report of conspiracy and mutiny you bring me, and I will have my officers in attendance to weigh it."

"You will remember my former charge, Captain Day?" I said.

"Well, sir?" he answered.

"If my report to-night is correct, as I have a witness to prove, does it not shed some light on my former charge against Mr. Holgate? And is it, therefore, desirable that he should be here?"

Day considered, and then he looked me up and down.

"If I were a doctor, Dr. Phillimore," he observed with sarcasm, "I should advise you to change your clothes."

"Oh, there is a more important matter than clothes," I replied angrily, "or should I be here? Is it for fun, do you suppose?"

He turned from me without saying anything, but my words had their effect, for when the door opened and Holgate's face appeared Day said civilly enough, "I am sorry to have disturbed you unnecessarily, Mr. Holgate, but I find I shall not need you at present."

The third officer's big face moved slowly on his bull neck and his eyes met mine.

"Very well, sir," said he calmly, and there was nothing legible in his gaze. It was blank and insignificant, destitute even of curiosity.

Barraclough arrived immediately afterwards, and on his heels—Mr. Morland, dressed as when he walked the hurricane deck daily, his somewhat dull face owning and manifesting a certain dignity.

"I have asked you here, Mr. Morland," said Day at once, "because of certain rumours and mysteries and alleged discoveries which are in circulation. It is an untimely hour, but that is not my fault. Dr. Phillimore has brought me a story, which, if he is correct, is of vital importance to us. I should be glad, therefore, if you would answer a question. Are you Prince Frederic of Hochburg?"

Mr. Morland's eyes lighted up. "I have employed you, sir," he began, "to work this ship——"

"Pardon me, it is necessary," said Day with extreme politeness. "I hear a tale of conspiracy to rob my employer, who sails with me and whom I know as

Mr. Morland, but who is stated to be Prince Frederic of Hochburg. I am justified, therefore, in asking if Mr. Morland is Prince Frederic; and if he has the money on board which the tale alleges. According to that answer must I shape my conduct."

Mr. Morland drew himself up. "It is reasonable," he said, as if reflecting. "Yes, I am Frederic of Hochburg."

Day's fingers trembled. "And the money?" he asked in a hard voice.

"There is some money on board," said the Prince, looking round on our faces, and now I was surprised that I had not identified long since that guttural German accent. "But I should wish to know what this scene means, sir?" he said in a haughty voice.

Day waved his hand at me.

"I have learned to-night," said I, "by an accident, that there is a plot among the crew to seize the ship and its contents before reaching Buenos Ayres."

For the third time I then told my story, to which my sodden garments were a genuine witness. The Prince listened to me with a frown.

"I do not understand," said he. "I was led to believe that I was chartering a good vessel with a good captain and a crew for my cruise. I do not understand this."

"Nor I," said Day, with a shrug of his shoulders. "I am not responsible for the crew. It was arranged by your agents, Mr. Morland."

"Ah!" said the Prince shortly, and then, "But you tell me they have turned out to be pirates. This is ridiculous."

"I must refer you to Dr. Phillimore, sir," said Day curtly. "As for me, if I had known what I know now, you would have sailed under another captain. I am too old for mysteries."

Ignoring this, if he listened to it, the Prince turned on me.

"Where is your evidence of this?" he asked, and his eyes fell on Ellison, who was plainly uncomfortable.

"Ah! did what the doctor says happen?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then we must send for this man Adams," concluded his Royal Highness. "Let him be brought."

I had in my hand during all this time the bar of iron which McCrae had brought. I gave it to Barraclough.

"If you are going," said I, "take this. It may be needed."

He looked at me with a lift of his eyebrows.

"All serene," said he with a smile. "This seems a pretty show altogether. Come, quartermaster."

Legrand went back to his bridge with a revolver in his pocket, and I was left with Mr. Morland and the captain. The former scrutinised me closely and deliberately, without regard to my feelings, while Day feigned to be busy at his table.

"I stay here, sir," said I to the Prince with emphasis, "because I seem in a manner to be a prisoner on trial. I have called my evidence, and it will be forthcoming presently. But I must say," I added bitterly, "that I resent the way in which my testimony has been received, and at Buenos Ayres, if we ever reach that port, I shall beg to be relieved of my duties and have my contract cancelled."

"If Mr.—Mr. Morland does not object certainly I shall not, Dr. Phillimore," said Day drily.

"Oh, come, captain," said I impatiently; "we are in a peril together and you stand on ceremonies."

"That has yet to be proved," he said.

Even as he spoke a noise announced the return of the party, and Sir John Barraclough entered.

"Your man's missing," said he.

Day uttered an exclamation, and the Prince's frown deepened.

"There's no one in the cabin," said Barraclough.

At that instant a knock fell on the door. "Is the doctor here?" said a voice which I recognised at once. Barraclough opened the door and Holgate stood on the threshold.

"It has been reported to me as I came on duty," he said, "that Adams is missing, doctor. It seems a bad case. He was delirious, and two of the men say they heard a plunge. The port-hole is open."

"It's a lie!" I cried.

Holgate's face twitched. "It's the report made to me," he said; "I came at once," and the fang showed clear under his upper lip.

"It is foul play!" I said. "He was not likely to throw himself overboard. It all belongs to the plot."

"Was this man delirious?" asked Day of me.

I hesitated. "For a time he was slightly," I answered.

"He was delirious when he told you these things?"

"That I deny."

He turned to Ellison. "What do you say, quartermaster?"

"I don't know, sir," said the man in confusion. "He didn't seem quite—quite all right."

"Ah!" said Day, looking at Mr. Morland.

"Good heavens, sir, would you take a common sailor's word before a doctor's?" I asked indignantly.

"No, Dr. Phillimore, I am only weighing the evidence," said he coolly. "This man was, according to you, delirious for a time. He made some communication as to a plot. Then he disappears. It is either conspiracy or delirium. Either accounts for the facts. Which are we to believe?"

"You forget the attempt on me," I said hotly.

"Not at all," he said, "I have not forgotten that—accident. But it hardly gets us further. It fits in with either supposition—the plot or"—he paused—"the delirium," he added significantly.

"Gentlemen, I wish you good night, or good morning," I said, turning on my heel. "And I will beg of you, Mr. Morland, to grant me the privilege of a substitute when we reach Buenos Ayres."

Mr. Morland did not answer. He made an impatient gesture, and then:

"Are you satisfied, Captain Day?" he asked.

"Quite," was the laconic answer.

"Then may I request you will see that discipline is kept among your men," said the Prince severely, and stalked out of the cabin.

Barraclough broke into laughter. "Upon my soul——" he began, but was interrupted by an angry exclamation.

"Be good enough, sir, to keep your counsel till it is asked, sir," said Day, trembling with fury. "I have too many princes and baronets here for my taste." He stamped round the room in agitation. "My men!" he cried. "Good Lord, what have I had to do with them? I wish I'd never seen the figurehead of the yacht. Good Lord! my men! I would sooner run an excursion steamer than submit to this."

Barraclough eyed him without any emotion, even with hard hostility. The exit of the Prince had stayed my departure, and abruptly Day came to a pause by me.

"That will do, gentlemen," he said quietly. Holgate, who was at the door, opened it, and his round face swung gently on his shoulders till his gaze rested on

me again. Something flickered in it, something like a leer on that malicious blackness, and then he was gone. Day stood stock-still looking by me after him. As I turned to follow he addressed me.

"Dr. Phillimore, if you can spare a moment before you change," he said civilly, "I shall be glad of a few minutes."

I answered promptly, wondering, and the door closed behind Barraclough.

"Doctor, I haven't slept a wink for nights," burst out the captain suddenly; "I must have something."

He had a haggard, drawn look, and his eyes seemed sunken in his head. At once I was the professional man, and not an officer of the ship.

"Sit down, sir," said I, "and tell me. What is it?"

He sat down shakily. "I don't like my officers, doctor, and I don't like my employer," he said peevishly. I held his pulse, which was jumping.

"What else," I said.

"You are not a married man?" he inquired, looking at me restlessly. "No; never mind," he paused, and proceeded in his ridiculously precise voice. "I had the misfortune to lose my wife and my son in a fortnight —about a month ago. It has rather upset me."

It might have seemed comic communicated in that matter-of-fact tone, but somehow it struck me as tragic. That this vain, self-contained, and reticent man should confess to the frailty of humanity to a man he disliked was the measure of his suffering.

"I can mend the sleep, captain," said I. "You must do the rest."

"Good God!" he shook his head and stood up.

"No," said I, "sit down. I'll see to you. Let me ring."

In a few minutes I had my case of instruments, and carefully extracted what I wanted, while Day looked on feverishly impatient.

"I'm going to do what has already been done this night," I said gravely, "but in a better cause."

I raised the syringe, and bade him put back the sleeve of his pyjama. A rush of pain went through my arm which had been bruised and battered in the sea, and suddenly the cabin went from me. For the first and only time in my life I fainted.

When I came to Day was bending over me, glass in hand, a look of solicitude on his face.

"It seems we have changed places," said I feebly, "and that you are my physician."

He set the glass down. "Doctor, I did you less than justice just now," he said quickly. "But I have had my troubles."

I picked myself up slowly. "I will now resume," I said, smiling.

"If you are able," he said doubtfully, and then, "Heavens, I should like just one hour of sleep."

"You shall sleep till eight bells, I promise you," I answered, and once more I took the syringe.

He sighed as if in anticipation. "Doctor," he said, as he lay back. "Not a word of this. We must talk about the other thing. I don't like my officers. I'll tackle this question to-morrow. There's something in it."

I bade him "good night," and left with the conviction that in the difficulties before us Captain Day would count for little. To face such emergencies as I felt must now be faced we had no need of a neurotic subject.

Nevertheless I was mistaken in one particular. Day sent for me next morning, and I found him in quite a brisk, cheerful state. He did not allude to what had occurred between us, but came straight to the subject of the plot.

"Nothing has happened, doctor," he said.

I knew nothing could happen, for the disappearance of Adams meant that the conspirators were not ready with their plans. Otherwise they would not have been so determined to rob me of my evidence. This I explained, and he listened attentively.

"You see the difficulty," he said at last. "There is no corroboration of your story, and I can take no action. I will have an inquiry into Adams's disappearance, of course, but I fear nothing will come of it." He rubbed his hands nervously. "I wish to God it would."

This was astounding from the man, but, as I looked into his eyes, I could see how deeply his nervous system had been shocked, and once more I despaired of such a captain in such circumstances. I carried my misgivings to Legrand, with whom the events of the night had seemed to bring me in closer relationship.

"The old man's all right," he said. "A better seaman doesn't exist. There's nothing he doesn't know."

"Except human nature," said I.

"Well, that may be. But who knows much about that?" said the second officer, setting his sextant. "You say we're slumbering over a volcano. I daresay we are. It's more or less what we're paid to do, and take all risks. Things are quiet enough now, anyway."

Was this another sceptic, where I had sought to find an ally?

"I am used by this to ridicule," I began drily.

"Who on earth is ridiculing you?" he asked. "You have only given us something to think of—and something pretty tall, too."

I shrugged my shoulders. "I suppose it is my word against Holgate's," I said wearily.

"Holgate's!" he said, lowering his sextant swiftly. "Holgate's! I wouldn't trust Holgate if he were on a dozen oaths—not if he were swung at a yard-arm, and were making Christian confession," he said passionately.

"Nor would I," I said softly after a pause. We exchanged glances. He resumed his sextant.

"The only thing to be done," he said, "is to keep a watch. We shall know shortly. Excuse me, doctor, I must take the bearings."

Routine must go on aboard ship, but this cool attitude, reasonable as it was, was not to my taste in

my condition. Things moved as smoothly as before; the watch came and went, and the bells tolled regularly; but with the knowledge that I had that something evil was brewing, I fretted and worried and grew out of temper. The powers that were responsible for the safety of the ship and her good conduct were indifferent to the danger, or else incredulous. I alone knew how incompetent was the captain to secure his vessel, and the attitude of "Mr. Morland" filled me with contempt. It was very well for a royal prince in his palace, surrounded by his guard, servitors, and dependants, to assume an autocratic attitude, and take things for granted. But it was another case when he had deliberately abandoned that security and launched himself upon a romantic, not to say quixotic, career, in which nothing was certain. Yet upon the promenade deck the Prince and his sister took their constitutionals as if nothing had happened or would happen, and, as before, Mlle. Trebizond joined them, and her laugh floated down to us, musical and clear. Would nothing make them understand the peril in which they stood?

In all this vexation of spirit I still found time to be amused by Lane. The affair of Adams was, necessarily, public property, and the inquiry promised by Day was in process. Adams was gone, gone overboard, as I knew, and I could have put my hand on his murderer, if I could not also identify the man who had made an attempt to be mine. Lane, on the rumour of the night's proceedings reaching him, sought me, and complained. It was ludicrous, but it was characteristic of the man, as I had come to know him.

"Where do I come in?" he asked plaintively. "You might have given me a call, doctor."

"I wish I had been sleeping as sound as you," I said.

"Oh, hang it, man, it's dull enough on this beastly boat. If there's any row on, I'm in it."

"Do you think you guess how big a row you may be on?" I asked him.

"Oh, well, it's infernally dull," he grumbled, which, when you come to think of it, was a surprising point of view.

The Adams inquiry ended in what must necessarily be called an open verdict. The evidence of the boatswain and Pentecost, one of the hands, assured that. Both testified to the fact that they were awakened in the still hours by a splash, and one thought it was accompanied by a cry, but was not sure. At any rate, the boatswain was sufficiently aroused to make search, and to discover that Adams was missing, and subsequently that the port-hole was open. He had then, as he declared, reported the matter at once to the officer of the watch, who was Holgate. Holgate came to the captain's cabin, as has been related. There was no discrepancy to be noted in the stories of the two men, nor was there any inherent improbability in their tale. So, as I have said, though no verdict was given, the verdict might be considered as open, and we had got no further. The captain, however, took one precaution, for the key of the ammunition chest was put in Barraclough's charge. What others did I know not, but I slept with a loaded revolver under my pillow.

We were now within a week of Buenos Ayres, and had come into summer weather. When we passed the twentieth parallel the heat was overpowering. We took to ducks, and the ladies, as we could observe, to the lightest of cotton dresses. For all, however, that we saw of them they might have been dwelling in another sphere, as, indeed, they were. The steward alone had the privilege of communion with them, and he, being a distant fellow, had nothing to say, though, I believe, Lane cross-questioned him rigorously.

I have said that we saw nothing of our passengers, but I, at least, was to see them more nearly very soon, and that in the most unexpected manner. One evening I had retired to my cabin and was stretched in my bunk, reading one of the gilded books from the yacht's library, when I was interrupted by a knock on the door.

"Come in," I called idly, and the door promptly opened, and to my amazement Miss Morland stood before me. She wore a plain evening dress of chiffon, very pretty to the eye, and over her head and shoulders a mantle of silk lace. She had naturally, as I had observed on my previous encounters, a sparkle of colour in her face; but now she had lost it, and was dead white of complexion under the electric light.

"Doctor Phillimore," she said in English, which was more perfect of accent than her brother's, but speaking somewhat formally, "I understand that you believe you have discovered some plot."

By this time I was on my feet. "Madam, no one else

believes it," said I.

"I do," she said sharply; and then, "I want you to come and see my brother—Mr. Morland."

"I will do as you will," I answered, "but, at the same time, I must point out that Mr. Morland has cognisance of my story. I stated what I had to say in his presence some days since."

"Ah," said she, "you do not understand. It is impossible for one in my brother's position to entertain these suspicions. It is not for him to take precautions—or should not be," she added bitterly.

I bowed. "I will repeat what I have already stated," I said; and then, as she turned to go, I took a sudden impulse. My heart was beating faster at this unexpected appearance of an ally and I made up my mind to confirm the alliance if it was what it seemed.

"Miss Morland," said I, "if I must continue to call you so."

"That is my name, sir," she said loftily.

"Then if that is your name there is nothing in my plot," I answered bluntly. "This plot, imaginary or otherwise, but one in which you say you believe, is dependent wholly on your name not being Morland, madam. Assure me that it is, and I undertake that the plot shall cease—disappear in a twinkling."

"You speak, sir, as if you had authority over it," she said, after a pause.

"No. I reason only on what I know. This conspiracy has been evolved on the supposition that you and

Mr. Morland are not what you claim to be, and on other suppositions. If these be untrue, and the mutineers can be convinced of that, the conspiracy naturally falls to the ground."

Again she made a pause, but spoke quickly when she spoke:

"My brother is Prince Frederic of Hochburg."

I bowed. "And, madam, the ship contains treasure? Let us finish our confidences."

"There are bonds and bullion to a large amount on board," she said, as if reluctantly. "It was unwise of him, but he would have it so."

"I may take it that the Princess Alix would not have it so," I suggested.

"You may assume what you will, sir," she said coldly.

"Madam," said I seriously, for handsome as she was and royal, too, I was nettled by her distance, "you ask me to help you, and you keep me at arm's length. I am not asking out of curiosity. I only want to know what allies I can depend on. Heaven knows I have gone through enough already to keep me silent henceforward for ever, even to the point of attempted murder."

"I will answer any question you wish to put—if I can," she replied in a milder voice. "But my brother is waiting."

"Then may I know why you credit this plot?" I asked.

"I know nothing of the plot," she said. "The news of it

has just come to my ears, through some words dropped by Mr. Morland. But this I know—that he runs a great risk. He has always run a great risk ever since——" she stopped. "I am willing to believe the worst."

"Now," said I, "I am ready to accompany you," and forthwith, without more words, we went on deck.

When we reached the cabin I found not only the Prince, but Day, who was clearly in one of his moods. He had a nervous way of flipping his fingers when put out, and he stood now firing off his white hand restlessly. He did not pay me any attention on my entrance, but fixed his gaze on Princess Alix.

"As I am no longer in command on my boat, Dr. Phillimore," he said abruptly, "perhaps you will be good enough to explain to Mr. Morland what you propose to do."

I looked at the Prince, who nodded curtly. Evidently there had been a scene.

"I believe that a rising is contemplated before we reach Buenos Ayres," I said. "I would advise, therefore, that we change our course for Rio Janeiro at once. We are only thirty-hours' steam away."

Day turned his attention on me. "There is something in that," he said. "I shall be able to get a new doctor."

The Prince frowned. "It is for me to say," he said sharply.

"You, sir, will then be able to get a new captain," said Day politely. He bowed to the Prince and Princess.

"That is very probable," said the Prince, and added, "I order you to put into Rio, captain. Dr. Phillimore's advice commends itself to me."

I said nothing, but the Princess gave me a quick glance, in which I seemed to read approval.

"Your orders shall be obeyed," said Day, and ceremoniously left the cabin. When he was gone the Prince turned to me.

"I am obliged for your zeal in my service," he said, as if he were conferring a decoration; whereupon he bowed, and I followed the captain.

I went at once to Day's cabin and waited, for I had made up my mind as to the method in which he should be treated. The man was obviously incapable of discretion in his state. He entered presently with a heavy sigh, and only then observed me. A malignant look worked in his face blackly, but I interposed at once.

"Captain," said I. "If you are captain, I am doctor. This can only end one way, and I won't have it end that way if it is in my power to prevent it."

"You are wrong," he said snappishly. "You are captain and doctor in one."

"I am going to try on you a particular drug which I have faith in," I said, ignoring his words. "It is new, but there are great possibilities in it. If it is all I believe it to be, you will get up to-morrow another man."

He put his arms on the table. "Oh, my God!" he

groaned. "Night and day, night and day. For God's sake, doctor, give me something."

That was what I wanted. He was a little querulous, spiteful child now, and I had possession of him. I had seen his soul undressed and naked, and it frightened me. I felt more than anxiety for him; I felt compassion. And it was I that put him to bed that night. But meanwhile we were on the way to Rio Janeiro.

CHAPTER VII

The Rising

In advising that the yacht's course should be laid for Rio I assumed that possibly the mutineers would not have completed their arrangements, and would be taken by surprise. My assumption was justified, though its very correctness came near to wrecking what reputation I had left as a man of sense. I had long recognised that I was looked upon as having a bee in my bonnet, and the fact that we arrived safely in the port must have increased the doubts of those who knew I was responsible for the alteration of the course. The change could not, of course, be concealed very long. The watch was privy to it, when Day set the new course, and by next morning it was

all over the ship. Yet the same dignified routine proceeded; no one volunteered any act of violence; and if I believed in myself no one else did, I am sure. Little Pye mused openly on the change, but withdrew himself at once into his legal reticence when I also expressed my surprise. To say the truth, I was not anxious that it should be known that I was the author of the alteration, and so made inquiries with a show of innocence. Nor do I think that any one suspected me, for neither the Prince nor Day would be likely to talk. Day, indeed, surprised me. He thanked me privately for my medical advice, and, with a smile, added:

"Perhaps I should say also nautical."

I shook my head, smiling also. "It was political, captain, and that's all."

He nodded absently, and said suddenly, "I think, doctor, I will get rid of Pierce at Rio."

I was heartily glad to hear this, and would have suggested that Holgate also should go, but refrained. I knew not how far his improvement would bear the strain of the suggestion.

We lay at anchor in the bay to coal, and the passengers took themselves off to the shore, Mlle. Trebizond in a wild flutter of excitement. This meant for her the nearest approach to Paris, I suppose, that was available. At least she was in great spirits, and talked with the officers. As we entered the harbour we heard the sound of music pouring from the saloon, which had never yet been used by the party, and on that the rich notes of a fine mezzo-soprano.

The little exhibition arrested the men at their work, and, after that long passage of silence, seemed to wake us up and put us in a better mood. As it was disagreeable on board during the coaling operations, I, too, followed the party on shore in the company of Barraclough.

We had arrived at mid-day, and the yacht was to sail on the following evening, for the simple methods of coaling in Rio protract the business. I lunched at the English Hotel, and occupied the time in the usual manner of the sight-seer; visited the summit of the hill by the Alpine Railway, and walked negligently in the Botanical Gardens. I slept ashore, and was joined on nightfall by Lane, who was full of the gust of living. He could only be said to enjoy himself when he got ashore, and yet he could not keep off the sea. I learned from him with satisfaction that Pierce, the boatswain, was gone, paid off at the captain's orders. So here was something for my consolation. I breathed a little more freely, and inquired further. But the rest of his information was not so satisfactory. Besides the passengers, Day, Barraclough, McCrae, and himself had come ashore, leaving Legrand with Holgate and little Pye to represent what might be termed the aristocracy of the deck. And next morning I got a glimpse in the streets of Pye, so that Holgate was, barring the second officer, master of the yacht. I will confess I did not like this look of things; so deep was my distrust of Holgate. In the Rua do Ouvidor I had a fleeting vision of Princess Alix and Mlle. Trebizond as they turned into a shop; but for the rest I enjoyed myself as a stranger to the *Sea Queen*, and one with no concern in her fortunes.

It was late afternoon when I got to the quay to take a boat to the yacht; for, as I calculated, that would leave me a full hour to the time appointed for sailing. Judge, then, of my amazement when I saw her standing out, the smoke-wrack flying abaft, and trudging steadily for the mouth of the harbour. I stood there, I think, fully three minutes before I moved or took action, but during that space of time I had jumped at the conclusion. I was not wanted aboard. Was it Day? No; the idea was absurd, as he was most meticulous in his observation of the conventions. It certainly was not the Prince. The inference was only too obvious. The hour of sailing had been shifted. By whom?

I sprang down to the foot of the quay, where one of the big two-decked harbour ferry-boats was lying.

"Is your steam up?" I shouted to a man on the bridge. "I want you to catch that yacht."

He stared at me in astonishment, and shook his head. I shouted back again, and he replied in Portuguese, I assume, of which tongue I am quite ignorant. I clambered aboard and made my way to him, by which time he had been joined by another man, with gold lace round his cap. I repeated my query in French, and the second man replied indolently.

"It was impossible."

"I will give you twenty pounds if you catch her," I said, and fumbled in my mind for some computation in their wretched currency. I do not know how many hundred thousand reis I mentioned, but it seemed to have some effect. Both men stared after the yacht. I

added several hundred thousand more reis, and they were plainly shaken. Heaven knew why I should have been offering my poor money for the sake of Prince Frederic of Hochburg. I did not stop to reason, but acted merely on impulse. The man with the gold band went to the speaking-tube and shouted down it. The other man began to give brisk orders in a small, thin voice. Evidently my offer was accepted. I turned and looked out into the bay, and there was the *Sea Queen*, still steaming leisurely for the heads.

When once the ferry-boat shook herself loose she made fair way. She champed and churned in a fussy manner, and the great steel crank in her middle began to thud in a terrifying manner. We had backed out, and were driving down the harbour at the rate of perhaps nine knots. Was the *Sea Queen* making more? It was impossible to judge at that distance. The yacht might have been a mile away, and if she were going as fast as we it would probably be impracticable to attract her attention for some time, until, at any rate, we were clear of the shipping. Surely then the sight of a cumbrous ferry-boat beating down on an unwonted journey to the heads would draw their eyes and fill their speculations. We were three miles out twenty minutes after starting, and now it was obvious that we were not making ground, but losing. The trail of the smoke swept the water behind her, and her nose was plunging for the open sea. I was in despair. I shouted to the captain in the effort to get him to hoist signals, and at last one was found which suited the emergency. I have forgotten what it was, but it apparently signified that help was required immediately. But still the yacht held on, and the distance between us grew.

It seemed that I was after all destined to be free of the fortunes of that ship, whatever they might be; and I stood by the captain of the ferry-boat with a feeling of defeat and helplessness, silent, and almost resigned. And then, by one of those strange ironies the solution came to me, came to me too just as mere selfish considerations were asserting themselves. I had thought of the Prince and the conspirators if I had thought at all, certainly not of myself; and now came the reflection that I had pledged my last sovereign in the endeavour to catch the yacht, and that I was to be landed again in that foreign port penniless. Was it under the stimulus of that thought that I recalled of a sudden the first appearance of the *Sea Queen* in my life, and remembered the flash of the rocket?

"Have you any rockets?" I asked, turning abruptly round.

The man stared, smiled deprecatingly, and shook his head. He addressed his mate in Portuguese, and they held an animated conversation. Finally he turned to me, and the mate went below.

"There is one, he believes, monsieur," said the captain. "It was for saving life, but it is old."

Well, old or new, I was resolved to try it, and presently, when the mate appeared with a huge bomb in his hands, we set ourselves to work. The men by this time were interested, and we had the rocket rigged in a trice. The anxious moment was when we came to fire it. Would it fizzle out. Was the touch long gone?

It resisted sullenly for some minutes, and then unexpectedly took the bit in its teeth, if I may put it that way, and bolted. In the summer evening sky was a great rush of light, and in my ears the hissing of a hundred serpents. Then there was silence, and the light, describing its arc, vanished into the water ahead. I gazed anxiously, but it was not until ten minutes later that we were able to judge of the success of our venture. Then the little captain touched me on the shoulder, beaming. He did not trust to his inadequate French, but pointed. I had already seen the *Sea Queen* lay to.

A quarter of an hour later I stepped aboard her, and the man who let down the gangway was Holgate.

"Why, doctor, we thought you were in your cabin. A near shave!" said he.

"Pretty close," said I; "I thought the hour was six."

"It was changed to five by captain's orders," he replied. "Notice was sent duly."

"It missed me," I answered cheerfully. "I wasn't at the hotel all the time."

I passed him and met Legrand, who stared at me. "It's not your ghost, doctor?"

"No," I said in a lower voice. "But maybe it will come to ghosts yet."

He stroked his short beard, and turned about. Day, I found, was surveying me from the bridge in the most elegant suit of ducks.

"Now that you have arrived, Dr. Phillimore, perhaps

we may be allowed to proceed," he said sarcastically.

I made no reply, but went aft, where my adventures must be poured into Lane's ears. Barraclough looked me up and down in his cool, indifferent way.

"Come aboard, sir?" he said, with a grin.

"Yes," said I with a deliberate drawl. "It cost me just twenty-five pounds."

"Damned if I wouldn't sooner have stayed and had a good old time," said Lane. "What's the use of a bally ship?"

"Oh," said I, "being a millionaire I can't tell. If I'd only thought of it, Lane, I might have followed your advice."

"Didn't you get the notice?" asked Pye.

"No, I was enjoying myself, you see. I'm a careless fellow, but I'm a modest one also; and I've made too much of a sensation for my taste."

"You're fond of sensations, my good sir," said Sir John, with his abominable arrogance.

"Well, if you'll allow me, I'll shed all I can of this—that is, clothes," I replied calmly, and I went below.

When I had had a bath and assumed my yachting costume, I came on deck again, only to meet Day in a furious temper, as I could tell from his eyes. I explained the circumstances of my mishap, adding that I had not received my notice, which was no doubt my fault.

"I certainly might have made more changes at Rio than I did," he said maliciously, and passed by me.

It was ungracious, but the man was not responsible. From the deck above, the face of Mlle. Trebizond peered down at me, smiling and handsome.

"It was an adventure," she said in her English, showing her pretty teeth. "It was most exciting, doctor, to be chased by a pirate."

"I'm glad you enjoyed it, mademoiselle," said I politely. "I take some credit to myself for the rocket."

"Oh, but it should have been dark—that would have been much better," said she. "Come up and tell me all about it."

After a momentary hesitation I obeyed, and when I reached the deck I found Princess Alix there. Once more I explained my misadventure, and Mlle. Trebizond chatted and laughed in great good-humour. She had made many purchases, but complained of the shops. She could not get her favourite perfume, she protested, and wondered how people could live in such remote regions. Then she tired of me, I suppose, and walked off, leaving me to the Princess. Her blue eyes, as cold as her brother's, flashed a question at me.

"It was not an accident?" she said.

"The notice, I find, was sent last night, after Mr. Morland had communicated with Captain Day. It should have reached me at the hotel early this morning. It didn't."

"I see." She looked towards the forts at the mouth of the harbour, which we were then passing. "I am glad you did your duty in rejoining the yacht," she said next.

I think I was between amusement and irritation at her words, for, after all, I considered that it was not a time to talk of duty when I had been the victim of a trick, and had, after my own poor fashion, paid so heavily for it. I might even have looked for a sentence of thanks for my zeal. But the Princess was a princess still, despite that she was also Miss Morland and the sister of a man who had thrown away all to contract a morganatic marriage. But amusement got the upper hand. I smiled.

"Oh, we English have usually a severe sense of duty," I replied, "at least, when it comes to a pinch. On the other hand, of course, we lack discipline."

She glanced at me, and, with a little bow, moved away. I was dismissed.

The yacht was pointed now for Buenos Ayres, at which port it was clear that, for reasons of his own, Prince Frederic was anxious to arrive. It was not until the second evening, however, that anything of importance occurred. But that was of considerable importance, as you shall see. I had occasion to pay a visit to the stoke-hole, where one of the men had injured his hand, and I had finished my work and was mounting the grubby wire ladder, when a fireman passed me with averted face. I hardly glanced at him, and certainly did not pause the least fraction of a second; but to the half-glance succeeded a shock. The nerves, I suppose, took a perceptible

instant of time to convey the recognition to the brain; but, despite the grime on his face and the change in his appearance, I could not be mistaken. It was Pierce, the discharged boatswain.

Here was news indeed! Pierce, of whom Day thought he had got rid in Rio, was employed as stoker on the yacht. How came he there? This bespoke treachery again. And now I began to get some notion of how vast and subtle was the web of the conspiracy. It could not be that only a few men were concerned in it. Holgate had been right. How many hands could we depend on? Who put Pierce in his present situation? I went on deck in a fume of wonder and excitement. Plainly something was hatching, and probably that very moment. If fierce thought I had recognised him it would doubtless precipitate the plans of the villains. There was no time to be lost, and so, first of all, I went—whither do you suppose? To see the Princess.

She received me in her boudoir, where she was reclining in an evening gown that fitted her beautiful figure closely, and she rose in astonishment. But at once her eyes lighted.

"You have something to tell me?" she inquired.

"Yes," said I. "The man who was dismissed is still on board. He is acting as stoker."

She compressed her lips and eyed me.

"That spells, madam, business," said I.

"What is to be done?" she asked quietly, but I could see her bosom moving with excitement.

"I have come to you first because it is you who must prepare the Prince and persuade him of the crisis. I will go to the captain with my tale, and Heaven knows how I shall be received. It is the Prince who must act."

"Yes—yes," she said quickly. "Go at once. I will find my brother."

Day was in his cabin, and, knocking, I entered without waiting for permission. I found him with his arm bared and a syringe in his hand. He stared at me and scowled.

"There is no time for words, sir," said I. "Pierce is on board, and there is danger. There will probably be a rising to-night."

He threw the syringe down. "I'm very glad to hear it," he declared, in even tones. "Take that away, doctor. Where's Sir John Barraclough?"

I told him that he was on the bridge.

"Send Mr. Legrand to me, and——" he broke off. "But how do you know?" he asked suspiciously.

"It is not a case of knowledge. It is a case for preparation," he said. "If we have the arms distributed——"

I was interrupted by a sharp report from below. Day ran out in his pyjamas, and I followed. We heard Barraclough's voice from the bridge, raised angrily.

"Go back there, man; get back, Gray."

It was a pitch black night, save for the glittering

stars, and I could only make out a knot of men at the head of the ladder leading from the lower deck.

"What the devil do you mean?" shouted Barraclough; and then all of a sudden the knot of men opened in a struggle, and a man burst through and dashed towards us, falling at my feet.

"For God's sake, sir," he panted out. "They've seized the engine-room, and Mr. McCrae's shot. 'Twas Pierce done it."

I recognised by his voice Grant, one of the deck-hands, and I helped him to his feet.

"Who's in this?" I asked; but before he could reply the gang of men approached nearer, and some one spoke from their midst. It was Holgate.

"Captain Day, I regret to state that the men are not satisfied with the way things are being conducted," he said, in a level voice. "They are not satisfied with their pay, for one thing, and there are other matters. No harm is intended, but they have decided that I am to take your place, and for the present you are to consider yourselves prisoners—particularly the doctor," he added.

The offensive assurance of the man made me boil, but on Day it seemed to have a curiously astringent effect.

"So, Mr. Holgate, there has been a council of war," he said quietly, even drily, "and you are to step into my shoes. I will give you three minutes to retire from the deck. Go back! I tell you, do you hear, men? Go back!"

His acrid voice rang out thinly, but Barraclough above shouted hoarsely:

"Good God, can't you do something to them?"

At this moment I was aware of noises on the promenade deck, and, looking up, saw the Prince's figure outlined dimly against the stars.

"You have your orders," he called out in his deep voice. "Go back to your quarters."

There was a pause, and then the silence was broken by a shot, and one of the men fell. A second report rang out, and a curse rose on the air. A third followed, and the men turned and retreated.

From the hurricane deck came still another shot, and they tumbled down the ladder pell-mell. The Prince was shooting as calmly as at so many partridges. I ran down stairs and fetched my revolver, and when I returned I could hear no sound from the lower deck. Barraclough met me at the door of the saloon.

"There's not a pound of steam on her," he said. "The brutes have shut off the valves."

"Let her go," said I. "We have something more important on our hands. They'll be here again. The Prince took them by surprise. No English captain would have used his weapons so."

"No, by Heaven," he exclaimed. "This makes it a question of——"

He paused. Mr. Legrand came running along the deck.

"We've got it now," he said. "Oh, we've got all we want now."

"Look here," said I. "Is Ellison with you? I'm sure he's not in this?"

"Yes," said Barraclough.

"Well, post him at the ladder, and here's Grant. Let's find out how we stand."

"It'll be hot work to-night," said Legrand.

Day's voice came to us from his cabin door: "Sir John Barraclough, be good enough to place all the men you can trust on guard, with orders to fire in case of necessity. I shall be obliged for your company and that of the officers in my cabin."

We had four men, including Ellison, on the deck, and there was also the man at the wheel, who had not quitted his place through all these events. One could surely rely upon a man with such a sense of duty; so, having made such dispositions as were possible, Barraclough followed us to the captain. The ladies, I hoped, were safe in their cabins, as I had heard no sound of them.

Day was brief and businesslike. "Dr. Phillimore was right," said he. "I ask his pardon. We must see how many men we have. There is Mr. Lane and Mr. Pye. Where is Mr. Pye?"

"I am here, sir," said the little clerk from the back.

"That makes, including Mr. Morland, twelve men to depend on, so far as we know—if, that is," he added almost with a sneer, "we can depend on them."

"Grant may know more," said Legrand.

"Bring him," said Day, and opened the door to the Prince.

Prince Frederic was cool and collected, and showed little to mark the disturbance and bloodshed of the last quarter of an hour—little, unless it were in the increased blue of his eyes, which shone frostily.

"Have you all your men, captain?" he remarked in his determined German way, quite free of vivacity.

"We are sure of twelve," said Day, "and we are trying to find out about the others, so as to separate sheep and goats."

But here was Grant arrived, blood on his face, and a brisk air of savagery about him.

"Grant, who are the mutineers?" said the captain.

"Couldn't speak to 'em all, sir," said the man. "I knew nothing of it till half an hour ago, when I ran into them, and they seized me. There was Gray and Pierce and Mr. Holgate and Granger, and half a dozen in the lot that took me."

"Do you mean to say that you had no inkling of this?" said Day, with asperity.

"I'll take God to witness, no, sir," said the man earnestly, "and I'll take my oath Williams and Naylor hadn't neither."

"That makes two more," said the Prince, nodding. "But where are they?"

Grant looked over his shoulder in the direction which would indicate the forecastle. "If they're not here, sir, your highness," he said hesitatingly, "I don't know where they are. The stokers is all joined, I heard 'em say."

"Good Lord, they've made a clean sweep," said Barraclough, with a laugh. "And what's this about McCrae?"

"Mr. McCrae was shot at the first, sir, in seizing the engines."

"And they've fetched her pretty nigh to a standstill," growled the first officer. "Phew! No, there she goes," he exclaimed, as the screw began to bump. "They've picked her up. That'll be Crossley. He's with them, confound him."

"Then that leaves twelve," said the purser, "and forty-odd t'other side. Oh!" he whistled, "this makes swank, don't it?"

"Silence, Mr. Lane," commanded the captain. "We must first of all be on our guard, armed; and, secondly, see if we are in a position to add to our numbers. But we have the deck, which can only be reached one way. The stewards, Mr. Lane?" he asked quickly.

"I'll answer for the three, and the cuisine," declared the purser boldly. "I'll go bail on them. I've known Jackson on other voyages. I engaged 'em myself."

"Then who the devil engaged the others, I'd like to know?" asked Day, in his old irritable tone; at which, to the astonishment of all, a small voice broke the

silence.

"I did, sir."

We all wheeled round. It was Pye. The little man fixed his gold glasses on his nose with two fingers in his nervous way, and blinked through them at us, unruffled as a cock-sparrow that yet had doubts.

"He, by heaven!" whispered Legrand to me, with infinite scorn. "He chose 'em!"

"And I regret to find, sir," pursued Pye, "that some of them have gone wrong. I feel myself in a way responsible."

"It all comes of putting things in the hands of lawyers," said Lane, with innocent recklessness.

Day looked down his nose. "Well, Mr. Pye," he said drily, "we'll try to forgive you. You fell in with the wrong crowd. If I had known——" he paused. "The question is, how are we to get in touch with the faithful men who may be in the forecastle?"

"If you will allow me, sir, I will venture into the forecastle and find out," said Pye, with a restrained sense of importance.

"You!" cried Day in amazement, and there was a general burst of laughter, except on the part of the Prince, who was eyeing Pye severely, and on the part of myself, who did not see anything for ridicule in the unexpected courage of a timid man.

"I feel in a way responsible," repeated Pye; but his protest was feeble in effort, for Day put him curtly aside.

"I fear you will not do, sir," said he.

"But I will, captain," I called out. The Prince's eyes came over to me, leaving Pye. He nodded and addressed Day in an undertone.

"My dear sir, they've marked you out first and foremost," said Barraclough.

"I'll back the doctor," declared Lane excitedly.

"Oh, I go only in the mission of humanity," I replied. "McCrae may not be dead. No one knows. And, what's more, the mutineers have two or three cripples on their hands. They won't lay a hand on me at present."

"That's true, Dr. Phillimore," remarked Day. "Well, if you have weighed the risks I will not prevent you. It is essential we should know something more. It will come to blows again, and that without notice. Mr. Morland," he hesitated, "wishes me to express his thanks for your offer."

"In that case," said I, acknowledging the compliment with a bow, "I may as well take time by the forelock," and nodding to Legrand, I slipped out on the deck.

CHAPTER VIII

The Capture of the Bridge

I walked through the darkness to the head of the ladder, where Ellison was on watch.

"Any news?" I asked the quartermaster.

"No, sir; all quiet," he answered, and as I made to go down he cried out, "Where are you going, sir? Don't do that. You can't go there."

"It's all right," I answered. "Keep your eyes open. Nothing will happen to me. And don't be lured from the staircase, whatever occurs; and here, take my revolver. I'm on a mission of peace." I slipped down the ladder and found myself in the gloom of the orlop deck. A lantern was hanging in the shrouds and I had not reached it before I was challenged.

"It's the doctor, Gray," said I, recognising his voice, "and come no earlier than you want him, I'll wager. There's more than one of you has got his gruel, I'm thinking."

He came into the light. "Are you armed, doctor?" said he.

"You can feel," said I, and he clapped his hands down my pockets.

"Well, I don't know," he said, in a hesitating way. "It's true enough. Davenport's dead as mutton, and Stephenson and Coyne are down in their bunks. But it's Mr. Holgate commands here. I'll call him." He went forward and whistled, and presently two other men approached, one of whom I saw was Holgate by his rolling form.

"Glad to see you, doctor," he said cheerfully. "I was

hoping to be honoured by a visit, but, hang me! if I expected it. Come along now, and let's get some light on the case."

He led the way into the forecastle quarters, and emerged into the room in which the hands had their meals, which was lit by electricity, as were all the cabins and saloons of the *Sea Queen*.

"These digs are not what I'm accustomed to, doctor," he said, taking a seat. "I'm frank, you see; but of course I retire only to jump better. Isn't that how it goes? We jumped too soon, you see; and that was you. If it had not been for that fool Pierce! Twice the essential ass played into your hands. You were pretty smart, though I gave you a lead. There I was the fool."

"Well, Mr. Holgate, as between man and man, you were," I said.

He laughed. "Oh, it will work out all right, but it makes it bloody. Now, there was no need of blood in this little job, not if it had been rightly managed, and I'll take blame for that. No, you were my mistake."

He looked at me in his tense unblinking way, as if he would have torn out of me on that instant what I thought and what I really was.

"I shall not be your last," I said indifferently.

"Have a drink," he said. "We've got some good champagne, all under lock and key, you bet, my son. That's not going to be my mistake, at any rate. I've not lived forty years for nothing. I'm going to pull this off."

"Thank you," said I. "But it's business I've come on."

"Business and 'the boy' go together in the city, I've heard," he answered. "Well, is it terms you want?"

"Oh, dear, no," I replied. "Only an affair of mercy. You've got two wounded men, and there's McCrae."

He looked down for a moment. "McCrae was another mistake, but not mine," he said. "You can't do any good to McCrae. But you can see the others, if you will. Not that that's what you've come for. Shall I tell you what, doctor? You've come like the gentlemen who went to the Holy Land, and came back carrying grapes, eh? I remember the picture when I was a boy —a precious huge bunch, too. Well, you can have the grapes if you'll take 'em in a liquefied form, and carry them in your belly."

I rose. "I'll see these men," I said abruptly.

He led me to the bunks, and I examined the wounded men. One was beyond hope; the other was but slightly injured; and I told Holgate the truth. He nodded.

"I don't much want Coyne," he said musingly. "I've no use for him. He's a bungler."

The cold-blooded way in which he delivered this heartless criticism raised in me a feeling of nausea. I was moving away when he stopped me.

"Stay; you're not going back empty-handed, doctor, after all your kindness. Any one you'd like to see?"

I thought. "Yes," said I. "Naylor or Williams."

Holgate moved out, and lifted the hatch. "Naylor!" he called. "Granger, let Naylor up." He turned to me. "We don't starve 'em. It's pretty comfortable 'tween decks when you're used to it."

I made no reply, and presently a voice hailed us from below.

"Is that Naylor?" asked Holgate.

"Yes."

"Naylor, here is the doctor inquiring after your health. Any questions he puts to you you are at liberty to reply to."

He moved away whistling cheerfully, and I called out, "Naylor, I only want to know one thing. How many of you are there?"

"Six, sir," said the man.

"All under hatch?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well; keep up your hearts. This is not the end. Good-night."

I went to Holgate. "Really," said I lightly, "I find there are more honest men in this ship than I had anticipated."

I don't think he liked that. "You've got twelve," he said drily. "And there's more than thirty with us."

"You forget one thing," I said. "We have the wheel, and to-morrow you may find yourselves steaming cheerfully up the river to Buenos Ayres, like any

good liner."

"That would be a pity, wouldn't it?" he said with a grin. "But you also forget one thing doctor—that is, I've got the engines. Supposing those engines stopped?"

"Well, we can get a press of canvas on her," I suggested.

"Great heavens!" says he. "Can you? What are we doing?"

"I think," said I, "that we have a good marksman on board."

"You're right," he said savagely, "and, by thunder, I won't forgive him for that. I had meant—— By thunder, I'll play Old Harry and merry Hades to him for that. Lord, doctor!" he added with a sneer, "to think of you sucking up to a potty prince! or perhaps it's the ladies."

"Yes; I hope you remember the ladies," said I. "It's not too late, Holgate."

He was silent a moment. "I take no stock in women," he said at length. "They're nothing to me. Let the little innocent birds go free. I'll tell you what, doctor. I'll offer terms, and generous terms, considering I've got the trumps. I'll drop the whole pack of you at the mouth of the river, ladies and all, and add all personal possessions of every one save what's in the Prince's safes. Now that's fair. I'll make you ambassador. By gad, it will be the only chance you will ever have of being a prince's ambassador." He laughed.

"Holgate," said I, "I've met many generous men, but you appropriate the gingerbread, as you might say. Now I wish you good-night."

He advanced two steps towards me. "Doctor," said he gravely, "you've got to consider this. It's important. I'm not here to play marbles. It's a sure thing. I give you up there"—he made a movement of his thumb to the quarterdeck—"just this chance. Strike a bargain and I'll see you through. There's not a hap'orth of harm will come to any. Otherwise——" He shrugged his shoulders.

"Mr. Holgate," said I, "I will deal with you as frankly as you seem to desire. This spells for you, in my opinion one thing, and that's the dock."

"Oh, dear, no," he interrupted, smiling. "The men were discontented, despatched a deputation, and were fired on by the Prince. English juries don't like these arbitrary German military ways."

"You forget McCrae," said I.

"No, I don't. There was an accident in the engine-room, and the second engineer can bear witness to it, as well as some others. Oh, we stand very well, doctor."

Even as he spoke I saw a shadow steal out of the deeper darkness and draw to his side. I made it out for Pierce, the murderer. I will say that that interruption of the ruffianly boatswain turned unexpectedly the course of my blood. I had seemed somehow to have been dealing with Holgate, as a scoundrel, certainly, yet upon terms of fair warfare. But that shadow struck us all down to a lower level.

Murder had been committed, and here was the murderer. Without one word I turned and made my way towards the ladder communicating with the upper deck.

I had no good news to offer to my comrades; indeed, had I spoken quite what was in my thoughts, it was a black prospect with which I must present them. But I did not wish to increase the tension of the situation, and merely recounted the facts I had gathered.

"Thirty against twelve," mused Day, "and there are six true men in the hold. Three head men. We have opened well, gentlemen."

He looked round sarcastically as he spoke, but at once returned to his colder formal manner. "They have the engine-room and we the bridge. That means that their attack will be on the bridge."

"I have no doubt that is what they mean," I said.

"Very well, gentlemen," said Day. "We know exactly where we are now, thanks to Dr. Phillimore. You have your stations. I shall be obliged if you will take them. We are likely to have a lively night."

"And let me say, gentlemen," said the Prince, raising his voice, "that I do not conceive it possible that a pack of mutineers can secure the control of their ship from their officers. It is inconceivable, I repeat. I shall be at your disposal, captain," he turned to Day, "when it is necessary. I will take my share in the common danger and struggle."

There was a murmur of applause at this, and we dispersed to our quarters. Legrand had the bridge,

and the man at the wheel was turning the spokes as calmly as if there had been no such thing as an alarm or a rising. Down below all was quiet, and the engines were moving slowly. It was now about one in the morning, and on our beams the wind was rising. The yacht was making about eight knots and no more, and we were still a day's steam from Buenos Ayres. I paced the deck in cover of the chart-house for an hour or more in a condition of nervous impatience. Holgate, I knew, would move deliberately, but when he moved this time he would strike hard.

It was towards the dawn that, stopping in my walk, I listened, and heard amid the whistling of the wind and the wash of the water a little mutter of sound somewhere in the disintegrating darkness below. I called to Legrand under my breath, and I heard his "hist." He was at attention, his ears straining in the wind to get news of what was passing. Then there was a shot, and the noise of a *mêlée* at the ladder. Oaths and shouts and the reports of revolvers echoed from the wooden walls.

"Can you see, Phillimore?" screamed Legrand against the wind.

"They are attacking the gangway," I shouted back. One of the two men who stood armed near me rushed forward.

"Go back, go back," thundered Legrand from the bridge. "Go to your post."

I was aware that the Prince had come out on the hurricane deck, which was on the level of the bridge,

and as I peered into the gloom, suddenly a shout from the second man in my neighbourhood made me wheel sharply about. I turned in time to see him fire at some figures that came over the port side of the yacht. Immediately I guessed that this was the real attack, and that the assault on the ladder was but a diversion, I ran forward, calling to Legrand, I found Barraclough on the other side of the deck-houses, using a cutlass, and I moved to his assistance. Three men had reached the deck, and a fourth was clambering over. The seaman who had called out fired wide, and the next moment went down under a heavy blow from the figure in front. I discharged a shot, but missed the man as he made his rush. Barraclough simultaneously gave way, and I saw him being pushed backwards against the side of the saloon. I fired again at one of his assailants, who fell away with a curse, and just then the first flush of the coming dawn moved over the waters, and shed a little light on the scene. It disclosed the burly form of Holgate in grips with Legrand, who had descended from the bridge, and Barraclough still struggling with his opponent. I had just time to make this out when one of the mutineers struck at me with a heavy bar, and the blow, owing to a movement on my part, fell on my right arm and paralysed it. He raised his weapon again while I fumbled to get the revolver out of my useless hand into my left, when Day suddenly emerged from somewhere with a levelled pistol. My antagonist dropped like a log. Day fired again, and then with an oath Holgate threw the second officer heavily to the deck, and pointed a revolver. There was a pause of two seconds, then a report, and Day slipped, moved his arms helplessly, and slid along the deck. A shout now came from the other side of

the ship where the struggle at the gangway had been going on; and in a moment a stampede was upon us.

I was forced back by sheer weight of numbers to the head of the companion-way, using my weapon with some wildness, for all was passing before me in confusion. I had received a hard crack on the head and scarcely knew what I was doing, but was merely sustained in my resistance by a sense of continuity, inherited, as it were, from the earlier part of the struggle. Somehow I found myself in the shelter of the corridor that led to the apartments of the Prince, his sister and his guest, and, for some reason I could not with my dizzy head conjecture, I was alone. I looked down the corridor, which was in gentle light, but saw nothing; it was as silent as though it had been plunged in the profound peace and slumber of the night. Without, the racket of noises reached me as in a dream, and I remember that I sat down on a couch in the corridor, my empty revolver in my hand.

What ensued or how long I sat there I do not know; but I think it could not have been very long. I was aroused by a voice, and looked up stupidly. A face floated in the mists before me, and I nodded in a friendly way, smiling, and opened my mouth to speak. Instead I lurched forward and was conscious of warm arms, the soft pressure of a human body, and the fragrance of a dress. There was a time when I seemed to sway alone in a cold and dreary vacancy, but soon there returned to my senses the warmth and the fragrance and the ineffable comfort of some presence. Some liquid was forced between my lips, and I drank; and as I drank my brain cleared, and I

looked and was aware who was supporting me with her arm. It was Princess Alix.

"Madam——" I began stuttering.

"Hush! Drink this," she said quickly. "We have need of you. We cannot spare a man like you. You have no dangerous wound?"

"I think not," I said with difficulty. "A blow on the head——"

My hand went feebly to it as I spoke, and came away with a patch of red. I rose and totteringly picked up my revolver, which had fallen. "What has happened?"

She shook her head. "I was up in the hurricane-deck, but my brother sent me down. There is nothing to be heard. I was going out when I found you here."

"It is good of you," I said vaguely. "Let us go out, then. Take this weapon."

"I have one," said she quickly.

I nodded. "Brave girl!" said I gravely. "Brave heart, as brave as beautiful!" I felt vaguely I was paying her a necessary compliment, but that was all. Yet the corridor was clearing before me now, and the light of dawn was filtering through the curtained windows.

Princess Alix had turned to the door which gave on the deck.

"If they have won," she said suddenly in a low voice, "why have they not come here?"

I shook my head. "They do not want the saloon. They want other things," said I. "They want the strongrooms."

"Then are they——?" she began.

"I cannot tell," said I. "I will go out."

"No," she said imperatively. "Wait." Of a sudden a voice was raised in a scream from the farther end of the corridor. "It is Mademoiselle," said she, with a little frown. "She is impatient of my return. I must go back."

She glided off swiftly, and I stood by the door waiting for some moments. As she did not return, I opened it softly, and the strong wind off the morning sea took me in the face, refreshing me. I stepped out upon the deck. The sky was as grey as the sea, and the silhouette of the spars and funnel was ghost-like. The *Sea Queen* thundered on her course, heeling to the broad wash of the water. As I stood watching, my ears alert for any sound that would give me information, I saw a figure detach itself from the bulwarks and move uncertainly about, and as it drew near I discovered it was Pye's. His face was of a colour with the gray steel of his revolver, which he held loosely, as if he was not aware he held it.

"Oh, my God!" he said in a hoarse whisper. "Oh, my God! I didn't know it was like this. Oh, my God!"

"Pye!" I called softly; and he started and dropped his pistol.

"Pick it up, man, and keep silence," I whispered. "Come this way." I took his arm and stealthily

withdrew him into the corridor. "What has happened?"

He gazed at me wildly. "They've got the ship," he said with a whisper. "Oh, I didn't know it would be like this."

I gave him a dose of the brandy which the Princess had brought for me, and it seemed to pull him together. He blinked at me through his glasses, and eyed me with some terror and distrust.

"Do you know how things stand?" I asked.

He shook his head. "The captain's killed," he said falteringly. "I don't know about the others."

"We've got to find out," I said, and thought. Then, for I saw he would be of little use to me in his present state, I said, "Look here, Pye, I'm going to explore, while you keep this door. Mind you let no one in. We'll bolt it, see."

I did so as I spoke, and turning found the Princess coming down the corridor. I explained to her the situation, and added that Pye would be placed on guard. She cast a glance at him, and looked at me inquiringly.

"I'm going down to the saloon below," I said. "This set of cabins is isolated, except for the doors at each end to the deck and the door that gives on the staircase to the saloon. Can I depend on you to hold out for five minutes? A shout will bring me up at a moment's notice."

"Yes," she said breathlessly.

I opened the second door that admitted to the staircase and glanced down. No one was visible, and no sound was audible. I turned, nodded reassuringly to the Princess, and descended. The saloon was empty, and there were no signs of any struggle. I passed along the passage towards the officers' quarters, but everything was in order; and finally retraced my way towards the kitchens, which abutted on the engine-room, but were separated from it by a thick partition of steel and wood. As I went, the yacht rolled and sent me against a closed door with a heavy bump. From within issued a sound, subdued but unmistakable as that of a human voice. I reflected that the mutineers would not be here, for it was evident that the door was locked, and no mutineer would secure himself in a cabin in the midst of his triumph. I rapped loudly on the door and called out:

"It's Phillimore. Who is in here?"

After a pause I heard the bolt go back and the door opened a little, disclosing the face of Lane.

"You, doctor?" he said. "Thank the Lord we're not all done yet." He flung the door wide, and I could see now that his companion was the head steward.

"Where's the Prince?" I asked anxiously.

"I don't know," he said, heaving a big sigh. "Thank the Lord there's some one else alive. I was forced down the companion and fell. Lost my weapon, too, or I'd 'a' showed more fight. Great Scott, I rolled all the way down, not before I'd done for one or two, I tell you."

"Well, you're wanted upstairs now," said I, "both of you. We've got the ladies on our hands, and we've got to find out where the Prince is. Day is dead."

Lane whistled. "Poor beggar!" he observed. "But Jackson must stay here. This is our magazine, my boy—where the grub is. If we've got to stand a siege we've got to seize the grub-chest. The storage chamber's along here."

The advice seemed excellent. "Yes," I answered, "that is true. Well, let Jackson wait here and lie low. He won't be discovered here."

"I dare say the cook's somewhere hidden about here, sir," observed Jackson.

"All the better. Find him if you can. And remember that, if we pull through, this means a big business for you, Jackson, and cook, too."

"Yes, sir," he assented mildly.

"Now, then, Lane," I went on, and the purser followed me into the saloon. We mounted the staircase, and I took the chance of closing the doors at the head that gave access to the deck. Then I rapped on the door that gave on the Prince's corridor. It was opened by the Princess eagerly.

"We are two more, Miss Morland," I said cheerfully, "and here is one of them."

"But my brother!" she cried out.

"I've not discovered his whereabouts yet," I said evasively.

"Do you think that he's——" She did not finish.

"Not a bit of it," I said, as decidedly as I could, for, to tell the truth, I had my grave doubts. "I have unearthed Mr. Lane and the steward. Why shouldn't I unearth Mr. Morland, too?"

Yet, if the others were alive, why was the yacht so quiet?

She sighed, and then looked over at the couch on which Pye sat huddled. "That man's no use," she said contemptuously. "He's been doing nothing but drink brandy."

Lane crossed over to him. "The beggar's drunk," said he in disdain.

"Then you must hold one door and Miss Morland the other," said I.

"But you——" She paused.

"I am going on another expedition. You must let me out and in. Two knocks will warn you."

So saying, I slipped the bolt and got out on deck. From the appearance of the sky I judged that it was only half an hour since I had found myself in the corridor. It was light enough to make out things fairly well, and now I could discern on the bridge the portly form of Holgate struck with this light. The figure of a man was visible a little in front of me by the chart-house. I heard Holgate's voice raised wheezily in orders, and the replies of the men came back to me inarticulately. As I crouched under the shelter of the cabins on the lee side I became aware

of a faint but continuous line just over the bulwarks, and then the explanation of the mysterious silence on the yacht dawned on me. It was the coast line, from which we could not be more than a couple of miles away, and in the confusion of the fight, no doubt, the *Sea Queen* had lost her course and been driven inshore. It had, therefore, become imperative for Holgate to devote his attention and the activities of his men to the danger that threatened, more particularly as the heavy wind had threshed itself into a gale abeam.

Now at this juncture I must confess that I was entirely at a loss. I could not move a foot across the deck without being discovered, since it was merely the fact that I was in the lee of the cabins and in the deeper shadows of the dawn that enabled me to skulk where I was. Yet I was reluctant to go back without having carried the search a stage further. It was obvious from the calm which reigned among the mutineers that the Prince and his following were either dead or prisoners. Which had been their fate? The shadow of the man in front of me, scarcely a dozen paces away, turned and stopped and seemed to put his ear to the woodwork. It must be (I reflected) the chart-house door by which he stood. What was he listening for? Was it possible that some of our men were shut up in the chart-house? I shuffled a step or two nearer and watched him. He was fully armed, for I could make out a weapon in his hand, and he had something by his side, probably a cutlass. It was probable that he was placed guard over the prisoners. I drew two steps closer still. Holgate's voice still painfully dominated the wind and water, and I ventured yet a pace nearer. Did he

turn now the man must see me, for I was in the gray light of the dawn, a deeper shadow than the wooden walls by which I lurked. My hands twitched, and I almost seemed to have sprung before I did spring. Then I knew I was on his back and had a leg twisted about his legs. He fell heavily, and I thrust a hand across his mouth. He struggled hard, writhing upon the deck under the weight of my body like a snake, and a choking sputter issued from his throat. Hastily I dragged a handkerchief from my pocket and pushed it into his mouth. The struggling increased. I glanced up and found that we had fallen under the door of the chart-house; also in that same glance I observed that the key was in it. No doubt it had been turned on the outside. I reached up a hand, but missed the key by a few inches. The endeavour had loosened my hold of my prisoner, and I was flung against the door with a thud; but I hurled myself upon him again just in time to prevent him from withdrawing the gag. In the struggle which ensued I managed to push him a little closer under the door, and then, with a desperate effort, stretched out and turned the key. I was fumbling for the handle when the man once again evicted me from the possession of his body, and I fell in a heap, jamming the door, which opened outwards. But on that I was aware that my back was being jarred and scored, and the next instant I was tumbled over at the foot of the mutineer, who had got on his legs at last. The door was thrust open with a noise, and men issued from it, stepping over my body.

"It is I—Phillimore," I gasped. "Run for the cabins."

Some one helped me to my feet, and I saw the

mutineer drop with a sword point through him; and then we ran, I between two of the others, one of whom I was conscious was Ellison. A shout sailed down to us from the bridge, and there was the noise of a revolver shot, but luckily it missed us, and we gained the companion-way in safety, locked and barred the door, and knocked on the entrance to the corridor. Lane opened it.

"His Royal Highness, by gum!" he cried excitedly, and for the first time I was able to recognise my companions. The Prince was there, safe and scathless, and with him Barraclough, Ellison, and a fourth man, who was Grant.

Princess Alix rushed on her brother, and was taken to his arms. He kissed her affectionately.

"Yvonne?" he said.

"She is safe," said the Princess, withdrawing herself. "She it safe, dear, but frightened."

She spoke in German, and he nodded.

"Ah, she would be frightened. It is no woman's work this, Alix. We must be tender with her."

"We have done our best," she replied, I thought a little coldly; and at that a door down the corridor opened, and Mademoiselle herself appeared.

"Frederic!" she cried ecstatically, and hastened towards us with graceful movements. "Ah, Frederic, it is cruel to leave me so. I wish I were back in Paris. Oh, *mon Dieu!* what a voyage, what a ship!"

As they embraced I turned my head away, for this

reunion of lovers was no sight for public eyes, and as I did so I swept the Princess in my vision. Her face had fallen dead and chill, and I thought that a little curl of her lips betrayed some impatience with these demonstrations. Meanwhile Barraclough was narrating in his deliberate way the adventures of the party; but I cut him short, only asking one question:

"Where is Legrand?"

"They took him up and carried him forward, but I couldn't say if he were dead."

"We have no time to lose," I said. "They may attack at any moment, and we have too much space to defend for comfort."

"Why, we can manage this well enough," said he easily.

"And be starved," said I. "No; we must keep the access to the saloon and the kitchens, and that means precautions. Look at the windows through which we may be approached."

"Dr. Phillimore is right," said the Prince in his deep voice. "We must guard the windows."

"We must close them," said I. "Grant, you can use tools. Ellison, you and Grant do what you can. There is plenty of woodwork to draw on—doors and trappings in the cabins. The portholes are useless to the mutineers, but they can enter by the skylights or the windows. They must be all barred. We are in a state of siege."

"You hear your orders," said the Prince in his

imperious voice. "The doctor speaks sense. See that it is done."

Barraclough and Lane and the Prince himself were left on guard, and the rest of us sallied down to hunt for tools and timber to carry out this primitive fortification. In this we had the assistance of the steward, Jackson, and the cook, who had been discovered in one of his pantries. The work took us a full hour or more, but at last it was decently accomplished. The windows of the saloon and music-room that gave on the deck were shuttered, as also the windows of the cabins. Nothing but the skylights remained unprotected, and these we could trust ourselves to guard. I reckoned that we were in a position to stand a siege indefinitely, unless something untoward occurred. The fortifications completed, we stationed our guards, two in the corridor, two in the saloon, and sat down at last, wearied out with the fatigue of that abominable night.

CHAPTER IX

The Flag of Truce

We were not interrupted during all this time, and from the sound of the screw we could tell that the

yacht was still ploughing her way, but clearly it was not now for Buenos Ayres. At six we took some food prepared by the cook, and considered the position with more equanimity. Counting the cook, who had not been reckoned in our previous numbering, we were now reduced to a party of ten men, if Pye could be accounted a man after his cowardly behaviour. There were six sailors in the hold at present useless, and the mutineers, even after their losses, were not far short of thirty. Of Legrand we knew nothing, but could only hope for the best. So long as we could hold the saloon we had plenty of food and water, and our stock of ammunition was ample. The outlook did not appear so bad. Only on the other side we had to remember that Holgate had the ship and could go whither he wished. Even if coal failed him he had the auxiliary power of the sails. Our main hope was to hold out until his provisions should be exhausted and he should be obliged to put into some port. Then would come the hour of reckoning, for we were probably better supplied with provisions than was the forecastle.

The ladies breakfasted in their cabins, but the Prince was present at our common table, showing a right democratic attitude.

"We are all in a common peril, gentlemen," he said with spirit. "We must not make differences. But there must be discipline," he added.

There was, therefore, a certain *camaraderie* reigning which had been foreign to the yacht before, and Lane gave way to his native garrulity, enlivening the table by some anecdotes, at which even Barraclough condescended to smile.

"My hat!" cried the purser suddenly, slapping his flank. "They've not got what they fought for, and we've none of us thought of it."

There was a pause. It was true, none of us had thought of it; we had been too busy thinking of other things.

"Are you sure?" said I.

Lane rose. "Let's go and see," said he. "But I've all the keys, and I'll swear no one came down in the neighbourhood of the strong-room while I was there."

We trooped down, Prince and all, and it was as the purser had said. The safes were untouched. Barraclough elevated his eyebrows.

"The fools!" he commented.

"Well, it doesn't seem to me quite that," said I slowly. "It only looks as if Holgate was certain."

"What do you mean?" he asked, and they all looked at me.

"Why, if he did not take the trouble to touch this, he cannot be in a hurry. I never came upon a man with a cooler head. He's not in a hurry, that's a fact. It's been deliberate all through, from the very moment we left the Thames."

We looked at each other now. "Jerusalem!" said Lane. "What a savage! He's made sure of us, then."

"He can wait his time," I said. "He has waited, and can wait longer. The ship's in his hands."

"You take a gloomy view, sir," observed the Prince with a frown.

"Well, Mr. Morland," I replied drily. "I don't think we're here to glaze matters over. We've got to face things, and one of these things is that Holgate hasn't worried us since he got possession. How are you going to account for that, save on my hypothesis?"

"They shall be hanged—every one," he exclaimed angrily, the German accent emerging roughly now.

"Well, we'll do our best, sir," I replied lightly.

I shut the strong-room door, and Lane locked it; and, as I turned, I saw the white face of Pye in the background. He had been missing from breakfast, and he looked very sickly, very pale, and very much abashed. The Prince noticed him, too, and addressed him sharply.

"Why are you here, sir? What do you mean by leaving your quarters? I will have discipline kept on this ship."

"I have no quarters," pleaded Pye humbly. "I was feeling sick, and lay down in my bunk."

"You shall get to your quarters now, sir," declared the Prince severely. "Sir John, order this man to his post."

The little man was so downcast, and was obviously so unwell, that I took pity on him, and cheered him as he went upstairs.

"Never mind, Pye," I said. "We'll pull through."

He shook his head. "Ah, it isn't that," he said. "But I disgraced myself, doctor. I'm not built that way. It was awful—awful." He shuddered.

"Yes, we'll get our little tum-tums full of it now, I guess," remarked Lane cheerfully. "You freeze on to your barker, boy. You'll need it before we fetch up at Albert Docks again. It's Execution Docks for some of us, I'll lay. Have a cigar, doctor?"

I accepted, but Pye refused, turning a sallow hue. His nerves had not yet recovered, and he had certainly drunk a good deal of brandy. Ellison and Jackson were on watch below, and when we reached the corridor Grant signalled us in a whisper from his peep-hole.

"Some one coming along this way, sir."

Barraclough sprang to his side. "By Heaven, it's Holgate, damn him," he said, "with a flag of truce."

"Open that door," said the Prince evenly.

Grant turned the key and drew the bolt, and the door fell ajar. Holgate's big form was stationed before it, and he waved a flag.

"A truce, gentlemen," he said wheezily.

I looked at the Prince and Barraclough for the answer, and to my amazement saw that the former had his revolver at the level. His finger was on the trigger. I leaped forward and struck it up, and the bullet buried itself in the walls of the cabin.

"What do you mean, sir?" he thundered, turning on me savagely. "How dare you?"

"Mr. Morland," said I. "You spoke of discipline a little ago. Well, how do you keep it?"

"This is my ship," he said furiously.

"Yes," said I, "and it is in the charge of Sir John Barraclough here, who will tell you, perhaps, that it is against the laws of equity, not to say common sense, to fire on a flag of truce."

Sir John looked uneasy. "The doctor is right, sir," he said. "We ought to hear what he's got to say."

"He is a villainous murderer. I will see that they are hanged," said the Prince, with a scowl at me. But he let his arm fall. Behind him I could see the Princess, but her face was averted.

Holgate's figure blocked the doorway. "If I may come in," he said smoothly, "and you're quite done with your pistol practice, gentlemen, I should like to make a proposal to you."

"It shall be unconditional surrender, Sir John Barraclough," said the Prince morosely; "I will have no other terms."

"You may come in," said Barraclough shortly.

Holgate edged himself through. "I claim the protection of this flag," said he flatly, and looked about him. "I hope my men haven't knocked you about too much. Doctor, my respects to you. You've got a head on you."

"Come to business, sir," said Barraclough harshly.

"Sir John, I've saved your ship, and I hope you'll lay

that to my credit," said Holgate in his leisurely voice. "I found her drifting on a lee shore when I took charge, and, by thunder, she'd have floundered in another half-hour. So whatever you set on one side of the ledger, there's that lump on the other."

"We're not here to talk about these matters," said Barraclough sternly.

"Excuse me, Sir John, we are," said Holgate sweetly. "We're just on that and nothing else. It's pretty clear how you stand, but if you like I'll rehearse the situation. And I want you to understand where *I* stand. See? I don't think that's so clear to you; and I want ventilation. This is a duffing game for his Royal Highness there. He stands to make nothing out of it, as things go, and there's precious little in it for any of you. Here you are prisoners in these palatial rooms, outnumbered by more than two to one, and not a man of his hands among you, if I except the doctor. Well, you can hold out, I daresay. I know all about that. You've got a call on the food cupboard, and you're welcome to it. But I've got the yacht, and she'll canter under my hands, not Sir John's. Don't you make any mistake. You're not in a first-class position, gentlemen."

"You're a long time coming to the point," said Barraclough with exemplary curtness. "We have no time to waste."

"Well, gentlemen, I'm willing to make a deal—that's the short of it—a deal that will suit both parties. That's the pith of the situation."

He gazed from one to another of us unembarrassed,

and even with an expression of amiable cheerfulness. "And my proposal's this——"

"Unconditional surrender," broke in the Prince's harsh voice.

"That so?" says Holgate without concern, directing a glance at the speaker. "I guess, Mr. Morland, you're in this for more than your health. So am I. But I should like to know before starting whom I've got to deal with, just by way of encouragement, so to say." He paused. "I don't want to pry into any secrets, but it would suit me better if I knew whom to address. Owing to the unfortunate decease of the late Captain Day——"

"You infernal ruffian; you murderer!" broke fiercely out of Lane's throat. "You'll hang yet, by heaven, or I'll eat my hat."

Holgate turned his heavy face and still sombre eyes upon the purser, but said nothing nor otherwise remarked his outburst. It was Barraclough who spoke:

"Excuse me, Mr. Lane, this is my affair, not yours," he said abruptly. "Go on, sir," to Holgate.

"I can wait, of course," said the mutineer with cool irony. "There isn't much hurry about the matter now the ship lays her course. But I should prefer a business deal with business people, and I take it that that means with you, Sir John."

Barraclough nodded. "You may address me," he said. "And you will get your answer from me."

"That's all right, then. And having settled so much, this is what I've got to lay before you," proceeded Holgate placidly, breathing out his words. "There's been a certain amount of pawn-taking in this game, and we've both got to pass it over if we're coming to business. Now you know what I want, and by this time you pretty well ought to know what you want also. You're in a tight fix. Well, if you'll hand over the contents of the strong-room we'll get out a proper contract, as thus: self to take the said contents, agreeing therewith to allow his Royal Highness, or Mr. Morland (which you will), a moiety of the same, provided that the party be landed at a suitable place not more than ten miles from a civilised town, and provided always that no more be heard of the steps leading up to this contract."

He came to a pause, and eyed us, with a gaze divested of any eagerness, even of any significance. The Prince uttered a loud laugh, but Barraclough, as became his position, kept his expression. I was a little out of the group, and I could pick out the faces of the company. The Princess had moved forward and leaned now with her chin on her open palm, and one foot upon the settee near the door. She was frankly staring at the mutineer who made these astounding proposals. The Prince and Barraclough conferred in whispers, and presently the latter resumed his position.

"If you want the contents of the strong-room," he said, "it is suggested that you had better come and take them."

Holgate's eyebrows went up. "Well, I could do that, of course," he said slowly. "Don't suppose I've

overlooked that solution of the little problem. But I'm dealing with you squarely when I say I'd rather not. For why? Because I don't want any further mess. We've slopped about enough for the present, and I should say you gentlemen know it."

He paused again, as if to give us an opportunity of revising our decision, and once more the Prince and Sir John interchanged whispers. Barraclough shook his head vigorously, and a frown gathered on his features. In the fine light of the skylights Princess Alix's silhouette stood out, and the soft hair on her forehead was ruffled by the breeze. She was still gazing at Holgate. His bull-neck turned and he faced towards her, and their glances met. Neither gave way nor winced before the salvos of the other, and I had the odd thought that some strange duel was in progress, in which the antagonists were that fair woman and that villainous, gross man. Holgate's eyes shifted only when Barraclough spoke next.

"If you leave the yacht at the next port or place of call we shall be powerless to prevent you and the men under you," said Barraclough in a dry, formal voice. "But the mutiny will be, of course, reported to the British Consul at the most accessible port."

"That's a compromise, I reckon," observed Holgate with a grin, which showed his fang. "That's owner and first officer commanding rolled into one and halved, or I'm Dutch. Well, I'll let it go; but I've offered fair terms. And I'll tell you frankly that I wouldn't even have offered those had it not been for the doctor." He shook his head, wagging it at me. "Oh, doctor, doctor, to think what I lost in you! Why, we could have taken our time over the strong-room,

barring your little intervention. You're a real daisy, and I won't forget it. But now it's in the hands of Providence. It's war. Sir John, I congratulate the double-barrelled leaders. There's two captains here, and that's one too many. I only allow one in my quarters. All right, gentlemen." He took up his flag and waddled towards the door. "Good-morning. I've done what I could. Don't blame me."

On the threshold he paused, and his glance marched deliberately over us all, landing at last upon the Princess. "May the Lord help you," says he in his voice of suet. "May the Lord be merciful to you—all!"

The door went behind him with a snap. I turned almost unconsciously in that direction in which the last shafts of his eyes had flown. The accent on the "all" had been perceptible. Princess Alix had lifted her chin from her hand and set down her foot. She held on to the arm of the settee, and I could perceive her trembling. Her face had gone white like paper, and she stared at the closed door. I moved quickly towards her, for I was a doctor, if I had no other right there. My arrival broke upon her thought; she started, and the colour flowed back slowly into her face.

"That man is the most awful man I have ever seen," she said with a shudder.

"He is not so awful as he thinks," I said encouragingly.

She shook her head, and moved away. I followed her. "If I might suggest, I would advise you to take a rest," I said. "You have had a most trying night."

"Yes—I will rest," she returned with a sigh; and then, as we walked down the corridor together, "I thought you were right when you spoke to—to my brother in regard to the revolver; but now I don't know. I think anything that would rid the world of such a monster is justifiable."

"Perhaps," I replied. "But he is making war, and we are on terms of war, and more or less bound by them. At least, that is one's general notion. But who can tell? The ethical boundaries, and the borders of honour, are indefinable and intangible."

"I think I would have shot him myself," she said vehemently.

"I hope we shall hang him yet," I answered.

She looked at me out of her blue lustrous eyes, as if deliberating.

"We depend a good deal on you, Dr. Phillimore," she said next.

"We are all dependent on one another," said I.

"Do you suppose that man meant what he said?" she asked.

"No," I said. "I would distrust every statement of his. I can't determine what was in his mind or what he is aiming at. But this I know, that to make a compact with him would be to be at his mercy. He is ruthless; he would not consider what blood he shed; and, besides, he has committed himself too deeply, and is no fool to ignore that."

She sighed again. "I am glad," she murmured. "I

thought perhaps that it would be wise. But my brother would never consent. Only I was afraid. But I am glad it would have been of no use. That makes only one course possible."

"Only one," I said gravely. We came to a pause by the door of the cabin. "I think I had better see to Mademoiselle," I said, "in case of emergencies."

"Yes, please," she said with a start, and opened the door of the *boudoir*.

Mademoiselle, clad in a wonderful dishabille, was seated under the electric light, engaged in a game of dominoes with her maid, and just threw a glance at us as we entered.

"There ... *tenez ... là, là* ..." she said excitedly, and marked her board and scrambled up the dominoes in a heap.

"Juliette has won never," she cried in her broken English. "I have won three times. Where is Frederic, *ma cherie*? He is not fighting? *Non?*"

"There is no fighting now, Yvonne," replied the Princess with admirable restraint, as seemed to me. "Frederic is well."

"Oh, but the noise in the night," she rattled on in her own tongue. "It was dreadful. I could not sleep for the guns. It was abominable to mutiny. Ah, it is the doctor. Pardon, this light is not good, and they have boarded up the windows. We must live in darkness," she added peevishly. "But how are you, doctor? You have not been to cheer us lately. It is a dull ship."

"Why, we consider it pretty lively, Mademoiselle," I answered lightly. "It keeps us occupied."

"Ah, yes," she laughed. "But that is over now, and you will only have to dispose of the prisoners, to guillotine? ... No, to hang?"

"It is we who are prisoners," said the Princess abruptly.

Mademoiselle stared. "*Mon Dieu!* Prisoners! Oh, but it is not so, Alix. Juliette, shuffle, or I will box your ears, silly... Whose prisoners are we?"

"The anterooms, Mademoiselle, are cut off from the rest of the ship," I explained. "Are you prepared to stand a siege?"

"Oh, but we have gallant defenders enough," she said with her pretty laugh. "I am not afraid. It will be experience. Juliette, open, open, stupid. Do not stare at Monsieur like a pig. Play."

I passed on, the Princess following me. "When I left her she was in tears," she said in a low voice.

"She may be in tears again," I said. "But at present she wants no help from me. She suffices entirely for herself."

Our eyes encountered, and I am sure of what I saw in hers; if we met on no other ground we met on a curious understanding of Mademoiselle. I took my leave ceremoniously.

CHAPTER X

Legrand's Wink

As I went down the corridor the figure of little Pye sprang out upon me from somewhere.

"Doctor," he said in a piteous voice. I stayed. "Doctor, I'm very ill. I'm just awful."

I looked at him closely. The flesh under his eyes was blue; the eyes themselves were bloodshot, and his hands shook. I felt his pulse, and it was racing.

"You're in a blue funk, Pye," said I severely.

He groaned. "Anything. I'll admit anything, doctor. But for heaven's sake let me go down to my bunk. I'll pull together there, I'll swear it."

"You'll go down and drink too much," I said.

"Not if you'll give me something. There must be lots of things," he pleaded. "I've never seen—I'm not fitted for this. Oh, doctor, I've only lived in a street before, a suburb, Tulse Hill. Think of that."

His voice cracked, and with the ghost of his favourite trick his fingers quavered with the glasses on his nose. I took a pity for the creature, a pity in which there was naturally some disgust.

"Very well," I said. "Go down, and I'll make it all right. I'll pay you a visit later."

He thanked me and scuttled away like a rabbit, and I

sought Barraclough and explained.

"Ill?" said he. "Well, if he's ill——"

"He's ill enough to count," I said. "He's in a dead funk, and about as much use as a radish."

Barraclough's nose wrinkled in smiling contempt.

"Better make him steward and promote Jackson," he said. "He's part of a man, at any rate. They'll be on us before we know where we are."

"Do you think so?" I asked. "Well, to say the truth, Holgate puzzles me. Why did he make that offer?"

"Because he'll find it infernally difficult to get in here," said Barraclough easily. "Because it's a frontal attack all the way and a costly business. If it's a case of half the party going to glory they'll look out for a cheaper way first. That's why."

"You may be right," I answered. "But Holgate isn't exactly particular, and anyway I want to find out."

"Find out?" he echoed in surprise.

"Well, Holgate used a flag. Why shouldn't I in my turn?" I asked.

He screwed up his mouth. "Well, I don't know," said he. "I won't say you nay, but—look here, there's risk, Phillimore. You say Holgate isn't particular. To put it plain, he's a black-hearted swine."

"You couldn't put it too plain," I replied. "But I have my notion, and I may not be wrong. He's black enough, God knows, but I think I've gauged him a

little. Why didn't he push the assault? Why doesn't he now? No, Holgate's not all plain and easy. It's not like reading print. I'm hanged if I know what he's up to, but whatever it is, it's bad. And somehow I feel my way along this, and I don't think he'll do any harm at present. Call it faith—call it instinct—call it superstition if you will."

He bit his moustache doubtfully. "You're on duty in an hour," he objected.

"I'll be back before," I answered. "And another thing, Barraclough, there's Legrand.... Oh, they'll want a doctor."

"That's true. Well, God bless you," said he, placidly yielding, and unlocked the door. I had provided myself with a flag, and now emerged upon the deck clasping it in one hand.

I walked past the barred windows of the music-room and saloon, and past the smoking-room beyond, until I was level with the chart-house. I was on the windward side of the yacht, and she was heeling gently as she ran down the coastline under a full head of steam. Above me I could discern also the white spread of her wings, and from the look of the long white water that leaped and fell off her sides in a welter I guessed that we must be footing it to a pretty tune. If poor McCrae had been right in estimating her rate at eighteen knots, she could not be making much less than sixteen now.

The sails were full of noise, and the wind rattled and sang in the ventilators. The first sight that struck me as I came back square with the bridge was a man

swinging in a travelling-cradle and leisurely painting the funnel. It seemed so peaceful an occupation, and so strangely out of accord with those terrible transactions of the night, that I stared in wonder. Then my eyes went to the bridge and marked something more in keeping with the situation, for the bridge had been boarded about in the rear and sides with a wall of timber, so that the helmsman and the man in charge, Holgate or another, were invisible from the deck below, as also from the hurricane-deck. I suppose that this structure had been put together in memory of the Prince's prowess, and of his ruthless performances from the hurricane-deck.

I advanced to the end of the deck and hailed the forecastle, waving my flag.

"Is Mr. Holgate there?" I called out. "I wish to see him," and again I waved my flag.

A man came into the open on the deck below and stared up at me, and presently after he was joined by another whom I recognised as Gray. They exchanged words, and I knew also from a sound overhead that some one was peering at me from the bridge. Once more I called out for Holgate, brandishing my flag vigorously: and then I heard Holgate's voice below.

"Hold on, doctor!"

He emerged into my line of vision and with him was Pierce, his lank red face upturned to me, his lower jaw in its socket. Gray gesticulated, indicating me, and Holgate stood passively looking at me. Suddenly the ex-boatswain put his hand in his pocket, pulled out a revolver and presented at me. It was the work

of a moment. Holgate struck his arm up, and the bullet whizzed past me and banged into the chart-house.

"Steady there, doctor," said Holgate. "Glad to see you. Just in time, wasn't I? Step along down there." I moved towards the ladder and descended to the lower deck, where Holgate met me.

"Difficult to keep our respective men in hand, isn't it, doctor?" he said with a quizzical look. "But I won't have any firing on a flag of truce any more than you. You and I keep to the code of honour."

I could have sworn that the piece of comedy which had just been performed had been his. I knew for certain now that it was his jest, this crude and savage joke that was on the margin of tragedy, and might have gone over the border. But what would he care, this infamous man of astute intelligence, cold, cunning, and ruthless determination? His eyes twinkled, and he laughed now so as to disclose his abominable fang.

"We are now quits, eh, doctor?" he said. "His Royal Highness would have had me but for you, and now Pierce yonder would have potted you but for me. I like honourable warfare," he chuckled.

"Well," said I cheerfully, for I was resolved to take him in his own way, "then the Prince's offence is wiped out. He is forgiven."

"Oh, there's nothing to forgive about the Prince," says Holgate indifferently. "I don't want him. I want his safe. What's a Prince or two?" He looked at me narrowly. "Shall we get to business? Changed your

minds?"

"There's not the slightest chance of that," I answered. "You may set that on record."

"Say, I will," said he, unexpectedly turning, and called out, "Pierce, Gray, come here. Just listen to the whoop our cockerels give up there. Now, doctor, spit it out."

"I have nothing to add to my statement that there is no chance of any terms," I said sharply.

"Think of that," observed Holgate to the others. "They don't know what's good for them. Well, let 'em alone, doctor. Let 'em stew in their juice. They'll come round in a brace of shakes, after a little argument, let's say."

Gray guffawed, and Pierce grinned, his thin face puckering to his eyes, an unpleasing sight. It was clear who was master here. Holgate commanded by the sheer force of his individuality and his coolness.

"Well, to what do we owe the honour of this visit?" went on Holgate easily. "Come to borrow some of our provisions? Strikes me you're a bit fond of the forecastle. We shall have to make room for you. Got room for a little one inside, Pierce?"

The joke sent Gray off again, but I was aware that this gross fooling was as much a piece of acting as had been the feint of shooting at me. He was playing to an audience, and that audience a gallery that dealt only in crude fun. Why did he do it? What was his object? He puzzled me. But I made answer very plainly.

"You know my profession, Mr. Holgate. We had a second officer...?" I paused.

"Have!" he corrected mildly. "Have; not, of course, on active service—resting, let us say."

Gray giggled. His master was as good as the clown in a circus to his tickled ears. Holgate looked at me.

"There's nothing much the matter with Legrand," he went on, "save natural chagrin and a crack on the head. You see, I got him just so." He put both hands together in a comprehensive gesture, "and it interfered with his vertebræ. But better see him, doctor, better see him; and while you're about it, we've got a job or two more for you."

I followed him, as he spoke, towards the forecastle deck, and soon was busy in my professional capacity, Holgate chatting the while very wheezily in my ear. And when I had finished he had the hatch opened and I descended to the prisoners.

"I'm accompanying you, doctor," explained Holgate, "not because I'm going to spy on you—that would be mean, and not in the game—but as a guarantee of good faith, as one might say. You see I feel responsible for you, and if some one with an imperfect sense of honour, say like the Prince, should take it into his head to clap hatches on you, where would my reputation be?"

He smiled, took a lamp from one of his men and descended after me.

The prisoners were standing or squatting moodily about in that small compartment of the hold, which

was otherwise almost empty, and lying on his back with his face turned towards us was the second officer. His eyes gave no indication that he was aware of my presence, though they were wide open, and, I confess, I was alarmed to see his condition. It looked like death. I felt his pulse, and examined him, and all the time his eyes were on me unwavering. His high colour had fallen away, and his face was now spotted with unhealthy blotches on a pallid skin. I pressed my fingers to the back of his neck, puzzled, and as I did so my body came betwixt Holgate with the light and Legrand.

It seemed to me that now the eyes moved, and I could have declared that one of them closed sharply and opened again. But at the moment Holgate shifted his position the eyes were again dull and vacant.

I drew in my underlip, and stood up, looking at the mutineer.

"A heavy crack," said I.

"Well, I suppose he came down rather nastily," said Holgate, unperturbed. "I'm sorry. I bear Legrand no grudge. He was a good navigating officer."

"It looks like brain lesion," I said. "But I should like to examine more carefully."

"Welcome, doctor, welcome," said he cheerfully, "always welcome, so long as I command this ship. Fly a flag and I'll see there's no reigning princes about. I'm the only prince here, you may take my word for that."

I thanked him coolly, and giving the prisoners some

directions for the care of Legrand, climbed to the deck. As I left the lower deck with the suave compliments of Holgate in my ears, I had two things in my mind to ponder. In the first place, there was the mystery behind the chief mutineer. What ailed him that he had made no attack on our weak garrison? And had the deviation of the yacht's cruise been an adequate reason for leaving the strong-room untouched? Again, when he had offered terms, had he not known that we could not accept them, and why had he conducted himself with such easy insolence as to prevent us from accepting them had we been disposed to do so? This problem frankly baffled me. But the other thought was more consolatory. I was convinced that Legrand was not much injured, and I guessed that he was "shamming." That he had winked at me to convey his real case seemed obvious. My heart rose at the thought, for it had been downcast, heaven knows. But it was something to feel that we had allies forward, in the heart of the enemy, even if they were at present under hatches. I had faith somehow in Legrand, a silent, forcible man, and I entered the staterooms with cheerfulness.

Oddly enough, the note with which I was received bore some relation to that cheerfulness, for I was admitted to the tune of tremulous laughter. It was Ellison who let me in, but the laughter did not proceed from him. Half-way down the corridor was Sir John in animated conversation with Mademoiselle. At least, the animation was on her part, for he was decorously stolid, and favoured me with a nod.

"Managed it, then, Phillimore. Good for you," he said with amiable patronage. "I though it was all up when I heard that shot. But Mademoiselle put her money on you."

"Ah, was I not right?" she asked archly in her pretty English. "I know the doctor. He is an old friend of mine."

She was dressed in a smart morning gown, somewhat open at the throat, and her admirable voice seemed to encompass us in its sympathy. One could not but feel pleased and flattered by her faith. I smiled.

"I am glad to say that Legrand's safe, but *hors de combat*," I went on. "Perhaps not for long. We may have a surprise in store for us. At any rate, Holgate does not know everything. He's a little too clever, to my mind."

"Oh, I wish they were all hanged, and dead," broke out Mademoiselle, with an impatient gesticulation.

"They will be in due time," said Barraclough.

"Tell me, Sir John, tell me, doctor, is there any danger?" she asked vivaciously.

Sir John was ever deliberate, and I anticipated him.

"None, or very little at present, I think."

"Ah!" she beamed on us both. "Then you shall have time to play with me. Do you play breedge, Sir John?"

I turned away, for it was time to relieve Lane in the saloon.

CHAPTER XI

The Lull

When you consider how I had parted from the Prince, his subsequent conduct must be regarded as creditable. After my watch I fell dead asleep in my bunk, and might have slept till night had it not been for the sense of discipline possessed and exhibited by his Royal Highness. He visited me in person, and did me the honour to arouse me from my dreamless slumber, whereat I sat up cursing.

"It is natural you should feel irritated, Dr. Phillimore," said he calmly. "But when you come to yourself you will perceive that duty must be performed. It is your watch."

"Oh, ah!" I blurted forth. "You must excuse me; sir, but I have had a night of it."

He nodded amiably. "If you will come to my cabin after your watch," he observed, "I shall have something to say to you."

I do not know that I looked forward to the interview with any interest. I expected some censure of my

conduct earlier in the day, and I was resolved to defend myself. But the Prince proved mild and even amiable. He offered me a cigar, and condescended to discuss some points of policy with me.

"I have been told," said he, "that you have been in the forecastle, and have seen Mr. Legrand. You think that there is some chance of his joining us? Well, it is good hearing. I have no doubt that we shall succeed in destroying the traitors."

"Mr. Morland," said I, leaning forward to him, "I would not like to leave you in the thought that this is going to be easy."

"Oh, no; it will not be easy," he agreed.

But plainly he was confident that it was possible, which I was not. If there was any one in that ship that doubted, it was I. I said nothing, however, but remarked that Holgate was a man of resource and capacity.

"I am willing to believe that," he said after a pause. "He is a very clever scoundrel. Oh, yes."

"We might be in a better position to counter his plans if we fathom them," I suggested.

He looked at me, interrogation in his blue eyes, which were, and were not, so like his sister's.

"The question that puzzles me, sir, is why Holgate did not seize the saloon and the deck below last night when he had the chance—for down there is what he wants."

"He had us locked up in the chart-house," replied the

Prince with assurance. "He did not anticipate that we should escape; and the yacht was running into danger."

Yes; that was the explanation that had occurred to me; indeed, it was the explanation that hitherto we had all accepted. But was it true?

"It was his intention to possess himself of the papers at his leisure," continued Prince Frederic, smoking and gazing at me with the air of a preceptor instructing a pupil.

"Why should he?" I asked bluntly.

The Prince smiled pleasantly. "I will tell you, Dr. Phillimore," he answered. "When I left London, and Europe, for good, I instructed my lawyers to put my property into three forms of goods—drafts on bankers, Bank of England notes, and English currency. Each kind would be of service to me, whose destination was not quite settled. But these would make a bulky load for any man. There is a large amount of specie, and is it not the Bank of England that says, 'Come and carry what gold you will away in your pockets provided you give us £5,000'? Well, there is that difficulty for these villains."

"But," I objected, "do they know how the treasure is made up?"

He cast a dark glance at me. "I have told you," he said, "I trust such as you in my service, doctor. But there has been treachery. Who I am and what I carry became known. How, I cannot say. But it was treachery. The whole thing is a conspiracy," he cried,

hammering on the table, "and it may be that my enemies in Hochburg are at the bottom of it. I will find out. But, see you, doctor, I am Mr. Morland here and hereafter. Let that be understood, and it is as Mr. Morland I will hang these ruffians."

His frown knit his eyebrows closely, and his nostrils heaved, while the blue eyes were fired with sudden flame. If he had ideas on democracy, as reports of him had declared, he had also beyond question the temper of the martinet. It was possible, no doubt, to recognise these strange contradictions, but at the first sight it seemed difficult. I had yet to learn that I was dealing with a type of the fanatic, and a representative of that type, moreover, who exemplified in his blood the fatalism of his ascendants. Yet the glimpse I had of the man was interesting. I began to understand him, and even to sympathise with him. He had foregone much for the sake of an ideal, and that was something. But just then I should like to have known exactly what his sister's attitude to that ideal might be. For Princess Alix, strange as her brother was, was even more baffling than he.

Though we kept a rigid watch all that day and night, no attack was delivered, and I began once again to speculate as to Holgate's policy. Was he trying to tire us out before he made his assault, or had he other ends in view? The second day passed as tranquilly as the first, and the yacht was still making her best southward. She had passed the mouth of the Rio La Plata, and was forging along the Argentine coast, bound for—we knew not whither. Her destination was in other hands, and we must be content to abide

the issues, alert and equipped for any emergency.

On the second day I revisited the forecastle, with my flag, and found Holgate as amiable as before.

"You give me your word, doctor, that you have no weapons?" said he, when I had attended to his wounded men, and was proceeding to the hold where the prisoners lay.

"I give you my word," I replied.

He nodded, and gave orders for the removal of the hatch; and down I went, this time unaccompanied. Legrand still lay on his back, staring vacantly, and the sailors were grouped about, a despondent company, in that dark and stuffy hole.

"Any improvement?" said I to one of them.

"Not much, sir," said he, with a glance towards the open hatchway, where, no doubt, one of the mutineers stood on guard.

"Does Mr. Legrand take any nourishment?" I asked.

"A bit, sir, but not too much. He doesn't seem to relish his food," the man answered.

"Does he talk?" I asked.

"He has spoken about a dozen sentences, sir, but there don't seem much sense in them."

"Ah, I feared as much," I said. I was certain that Holgate, for all his lordly air of unconcern, had taken steps to know what was forward in the hold.

I made another examination, and was the more

convinced that there was nothing seriously the matter with Legrand. This time he frankly grinned in my face, as I laid him down. No doubt the sailors were in his secret, and primed for it.

"I daresay I shall have to operate," I said, and, bidding them farewell, I ascended to the deck.

Holgate waved his hand cheerily at me. "Always glad to see you, doctor," he called out, and went on with the conversation in which he was engaged.

I could have whipped myself that I could not guess what his crafty design was.

But, if I was ignorant, no one was likely to assist me. Barraclough had no views; all that his purview compassed was the probability of an immediate fight, to which he looked forward with unconcern. Lane was ridiculously inept in his suggestions, one of which involved the idea that Holgate desired to "bag ladies and treasure with one gun." This suggestion irritated me, and I snubbed him, so far as any one could snub Lane. The Prince, I knew, was secure in his obstinate conviction, and naturally Ellison had no views any more than Barraclough. They were both very excellent examples of pure British phlegm and unimaginativeness. This seemed to cast the burden upon me, for Pye was still confined to his cabin. The little man was undoubtedly shaken by the horrid events he had witnessed, and though he was confessedly a coward, I could not help feeling sorry for him. He was an abject creature now, and clung to his bunk, keeping out of the Prince's way and Barraclough's as much as possible, and pestering me with his consultations.

"I believe I should be better, doctor, if we were to get into warmer weather," he said pleadingly. "Cold does affect a man's nerves, doesn't it?"

"Well, you'll have to make love to Holgate, if you want that," said I drily. "We're at his mercy."

We were all, I think, conscious of that, if we did not always openly acknowledge the fact. Yet it was astonishing that no attack was made on the state-rooms. Holgate had promised it, and had even struck the shadow of deeper terrors during the concluding words of his interview in the corridor. But things went on peacefully; the sun rose in blurred heavens of blue and grey, and declined into rolling waters, and no event of consequence took place. The bells were sounded as of old; the wheelman in his armoured turret steered the yacht upon her course, and every day the *Sea Queen* drew southward under the ordinary maritime routine. Were it not for our memories, and for the outward facts of our predicament, we might have fancied ourselves merely upon a pleasant excursion.

There was, however, this lacking, that no one knew our destination. The secret was locked in Holgate's bosom, or perhaps he shared it with one or more of his desperadoes.

And, as if to lull us into a sense of security and to persuade us that all was normal, Mademoiselle suddenly developed and exhibited a remarkable liveliness. She was a thing of moods and impulses, restrained by no reason or consideration for others, so far as I could judge. And, having once got the better of her hysteric fear of the mutiny, she

promptly discarded any thought of it. We were prisoners in our part of the yacht, it is true, but that did not interfere with our comfort. We had food and wine to spare; we were supplied with every luxury; and no one gave us any trouble. The guards were set regularly, but Mademoiselle had no concern with that. I doubt if she even recognised that such precautions were taken. There was a certain romance in the situation which appealed to her and inflamed her imagination. She lived most of the day in her cabins, being tired by her maid, or playing dominoes or some other childish game; and in the afternoon she emerged upon us, a glorious figure in fine clothes, and gave us the benefit of her society.

Naturally she spent much of her time in company with the Prince and his sister, but Barraclough and myself were by no means denied her favours. Barraclough spoke French very indifferently—as indifferently, indeed, as Mademoiselle spoke English, but that did not prevent them from getting on very well together. As I have explained, Barraclough was a tall, handsome fellow, lean and inflexible of face, with the characteristic qualities of his race. His eyes admired the lady profoundly, and he endeavoured to keep pace with her wits, a task rendered difficult by the breaches in two languages. This vivacity was crowned by exhibitions of her voice, to which she began to treat us. She had, as I remembered, a wonderful mezzo-soprano, and, being pent up in this comfortable prison, and denied access to the promenade, she used it to effect. As I have said, the music-room surrounding the saloon below, as a balcony, was in our suite, if I may put it in that way, and thither was Mademoiselle accustomed to repair

of an afternoon to keep her voice in practice, as she explained. The Prince usually followed her there, and I have seen him more than once seated in the dimness of the farthest corner of the balcony, staring before him as a man lost in thought, or as one rapt out of himself into some sentimental ecstasy at the sounds of that divine music. Here we felt, more or less, that we were in Liberty Hall, and, to do him justice, Prince Frederic encouraged us to feel this. It was understood that the saloon was open to all, and it became a resort for such of us as were off duty in those days—a resort that would have been improved by more light; for the windows were all barred and shuttered, and only the skylights admitted the day.

The weather was now grown much colder, for we were off the coast of Patagonia, and Holgate appeared to be bent on doubling the Horn and getting into the Pacific. In the wilds of that wide domain there would be more chances for this crew of scoundrels to find refuge and security from the arm of the law. Was it for this he was waiting? And yet that was no argument against an immediate attack, for it was clear that he might get the business over, deal with us as he chose, and make for his destination afterwards and at his leisure. Nor could it be that he doubted as to the issue of the struggle, for his forces outnumbered ours greatly, and, if I knew anything of men, Holgate was utterly without fear. But, on the other hand, he had a great deal of discretion. The only conclusion that emerged from these considerations was the certainty that in the end Holgate had decreed our fate. *That* had been settled when Day fell, perhaps even before that, and when poor McCrae was shot by his engines. We were

doomed to death.

If any doubt as to our fate dwelt in Princess Alix's mind she did not show it. She was a girl of spirit and energy, and she had neat hands. Thus her time was spent in such work as she deemed useful in the circumstances, or such as occupied her mind healthily. She made a handsome fur cap for herself against the biting wind, which now came snapping off the icy highlands of the coast, and she sketched, and designed, and photographed. Above all, she was cheerful and self-reliant. There was not much in common between the brother and the sister save perhaps their aloofness from strangers. I questioned much if the Princess had any of her brother's sentimentality. She had all her brother's decision and fire, however, as I was to see exemplified more than once.

It was on the third of our quiet afternoons that I was sitting in the corridor with a volume in my hand, conscious merely of the many sounds in that silence, and scarcely aware of what I read. The voyage seemed to partake of the nature of that fabled voyage of the ancient mariner. Some strange doom hung over us all, and yet the sky smiled, as it did that moment, and the cold breath of the blue sea was inspiring in one's nostrils like wine in the blood. I was aware in this dream that a door had opened and shut, and that the Princess had come into the corridor. She sat on a chair not far from me and plied her needles in a way that struck me now, as I roused myself, as very homely and pleasant. I shot a glance at her. She was very simply dressed in what, for all I know, may have been a very extravagant fashion.

She had the knitted waistcoat she was making (I concluded for her brother) across her knee, and I had a full view of her as she swayed and moved about her task. Those flowing lines, that sweet ripeness, the excellent beauty of her face, impressed me newly. She met my glance, and smiled.

"What do you find interests you, Dr. Phillimore?" she asked in her pleasant voice.

"I was reading, or pretending to read, a book of poems," I answered.

"Poems," she replied, plying her needles, and then in a little, "It is strange you should be reading poems and I knitting here."

"It puzzles me," said I. I rose and went to the window behind her which was not shuttered, and for the light from which she had seated herself there. The crisp sparkle of the sea rose to eyes and ears. When I turned, Princess Alix had ceased from her work and was looking towards me.

"You wonder why?" she asked.

"I have made many guesses, but have never satisfied myself yet why the mutiny is not pushed to its logical conclusion."

"Which would mea——" she said thoughtfully.

"Which would mean," I interrupted quickly, "the possession of the treasure."

There was something deeply significant in her gaze, something that was brave, and appealed, and winced at the same time. She went on slowly with her

knitting.

"He is waiting his time," she remarked in a low voice.

"He will wait too long," I said with a little laugh.

"Do you think so?" she asked, and, laying down her work, went to the window as I had done. "It is cold."

"We are off an icy shore," I said.

"Yes, I found it on the map this morning," she nodded. "We are close to the Straits of Magellan!"

At that moment the sound of the piano sailed through the door at the end of the corridor. She turned her head slightly, and then moved away restlessly. She went to the chair on which I had been sitting and picked up my Tennyson.

"I know him pretty well," she remarked, turning the pages. She halted where I had inserted a marker.

"'The Princess,'" she said slowly. She drummed her fingers on the leaf, read for a minute or two, and dropped the book lightly. "We have no literature in comparison with yours, Dr. Phillimore; but we have sometimes done better than that."

"Oh, not than the lyrics," I protested lightly. "*Ask me no more*——"

The music from without broke into louder evidence, and she turned frowning towards the door.

"Do you know, Dr. Phillimore," she asked hesitatingly, "if Mr. Morland is in his room?"

"He went after lunch," I answered. She stood

considering.

"Mademoiselle has a beautiful voice," I said tentatively.

"Oh, yes," she assented. "It is of good quality and training." Her tone was curt, as if she were unwilling to continue the conversation, but she still listened.

> Einsam Wandelt dein Freund im Frühlings garten.

It seemed to me that I could almost hear the words in that uplifted music. The song has always been a passionate fancy of mine, beguiling the heart of rock to romance. Sentiment is on wing in every corner of one's consciousness when that song rises in its fulness and falls in its cadences on one's ears and deeper senses.

> In der Spiegelnden Fluth, in Schnee der Alpen....
> ... strahlt dein Bildniss.

I could see Mademoiselle Trebizond at the piano with the vision of the mind, her soul enrapt, her features transfigured. She was a figment of the emotions. And the Princess and I listened, she with a little dubitating look of perplexity, paying me no heed now, and I singularly moved. I walked down the corridor, past where Princess Alix stood, and as I went by I could have put out my arm and drawn her to me. She was wonderful in her beauty and her pride.

> Deutlich schimmert auf jedem purpur blättchen.

But I went by and opened the door that gave upon the saloon stairs. Instantly the flood of music rolled into the room in a tide, and, glancing back, I saw the Princess stir. She came towards me.

"A voice is a beautiful machine," she said uncertainly as the notes died away.

I could not answer; but she may have read an answer in my eyes. She passed me just as the singer broke into something new, and entered the music gallery. A shaft of light struck out her figure boldly. I walked round to the second door at the head of the stairs. Right away in the corner was Mademoiselle, and by her Sir John Barraclough lounged on the sofa, stroking his moustache uneasily. But my eyes lingered on the two not at all, for they were drawn forthwith to another sight which filled me with astonishment. The barriers had been removed from several of the windows, the windows themselves were open, and I could discern the figures of men gathered without on the deck.

With an exclamation I ran forward, interrupting the mellifluous course of Schubert's Serenade, and Barraclough started to his feet.

"What is it?" he asked abruptly.

Mademoiselle turned on her stool and regarded me with curiosity, and behind the Princess was approaching slowly.

"The windows, man!" said I.

Mademoiselle burst into laughter. "It was so dark," she said prettily, "I could not see plainly. I must always have light when I play. And I made Sir John open them."

Barraclough fidgeted, but turned a cold face on me.

"What's all the fuss about?" he asked surlily.

I pointed to the figures which we could see through the open windows.

"Well, that's my business," he said shortly. "I'm in command, and I'm not a fool." As he spoke he fingered his revolver.

"Oh, do not be afraid. It is all right," said Mademoiselle cheerfully. "See, we will have more open. I will play them something. They are listening to my music. It will soothe them."

She cast a look at Sir John from her laughing dark eyes, and let her hands down on the keys with a bang, breaking into a jolly air of the boulevards.

"Stay," she cried, stopping quickly, "but I know one of your English tunes suitable for the sea. How do you call it? Tom-bolling!"

As she spoke she swerved softly into that favourite air, the English words running oddly from her lips.

"'Ere a sheer 'ulk lies poor Tom Bo-olling..."

From the deck came a burst of applause. She laughed in delight, and winked up at me.

"I can do more with them than your guns," she said boldly, and was sailing into the next verse when the Princess intervened.

"Mademoiselle," she said in French, "you are inconveniencing the officers. They have much to do."

Mademoiselle turned about angrily and met the Princess' gaze. She seemed about to fly out in a tempest, but as suddenly checked herself, leaving only a little frown on her forehead to witness to her annoyance. She had been engaged in a little triumph that suited her vanity, and she had been called away from it. I really do not think there was anything more than that in it—not then, at any rate. She rose.

"You are a tyrant, my princess," she said, and nodding sweetly to Barraclough and myself, left the gallery.

Princess Alix followed, her face pale and still. More than ever was I convinced that, whatever feelings the lady had inspired in the Prince, his sister was not party to them.

CHAPTER XII

In the Saloon

I think it was from that hour that I began to get on badly with Barraclough. It was in his power as acting captain, no doubt, to remit certain precautions, but the remission of those precautions was not to the credit of his head. He had been beguiled by the Siren, and she, doubtless, by her vanity or her freakishness. When she had gone he turned on me.

"What the devil do you want interfering, Phillimore?" he demanded. "I'm in charge here."

There never was a man so insensate. I shrugged my shoulders. "Well, it was not my interference that was successful," I said curtly.

He walked abruptly to the window and opened it wider I could not be mistaken as to the bulky form that blocked it.

"Nice music, captain," said Holgate's wheezing voice.

"I'll give you just three seconds to quit, or I'll put a hole through you, you infernal rascal," said Barraclough savagely, raising his revolver.

"Oh, we're in no hurry," said the mutineer cheerfully, and moved away.

I suppose that some gleam of reason prevented Barraclough from firing. He barred the windows afresh, and came back to me.

"Why the mischief doesn't he attack?" he exclaimed peevishly.

I did not know, but I was near guessing just then. In point of fact, I did guess that afternoon. I paid my usual visit to the forecastle and the hold. Legrand

played the same farce with remarkable persistence, and I was no longer puzzled by him. He was biding his time, like Holgate, and his reasons were obvious. Holgate's dawned on me just then—but some of them only, as you shall see during the progress of this narrative.

He maintained his friendliness, inquired civilly after our health, and how the ladies bore the seclusion.

"I wish I could make it easier for them, but I can't, doctor," he said amiably.

He was an abominable liar, but I had a certain admiration for his effrontery. I was glad I could meet him on his own ground, so I answered deliberately:

"Of course, it would spoil your plans to get the job over."

He eyed me smiling. "As how, my friend," he asked.

"You would rather have us in charge of the treasure than yourself," I replied.

He laughed. "Doctor, there's imagination in you, as I've always said. It's a pity I made that blunder about you. Not that it matters now. Well, you've nicked it. What's the odds? You are welcome to the truth—now."

There was a perceptible emphasis on his last word.

"You're not afraid of the attack?" I said.

He shook his head. "Not much. While we have a common object we're all right. I'm afraid of success. Doctor, you've a penetrating eye. Why, the treasure

might break us up. If you had sent it down to me I believe I'd have sent it back. That would have been your best chance. I wonder you didn't think of it. But you've got your flaws. If you'd sent that treasure down I'd have had to take it; and you might have sat down and waited on events. But it's too late now. I know where I am."

"And where's that?" I asked bluntly.

He smiled craftily. "We enter the Straits of Magellan this extra special night," he said. "Let's put it at that."

"And what's to come?" I asked in the same voice.

"Lord, one would suppose you in the counsels," he said equably. "And in a way you are. Well, you can hand over that treasure which you have been good enough to guard for me better than I could myself as soon as you will. I've no objection now. Good-evening, doctor."

He wheeled about and went off humming a tune. But I was staggered. That meant, if he were not lying again, that we were near the end of our tether, that the truce was up, and that....

My mind shuddered in its train of thought. There was only one possible end for us if Holgate was to secure himself; and he was capable of any infamy. As I looked at his broad back and bull neck I felt rage and hatred gather in me and surge together. But I was impotent then and there. I went back to our quarters sick at heart.

It was falling dark when I reached the state-rooms, and all was as usual. The same vacant face of

quietude was presented to me in the corridor. Leaving the two men, of whom one was Grant, on guard, I went below to my cabin; and, as I did so, thought to look in upon Pye. Faint shafts of light streamed in by the open port, but I could see no one.

"Pye!" I called, and received no answer.

Well, it was of small consequence to us if Pye recovered or not, for he was negligible as a unit of our defence. But I was glad that the little man had sufficiently resumed what what might be called his manhood to be up and about again. Maybe, I thought with some amusement, I should find him airing himself in the corridor or disporting in the music-room. Coming out of my cabin, I groped my way along the passage in the direction of the stairs. When I reached the foot of them it was quite dark, and I stopped, arrested suddenly by a murmur of voices from the saloon beyond. I knew that some one must be on guard there, but I did not quite understand the murmur. I hesitated, making some inquiries in my mind. From the hour, I came to the conclusion that Barraclough was on duty, and I turned and entered the saloon, the door of which was ajar.

"Is that you, Barraclough?" I called.

My voice penetrated the darkness, which was here alleviated by the dull gleam from the port-holes. I heard a rustling, and I was sure it was of a woman's skirts.

"What do you want?" asked Barraclough in a leaden voice.

"Oh, nothing," said I as coldly; "I only thought I

heard voices."

"Now what the——" He pulled himself up sharply, for with all his faults (and heaven knows I had yet to find how many they were) he was a gentleman.

"It is the doctor," came in Mademoiselle's pretty accents. "Oh, it is so cold upstairs, doctor. You must make us some machinery to warm us."

"We shall be colder yet, Mademoiselle," I replied indifferently; "we shall have the ices of Magellan refrigerating us to-morrow."

"Magellan," said Barraclough. "What the mischief does that mean?"

"Ask Mr. Holgate," I answered. "It's his affair, or he thinks it is. He has taken it on himself." I made my way to the electric-light knobs. "As it seems to be getting dark," I said, not without irony, "I will take the liberty of illuminating."

"Oh, it's none so dark," growled Barraclough. "We ought to be used to darkness by this time. We're not all children at nurse," he sneered palpably.

I turned the catch, but no light came. "It's gone wrong," I exclaimed.

"Yes, I did try it a little time ago," said Mademoiselle sweetly, "when Sir John and I were in so deep argument."

Of course it was a lie, but what did that matter. If I could have seen Barraclough's face at that moment I felt sure it would have advertised a sense of shame, despite his passivity. But Mademoiselle.... Well, I

could see in the dusk the shadow of her face, and it was a handsome shadow. Almost I could see her smile. They were seated in the recesses of the saloon. I moved towards them.

"I suppose you understand the hang of this, Sir John," I said drily.

"I'm not a patent detective," he answered with his arrogant sneer, but I paid no heed, for I felt sure of settling him then and there.

"I suppose it has occurred to you to reflect on whose grace we have depended for our electric supply," I said mildly.

"I know that it comes from the engine-room, if that's what you mean," he replied bluntly.

"And now it's cut off," I said.

There was a pause, and it was the lady who broke it.

"What is it that you mean, doctor?"

I addressed her. "The mutineers cut off the light preparatory to an attack."

"You are the most wonderful sleuth-hound, Dr. Phillimore," said Barraclough with a hard laugh; "your talents are quite thrown away."

"I regret to say they are here," I answered sharply. "And where would he be if he had paid some attention to the patent detective? I tell you again, Sir John Barraclough, that we've got to expect an attack to-night, and that's why the light is gone."

A man may endure hostility and defeat; he may suffer shame and injustice; he may undergo pangs of jealousy and remorse. All these things are dispiriting or humiliating, but I declare that I would willingly experience them all if I might save myself from the supreme dishonour of appearing in a ridiculous *rôle*. I had spoken strongly because I felt warmly, and there was a note of dictatorial assurance in my voice which might have convinced, or at least silenced, Barraclough. But I had left the keys down, and to my shocking discomfiture as I finished my declamation the saloon was at a stroke flooded with light.

The radiance discovered to me Mademoiselle's piquante face, her eyes smiling, her lips full and pouting, and close beside her Barraclough's fair Saxon jowl. He grinned at me, but said nothing, for which perhaps I should have been grateful. But I was not.

"But this is in our honour, then?" suggested Mademoiselle Yvonne prettily.

I had no fancy for her, but I did not mind her little sarcasm.

I bowed. "No doubt to celebrate my oratory," I said, recovering myself. "But as we do not know how long Mr. Holgate will condescend to continue his compliment we may as well make the most of it."

"You're a cool hand, Phillimore," said Barraclough, now with the good temper of one who has triumphed.

"But none so cool as Holgate," I returned him in the same spirit, "for he has just warned me that his

reasons for not attacking us are at an end." He regarded me interrogatively. "Holgate is not only a cool hand, but a cunning hand, a far-reasoning hand. He has let us take care of his treasure until he was ready for it."

"What do you mean?" asked Barraclough in astonishment.

"His men might have become demoralised if he had seized the safe. He has, therefore, feigned to them that it was not practicable. That has been his reason for our security—not tender mercy for us, you may guess. So we have kept his treasure safe, and now—he wants it."

"Why now?" queried Barraclough, who frowned.

"That's Holgate's secret. I suppose he knows what he is going to do and what destination he wants. We don't. Anyway, we're turning through Magellan to-night, and he has no further use for us."

"I wish I'd shot that fiend to-day," said Barraclough savagely.

Mademoiselle looked from one to the other, a curious expression on her face.

"He is a remarkable man, this 'Olgate?" she asked.

"He is—pardon, Mademoiselle—the devil," said Barraclough.

She laughed her fluting laughter. "Oh, but the devil may be perhaps converted," she said. "He may be tamed. You say music have powers to tame the savage breast." She tapped her bosom dramatically,

and smiled. "There is many men that may be tamed."

She cast a soft glance at Barraclough and then at me.

But I only got the edge of it, for at that moment I caught sight of a gray face, with little tufts of whisker under the ears, and glancing glasses that hung over the railings of the music balcony above. It was Pye. Had he been there long in the darkness or had he only just arrived, attracted by the light and the voices? The latter seemed the more probable assumption, for as I looked up he made an awkward movement as if he was embarrassed at being discovered. Yet if he had been eavesdropping, where was the harm? But somehow I felt annoyed. The others followed my glance, but the clerk had gone.

Mademoiselle Trebizond sighed and put her small hand over her mouth to hide a yawn.

"It is so what you call dull, Sir John," she protested in her coquettish way. "Nothing but sea, sea, and not even the chance to go on deck. I would sooner have the mutineers. Oh, but it was insensate to leave Europe and France. No, it is a country the most diabolic this side of the ocean. What is there under the sea, Sir John?"

"Why, the fishes, Mademoiselle," said he, grinning.

"No, no; understand me, Monsieur. I mean under the ground. What is there?" She waved her hands. "Sea, sea, sea, nothing else, and savages," she added thoughtfully.

"They would be interesting," I suggested drily.

She looked at me. "My good friend, doctor, you are right," she said charmingly. "More interesting than this company. Monsieur 'Olgate, he is interesting, is it not?"

"We may have an opportunity of judging presently," said I lightly.

Mademoiselle got up and peered out of the port-holes. The glow of the electric light in the luxurious saloon threw into blueness the stark darkness of the evening. Nothing was visible, but through the ports streamed the cadences of the water rising and falling about the hull. It had its picturesque side, that scene, and looked at with sympathetic eyes the setting was romantic, whatever tragedy might follow. That it was to be tragedy I was assured, but this pretty, emotional butterfly had no such thoughts. Why should she have? She was safeguarded by the prince of a regnant line; she was to be the mistress of millions; and she could coquette at will in dark corners with handsome officers. She was bored, no doubt, and when dominoes with her maid failed her, she had Barraclough to fall back on, and there was her art behind all if she had only an audience. I began to see the explanation of that astonishing scene earlier in the day. She was vain to her finger-tips; she loved sensations; and it was trying even to be the betrothed of a royal prince if divorced from excitements to her vanity. After all, Prince Frederic, apart from his lineage, was an ordinary mortal, and his conversation was not stimulating. In Germany or in Paris Mademoiselle would have footed it happily as the consort even of a dethroned prince; but what was to be got out of the eternal wash and silence of

the ocean, out of the sea, sea, sea, as she herself phrased it?

She came back from the port-hole. "It is so dull," she said, and yawned politely. Well, it was dull, but perhaps dulness was more pleasant than the excitements which we were promised. With a flirt of her eyes she left us.

When she was gone Barraclough eyed me coldly and steadily.

"You didn't say all you had to say," he remarked.

"No, I didn't. Lights or no lights, Holgate will attack presently—I will not pin myself to to-night. He is where he wants to be, or will be soon. Then he has no use for us"—I paused—"women or men."

"Good God, do you think him that sort of scoundrel?" he inquired sharply.

"What has he done? Played with us as a cat with mice. Oh, he's the most unholy ruffian I've ever struck. And you know it. Look at his face. No, Barraclough, it's death, it's death to every man jack."

"And the women?" he said hesitatingly.

I too hesitated. "No, I don't credit him with that. He threatened, but I don't quite believe. Yet I don't know. No; I think it's a question of a terminus for all of us, man and woman"—I paused—"including your pretty friend there."

He turned sharply on me, but made no remark. His eyelids were drawn and heavy and his eyes surcharged. He appeared to be under the stress of

some severe thought. I moved away, leaving it at that, for it was obvious that he was moved. As I reached the door I happened to glance back. Barraclough stood where I had left him, his brows knitted; but my eyes passed from him to the gallery, and there lighted on Mademoiselle, who stood with one hand on the railing gazing down at Barraclough. She had her hand to her heart, and her face was white like death, but that may have been the effect of the electric light. I wondered, as I had wondered about Pye, how long she had been there, and if she had heard. Had she spied on us of a set purpose? If so (God help her!) she had taken no good of her eavesdropping. A pity for her seized me. She was still and silent in the course of my gaze, but, as I looked, the ship heeled, her bosom struck the railing heavily, and she uttered a tiny cry. Barraclough glanced up and saw her. As I went out a cold blast streamed off the sea and entered the open ports; the waters rocked and roared. I guessed that we were entering the channel.

I had made my report to Barraclough, but I had to report to the Prince. When I reached his cabin I found him seated before his table, engaged in sorting a number of documents. He wore glasses, which I had never seen on him before, and he proffered me a severe frown as I entered. I have never to this day rightly assessed the character of Prince Frederic of Hochburg, so many odd ingredients entered into it. He was dictatorial, he was even domineering, he was hard-working, and he was conscientious. About these qualities I had already made up my mind. But his acts had been wholly in disregard of the rhythmical and regular conventions which he should thus have

associated with himself. He had broken with his fatherland, he had thrown over dynastic laws, he had gone by his will alone, and no red tape. Perhaps there was the solution. He had gone by his conscience. I have said I was convinced of his conscientiousness, and possibly in these strange departures from the code of his fathers he was following a new and internal guide, to the detriment of his own material interests. He had abandoned the essence while retaining the forms of his birth and breeding. At least, this is but my assumption; his actions must explain him for himself. I have set down faithfully how he behaved from the first moment I met him. Let him be judged by that.

The Prince, then, who had violated the traditions of his house by his proposed alliance, was occupied in his accounts. That, at any rate, is what I gathered from the hasty glance I got at the sheets of figures before him.

"Well, sir?" said he brusquely.

"I report, sir, that we have entered the Straits of Magellan, and that we have every reason to look for an attack at any moment," I said formally.

He dropped his pen. "So!" he said, nodding quite pleasantly.

"It is just as well that it comes, doctor. We have been too long on the rack. It has done us no good."

"I think you are right, sir," I answered; "and, on the other hand, it has been of service to the mutineers."

He looked perplexed. "We have taken charge of the

safes for them," I explained.

He sat silent awhile, and then mechanically curled his moustache upwards.

"Yes—yes—yes," he said. "You are right. That, then, is the reason. This man is clever."

It seemed the echo of what his lady-love had said a quarter of an hour before. I made no reply, as none seemed necessary. He went to the barred window, in which a gap was open, letting in the night, and the act recalled again to me Mademoiselle. Was this scion of royalty perishing for an idea? He looked very strong, very capable, and rather wonderful just then. I had never been drawn to him, but I had at the moment some understanding of what it might be to be the subject of so masterful and unreasonable a man. Yet now he was not at all unreasonable, or even masterful. He turned back to me.

"Doctor," he said gently, "we must see that the ladies are not incommoded."

"We will all do our best," I answered, wondering if he knew how inadequate a word he had used. Incommoded! Good heavens! Was my knowledge of Holgate to go for nothing? What would be the end? Was the man an idealist? He seemed sunk in a dream, and I saw his face soften as he stared out at the sea. Compassion gushed in my heart. I turned away.

CHAPTER XIII

The Fog

My watch ended at ten o'clock, and I went direct to my cabin. I was a light sleeper, and could depend upon awaking at the slightest sound. Thus I had no fear that I should be wanting in an emergency, quite apart from the fact that the steward was stationed at the opening into the saloon with strict orders.

I suppose it must have been three hours later that I sat up in my bunk with a consciousness that something was wrong. I listened, but I could hear no sound, and I rose to my feet, seizing my revolver. Then I understood. It was precisely that there was no sound, or rather that sounds had dwindled, that I awoke. The screw had stopped. I opened the door and went along the passage towards the saloon. Grant was at the foot of the stairs, and I hailed him.

"No, sir, I don't know, sir," he answered me in respect of my questions.

Well, one had to find out at any cost, and I ran up the stairs and got access to the corridor of the state-rooms. Here were gathered the Prince, Barraclough, Lane, and the quartermaster.

"I believe he's been on the P.S.N.C," Lane was saying as I came up. "He ought to be able to pull her through."

"The question is, does he want to?" asked

Barraclough grimly.

"Good heavens, who wants to lock his ship in these accursed bilboes?" cried the purser. "It's enough to freeze one's hair stiff. Can you see anything?"

For answer, Barraclough threw open the door that led upon the deck, and it was as if a vent had yawned in the night. It was pitch black, and, what was worse, banks of fog rolled along the thwarts. Lane drew back a step, and shivered.

"Oh! my uncle!" he exclaimed.

"You do not see any sign of them?" inquired the Prince imperturbably.

Barraclough shook his head. "If they're coming they'll have their work cut out to find their way," he said.

"Oh, let 'em all come this weather," said Lane agreeably. "'I wish I'd bought ducks'—I mean fires."

He was shivering continuously and I pushed him back. "Don't be a fool," said I. "We want all hands in good form during the next four-and-twenty hours."

I peered out of the door, but the screen of sea fog shut off the view; it was as if I gazed at a blank wall, and the cold was intense.

"What do you guess has happened?" I asked Barraclough.

"He's got her in a narrow gut somewhere and is frightened. I've only been through here twice in my life, and in both cases it was broad daylight. This is where they melt fogs for the world. Oh, hang it, let's

have the door shut."

He shut it as he spoke, and I looked round. The Prince sat on a sofa and waited. Lane blew on his fingers and whistled. Ellison stood, the respectful seaman as ever.

"They've been kind about the electric light," observed Barraclough, with a grin at me.

I said nothing, for there was nothing I could rejoin in the circumstances. I retraced my way to the door and opened it.

"Oh! confound it all!" roared Barraclough, as the fog rolled in. "Don't you see the ladies are here?"

I turned back, but only Princess Alix was visible. She moved white and tall under the lights. I shut the door again.

"Why has the yacht stopped, Frederic?" she asked her brother.

"The fog," he answered, with a gesture towards the door.

She looked towards us, her upper lip lifted in a charming excitement and the colour flying in her cheeks. Then she came forward swiftly, and, even as she did so, the *Sea Queen* heeled over, rolling and trembling from her copper sheathing upwards. The shock sent me against the wall, and Barraclough also staggered. Princess Alix in her flight was precipitated forward and ran upon me. She put up her hands instinctively to save herself, but in the rush she gathered momentum, and swung across the dozen

paces between where she had been and the door with the speed of an arrow discharged in the air. Her palms struck the woodwork with a resounding slap, but the full force of her sweet body fell on me. For one instant I held her in my arms quite closely, her breath upon my face.

"Are you hurt, Princess?" I gasped.

"Oh! my hands!" she cried pitifully, and then ceased suddenly. She withdrew a little. "They sting," she said, also breathlessly. "But you—you must be injured."

"I am a little out of breath," I answered, "but I was never better in my life." I cannot say why I blurted this forth. Somehow I was beyond myself.

"She has struck!" cried Barraclough.

The *Sea Queen* righted herself slowly.

"I can't stand this," I said. "I'm going to find out."

I glanced at the Princess, but she stood clinging to the wall, her bosom heaving, her eyes on Barraclough. I opened the door, and, stepping out, closed it again behind me. I was determined to find out what had happened.

After all, it was not a very hazardous enterprise. Holgate had shown no disposition to take advantage of my visits to the forecastle, and it was pretty clear that no attack was possible at the moment. Nevertheless, I will confess that I experienced a little elation in feeling my way through the dense darkness along the saloon. It is not always possible to analyse

one's feelings, but I think afterwards (not at the time) I connected this mood with the Princess. I had held her in my arms, her face to mine, and I was suddenly exalted to be capable of great things. There was nothing I would not have dared then, no danger from which I would have shrunk, no risk I would not have taken, however foolhardy. In a sense I walked on air; I was lunatic; and all because I had held for an instant of time an adorable woman in my arms with no consent of hers. I believe now (and I hope it will not be counted against me) that it was with a little swagger I opened the door and stepped forth into the rolling fog.

The *Sea Queen* stirred a little as if to show she still lived, but there was no motion perceptible. I had buttoned up my coat round my neck, but even so the mists from the ice-clad hills on either side of the passage bit hard into me. I groped to the chart-house and then paused. A twinkle of light was visible ahead and aloft. It was the bridge. I launched myself suddenly into the vacancy before me, and went like hoodman blind with arms outstretched towards the railing. I struck an iron pillar, and guiding myself from it to another, reached at last the foot of the ladder that ran up. This I mounted very deliberately and carefully until I had come to the bridge itself, where a dull light burned by the binnacle. Instantly I was taken by the throat.

I struggled with my assailant at a disadvantage, as I was unable to reach his face, owing to his superior grip of me; but I managed to get a leg at the back of his, and though the pressure on my windpipe was terrible, and I felt that I was weakening fast, I threw

him back against the railings. As I did so a light was thrust into my face, and I heard Holgate's voice.

"It's the doctor. All right, Pierce. Hands off, man."

Even as he spoke my antagonist loosened his hold, and I drew off, the relaxed artery jumping in my throat painfully.

"By thunder, doctor, you were near gone," went on Holgate in his ruminating voice. "Pierce don't take his fingers off no more than a bull-dog when he has once caught on. Lucky I had a suspicion of you. I thought no one would be such a fool as to venture save you. Glad to see you as always, if unexpectedly. Any news?"

He lighted a cigar as he spoke, and the fog was roseate about his head. I recovered my breath as best I might.

"As you are reserving us—Holgate, for a destiny of your own," I panted, "and we are not—particularly anxious to anticipate it—thought I would find out—if we are going down."

He laughed fatly. "I like you, doctor. Upon my soul I do. It's a real pity we couldn't have hit it off. No; you can sleep calmly. There's no going down; well, not yet. I've been through these Straits a score of times, and in all weathers, and I've learned this much, that a fog spells the red flag. That's all, Dr. Phillimore. She's got no more than steering way on her, and I'll pull her up presently."

"Well," said I. "I suppose it matters nothing to us, but a wreck is a frightening matter this weather."

He seemed to be studying me, and then laughed. "All serene. If you have made up your mind to your fate there's nothing to be said. But I'm in charge here, and not Sir John Barraclough. I suppose he has some use, but I've not made it out up till now."

"Holgate," said I suddenly, "this vessel's in your hands till she's out of the Straits, if she's ever out. I don't deny it. But I should like a little further light on destiny, so to speak. You reckon you can take the safes. What more do you want?"

"Nothing in the world, my lad," he said comfortably. "You've hit it. Nothing in the wide, wide world."

"Rubbish!" said I sharply. "Does any one suppose you're going to turn loose witnesses against you?"

He took the cigar from his mouth, and, though I could not discern his face in the fog, I knew its expression.

"Well, now, that's a new idea, and not a bad idea," he said equably. "Of course I should be running a risk, shouldn't I? But what's to be done in conflict with a temperament like mine? I can't help myself. Take your oath on one thing, doctor, and that is I'll die game. If the respectable folk whom I take pity on and land somewhere—somewhere nice—turn on me, why, I'll die game. But of course they won't. You know they won't, doctor."

This question was not worth answering: indeed, I knew it was not meant for an answer; it was a palpable gibe. I held my tongue, but now I knew I should get no information out of this soft-voiced ruffian until it suited him to give it. Our fate was still

a mystery—if we were beaten in the struggle that was imminent, and I could not flatter myself with hopes of our victory.

I bade him good-night, for there was no reason to dispense with ceremonies; we were still enjoying our armed truce. But I had got no farther than the ladder when he hailed me through the gloom.

"I've pitched her to, now, doctor. You can sleep like a babe, and the Princess too."

I stopped—I knew not why; perhaps I had still a faint hope of discovering something.

"That means you will attack," I said calmly.

His figure loomed out upon me in the fog, the red cigar end burning in his mouth. "You don't mean that, my lad," said he, in an easy, affectionate tone. "I'm Lancashire born and Lancashire bred, and I'm shrewd enough to know a bit. You don't mean that, bless you. Look ye here, doctor; go and take your rest, and pray God to deliver you from your folly. A foolish man you were and that you be. You'll die that, my lad, I fear. Yet I would give you another chance. I liked you when I sat opposite to you in the tavern there."

"Ah, Holgate," said I, sighing deeply. "How many weary years ago, and your doing!"

I admit that this was theatrical; it was designed as such, and as a last appeal. I was afraid of that man, and that is the truth. I drew a bow at a venture. From the change in the position of the burning edge I gathered that he took his cigar out of his mouth. He

was perceptibly silent for a time. Then the light went back.

"Well, you'll have a sound sleep if you take my advice," he said in his normal tones.

"And then ... a sounder," I said lightly.

"You always take too much for granted, doctor," he replied, laughing. "By the Lord, I wish I had your forward mind."

"You shall have anything you like of mine directly," I said flippantly, and began the descent of the ladder.

I was conscious that he leaned over the barrier of the bridge watching me, for I saw the point of his cigar, but that was soon swallowed up in the darkness, and I saw nothing more. The cold was so intense that my fingers had grown numb as I talked with Holgate, and I could hardly feel the iron; moreover, my feet were like lumps of ice and seemed to rest on nothing as they met the rungs. This, I imagine, was the reason of my mishap. At any rate, I missed a rung, lost my catch, and tumbled heavily down the last three or four steps, falling, to my surprise, not upon the hard deck, but upon some warmer, softer body. Remembering vividly and painfully my struggle with Pierce, I was on my guard, and grabbed the man that lay under me.

"For heaven's sake—" he gasped. "It's me—it's Pye."

I was astounded, and relaxed my hold! What was the little craven clerk doing there at this time of night, and in such weather?

"What——" I began, when he uttered an exclamation of terror, as it seemed.

"Dr. Phillimore!"

"That is so," I answered. "What on earth are you doing here?"

There was almost a whimper in his voice as he replied:

"The fog, doctor. I was foolish enough to wander out on the deck, and I lost my way. I've been straying about for twenty minutes or more. I couldn't find the door again."

"Well, you won't in this direction," I assured him. "This part of the country belongs to the enemy. You've strayed afield, my friend, so, if you'll give me your arm, I'll do my best to put you straight."

He thanked me, and did as I asked him, but, as I thought, somewhat timorously. His hand rested nervously inside my arm, as if he would have withdrawn it and fled at a moment's notice. And so we stumbled along the deck together to the state cabins.

I gave the signal on the door, and we were admitted by Ellison. There was no one else in the corridor except Lane at the farther end, and, to my surprise, the Princess. She was seated on a couch under the electric light, reading, clad in a long and flowing morning-gown. Her hand with the book had dropped a little as we entered, and her eyes sought us.

"There will be no alarm to-night, Ellison," I said on

the spur of the moment, and I caught the Princess's eye. She rose, shut her book, and came towards us.

"You have come back safely," she said in a quick way.

"The fog was the only danger," I answered. "And it nearly did for Mr. Pye. You may confide your head to the pillow with a security to-night, Miss Morland. To-night Mr. Holgate is a sailor."

She did not seem to understand.

"His care is his ship to-night," I explained.

"You have placed us in your debt," she said. "I do not think my brother knows how much we are indebted to you."

I looked at Pye. The praise was pleasant on her lips, but I felt a little embarrassed. The clerk's eyes were fastened on the Princess Alix with a certain definite avidity of gaze. It was as if some strange animal had suddenly stiffened at the sight of prey and was watching greedily. The look repelled me; it struck horror to my marrow. I could have seized him, shaken his miserable little bones and thrown him into a weeping, cowardly heap on the floor. But as I looked his gaze came round to me, and behold! it was only the feeble watery eyes behind the gold-rimmed spectacles that I saw. With a bow to the Princess I proceeded on my way to give my report to her brother.

CHAPTER XIV

Barraclough Takes a Hand

I did not take Holgate's advice, although I had instinctively made up my mind that he was sincere in offering it. What reason he had for expressing kindliness for me—if he had any—I could not say. I reflected that it might very well be of a piece with his astute plans. He might seek to serve some purpose by it. I was useful as a doctor attending to his wounded men, but I knew enough of him to guess that that alone would not suffice to keep him friendly. There must be another reason, unless, indeed, it was as he said, and he really had been captivated by my personal charm! This solution of the problem was flattering, of course, but I was not disposed to accept it. So deep was my mistrust of the arch schemer that I racked my brain to find an explanation for his conduct. This, needless to say, was not conducive to sleep, and I passed a bad night. It was profoundly still, but towards dawn the screw began to move again, and I concluded that the fog had lifted. I got up and looked out of the port, and could discern dimly the white sheets of the mountains not two furlongs distant. The *Sea Queen* began to tramp along at a slow pace at first, but finally, getting speed, resumed her normal rate of progress. If I knew Holgate he was still on the bridge, and he would remain there until the danger was over. If he was an abominable scoundrel, he was indubitably also an admirable seaman with a sense of duty to his ship.

I fell asleep shortly after that, and when I awoke the sun was full up, but setting low in the east, glittering upon a field of snowy pinnacles. I ascended to the state-rooms, and there found Barraclough, who had just come on duty. He had a cheerful eye, and scanned me curiously.

"Well, are we going to get through this?" he asked.

"We're going to get out of the Straits, I believe," I answered.

"Ah!" he said, and frowned, as he was accustomed to do when thinking deeply. He was not a man of much thought.

"And after that?" said he abruptly.

"The deluge," said I, shrugging my shoulders.

"Look here, Phillimore, do you believe we can hold out against Holgate's forces?" he asked seriously.

"I think we shall have to try," I replied evasively.

"I'm damned if we can," he said bluffly. "It's all infernal nonsense."

"Well, we've got to try," I repeated impatiently.

"Oh, well! yes, we've got to try," he admitted, "unless Holgate will hear reason."

"Good Lord, man, do you suppose he's risked all this to listen to reason now?" I asked in amazement.

Barraclough turned away. "Well, you see him. You ought to know," he growled. "If he doesn't, we're done."

"I don't advise you to tell the others that," I said drily.

He turned on me fiercely. "Who said I would?" he snapped. "Do you take me for a fool? And who's captain here? Dr. Phillimore, I'll have you know your place," he cried, in a black passion, unusual in him. "I'm commanding officer and responsible to none, not even the—Mr. Morland, by heaven, no—not on this ship, anyway!" And with that remarkable tempest of unreasonable fury he strode angrily away, leaving me annoyed and something abashed. Assuredly the situation, the waiting, the suspense, had played havoc with all our nerves, even with this stolid English gentleman's. There was the development, in fact, as plain as a pike-staff. This tension had worn on us. Barraclough lost his temper for inadequate reasons; the Prince shut himself in his room morosely, for I shall come to that presently; and Lane growled and grumbled so that it was difficult to avoid quarrelling with him. Indeed, it was only by silence that I averted an open collision on more than one occasion. Little Pye was as nervous as a hen; a sound set him jumping. As I came up the stairs noiselessly, I encountered him, and his whole body started.

"Good gracious, man!" said I, with good-humoured contempt, "you'll be skipping away from your own shadow next. How do you expect to stand up against Holgate with a spirit like that?"

He was pale even through the strong colour that the sun had beaten into him. He eyed me without replying for a moment, and then, with the ghost of his old manner, answered: "I expect I shall sit down

to him."

The fingers with which he readjusted the glasses—his favourite trick—were tremulous.

Pye was to be counted out in case of an emergency, but Pye somehow set me thinking. Pye's cowardice was manifest—rampant, if one may use such a term; yet he had ventured into the fog the night before; not only so, but upon a deck which was filled in his eyes with horrid enemies, prowling in search of victims. How had he achieved that spirited action? It seemed incredible, yet I had come upon him at the foot of the bridge stairs, and I had his explanation. What induced the timid rabbit to venture out of his hutch upon such a night and in such circumstances? Frankly the riddle beat me, and I should have worried over it had it not been for other matters that seemed more immediately important. I have spoken of the Prince's seclusion. I admit now that it had already made an impression on me. He was, as became his nature and his training, a disciplinarian. Each man had his place and his duties, and Prince Frederic appeared at due seasons and shared in the responsibilities. He did not shirk, in accordance with his promise. But for the rest he had withdrawn himself now for three days from the general company. His meals were served with his sister and Mademoiselle, but from what I saw he was most often in his own cabin; and here it was I got a glimpse of him once again—a glimpse, I mean, into that strange and compound character.

I forget the occasion, but it was necessary that I should see him, and I entered the cabin after knocking. When we were done he pulled his papers

before him and sat looking at them dully.

"Have you any literary qualities, Dr. Phillimore?" he asked me, quite unexpectedly.

I hesitated. "If so, they are quite undeveloped," I replied. "I have no reason to suppose so."

"Ah!" he sighed, and taking a volume which lay on the table he opened it. "Do you know German?"

I told him that I could read the language. He nodded.

"It has never been properly appreciated," he said slowly; "the German literature is wonderful—ah, wonderful!" and he appeared to meditate over his page; then he set the book down and looked across at me.

"You are married, doctor? Ah, no!" He nodded again, and once more resumed his meditations. I might have taken it for granted that I was free to go, but for some reason I lingered. He frowned deeply, and sighed again.

"There is a passage in Schiller, but you would not know it——"

He gave me no chance of saying, and I answered nothing; only sat and stared at him.

"There is more music in Germany's little finger than in all the world else—in composition, I mean," he added.

"That has always been my opinion," I ventured at last.

He turned his dull blue eyes on me, as if wondering what I did there. "So!" he said, and heaved a bigger sigh from his very heart, as it seemed. "When the attack is made, doctor——" he broke off, and asked sharply, "When will they attack, do you say?"

"Any moment now, sir," I replied.

He rose. "We must remember the ladies, doctor," he said.

"Yes, we are not likely to forget them," I replied. He eyed me. "Do you think——?" and paused.

"That is all, sir," he said with a curt nod.

It was not a ceremonious or even a fitting dismissal seeing the common peril in which we stood. In that danger surely we should have drifted together more —drifted into a situation where princes and commoners were not, where employers and hirelings did not exist. Yet I was not annoyed, for I had seen some way into his soul, and it was turbid and tortured. Black care had settled on Prince Frederic, and he looked on me out of eyes of gloom. The iron had entered into him, and he was no longer a Prince, but a mortal man undergoing travail and anguish.

By the afternoon we were clear of the Straits, and the nose of the yacht turned northward. Still there was no sign from the mutineers, and that being so, I felt myself at liberty to pay my accustomed visit to Legrand in the forecastle. No one interfered with me, and I did not see Holgate; but the man on guard at the hatch made no difficulty about letting me down. As I descended it came into my mind how easy it would be to dispose of yet another fighting man of

the meagre force at the Prince's disposal by clapping the hatch over my head. It would have been a grim joke quite in keeping with Holgate's character, and for a moment I turned as in doubt; but the next second, banishing my misgivings, I went down to the floor. Captivity was telling on the prisoners beyond doubt, for here they got no sight of sun, and the light was that of the gloaming. I remembered that I had forgotten to take a lantern from the sentry as soon as this twilight gloomed on me, and I was turning back when I heard a sound.

"Hsst—hsst!——"

I stopped. "Who is that?" I asked in a whisper.

"It's me, Jones, sir," said one of the hands.

I walked towards him, for the light that streamed in by the open hatchway sufficed to reveal him.

"Anything wrong with you?" said I casually.

"Well, I could do with a bit more light and a smoke, sir," said the man, respectfully cheerful. But it was not his words; it was his action that arrested me, for he jerked his thumb incessantly as he spoke towards the darker recesses of the hold.

"All right, my man," said I. "I'll speak to Mr. Holgate. He oughtn't to keep you in such close confinement if you are to remain human beings."

So saying, I waded into the deeper shadows, and as I did I felt my hand seized and dragged downwards.

"S-s-s-h!" said a very still voice, and I obeyed.

What was it? I was drawn downward, and at last I knelt. I knew now, and somehow my heart leaped within me. I had never really understood Legrand; I had taken him for a very ordinary ship's officer; but I had come slowly to another conclusion. I bent down.

"Heart pretty bad," I said in a mechanical way.

"There's only one way out," whispered a voice below me, "and that's through the bulkheads into the engine-room. I've been waiting, and I think I can do it."

"I don't like the look of the eyes," I remarked indifferently. "Does he eat well?"

"Not very well, sir; it's a job to get him to take it," said Jones.

"We've had four days at it with a knife," said the whisper, "and by thunder we see light now. We'll get through, Phillimore. How do you stand?"

"Sleep at all well?" I inquired.

"I couldn't say, sir," said Jones, "just lays there like a log."

"Attack may be made at any moment," I whispered back. "There are some ten of us holding the state-rooms and the ladies."

He gripped my hand, and I rose to my feet. "Well, I'm afraid I can't do any more," I said. "He's going on pretty much the same. Good-bye, men."

They returned the farewell, and I made my way to the ladder and ascended. The guard with emotionless

face helped me out, and the first man my eyes fell on was Holgate, standing with his hands in his pockets, looking at me. He whistled as he eyed me, and his teeth showed in his grin.

"For sheer arduous pursuit of duty I don't know your equal, doctor," said he. "You just hang on to work as if you loved it. How's the patient?"

I told him that it was a question of time, but that there was no reason why Legrand should not get over the injury to his spine—"not that he will ever be the same man again," I added.

"No," said he reflectively, "he won't. And he wants time, does he? Well, perhaps we can give him time—though, mark you, my lad, I don't promise it," he said, with his ugly fang showing in a smile.

He took ten paces along the deck with me, seeming to be wrapped up in his thoughts, and then he paused.

"Tell me, doctor, are you in this move?" he asked brusquely.

"What move?" I asked in turn. "What do you mean?"

He waved a hand towards the upper deck. "Why, Barraclough's, of course," he replied. "Are you working with him? Because, if so, I'd like to know, if only for amusement."

"I haven't the faintest idea what you're talking of," I replied.

"You're not making terms, eh?" said he, heavily leaden of face. "By gosh, you might be, doctor, but

you ain't! More fool you. Then it's Barraclough, is it, playing on his own." He chuckled. "That man treated me as pretty dirt all along, didn't he? I'll go bail it was public property. Barraclough's real blue blood. Prick him and see. My son, he's got to be pricked, but I'm no surgeon."

"I understand nothing of all this," I replied. "You enjoy mystification, Holgate, and your talents are remarkable. You can beat Sir John out of his boots. But I wish you'd used your talents elsewhere. Better have buried them. For you've given us a stiff job, and we've simply got to lick you."

You will see that I broke out here in his own vein. I had come to the conclusion that this was my best card to play. I could sum up Holgate to a point, but I did not know him all through, and I was wise enough to recognise that. I think if I had been under thirty, and not over that sagacious age, I should have judged more rashly. But I had that unknown area of Holgate's character to meet, and I thought to meet it by emulating his own bearing. I am not by nature communicative, but I feigned the virtue. I spoke to him as an equal, exchanging views upon the situation as one might exchange them on a cricket match. And I believe he appreciated my tone.

"If you had as little character as Sir John and more prudence, I would have bet on your future, doctor," he said soberly. "But you must play your own cards. And if Sir John wants terms, he must be generous. Generosity becomes the victor."

He smiled, and nodded farewell, and I left him considerably puzzled. I had no guess as to what he

meant by his talk of Barraclough and terms. It could only mean one thing on the face of it, and that was that Barraclough had been in communication with him. If so, was this by the Prince's desire? And if so again, why had not I heard of it? Our company was so small and our plight so desperate that it was unseemly to confine policy or diplomacy within a narrow circle. Surely, we had all a right to a knowledge of what was forward—at least, all of us who were in positions of responsibility. As I went back I was consumed with annoyance that such an important matter as a possible compromise with the mutineers had been concealed from me. But then, was it a compromise authorised by the Prince? If I had read that obstinate and that fanatical proud heart aright, I could not credit it.

When I reached the state-rooms I inquired for Barraclough, and then remembered that he would be on duty in the saloon. I immediately sought him there, but found only Grant, who informed me that he had relieved Sir John at his orders half an hour earlier. He could not give any information beyond that. It was possible Barraclough had gone to his cabin, and so I repaired thither; but without success. I made inquiries of Ellison, who had not seen the first officer, and of the steward, who was in a like case.

It was Lane who gave me the clue, in a vein which I will set down without comment.

"He's on a perch, and crowing like a rooster, is the bart. You need not look for flies on Barraclough, doctor. He's his own chauffeur this trip. I don't fancy the joy myself, but the bart. is rorty, and what would

you say to Mademoiselle, eh?"

"Oh, let's be plain, Lane!" I said impatiently.

He jerked his thumb across the corridor. "Mademoiselle wants a partner at dominoes, matador, or bridge, doctor, and the bart. plays a good game. If you have to choose between your maid and a bart., you bet your life you'll pocket the bart. Oh, this trip's about enough for me! Where's it going to end, and where are we?" He made a wry face and sank in a heap on his chair. "If you've got any influence with Holgate make him come in. I'm sick of this damn sentry-go. If it suits Germans, it don't suit a true-born Englishman."

"Is Sir John with Mademoiselle?" I asked simply.

"Guess again and you'll guess wrong," said Lane moodily, kicking his feet about.

I was not interested in his feelings at the moment. My mind was occupied with other considerations, but it certainly gave me pause that what I had myself seen was apparently now common knowledge. That Sir John had been fascinated by the coquettish Parisian was obvious to me; if it was obvious to Lane, was it hidden from others who were more concerned? I had my answer as regards one almost immediately.

If Sir John were in the ladies' boudoir, it was not for me to disturb him, and I turned away and passed out of the corridor.

As I was preparing to descend to the cabins I heard the low strains of the small organ which the piety of

a former owner of the *Sea Queen* had placed at the end of the music gallery. I entered, and in the customary twilight made out a figure at the farther end of the room. Perhaps it was the dim light that gave the old air its significance. It had somewhat the effect upon me that music in a church heard faintly and moving with simple solemnity has always had. What is there that speaks so gravely in the wind notes and reeds of an organ?

Ein feste burg ist unser Gott.

I knew the words as familiarly as I knew the music, and yet that was almost the last place and time in which I should have expected to hear it. It was not Mademoiselle who played so low and soft to hear. Oh, I felt sure of that! The touch was lighter, graver and quieter. I drew near the player and listened. I had heard Mademoiselle sing that wonderful song, "Adelaide," and she had sung it divinely. But I would have given a dozen "Adelaide's" for that simple air, rendered by no voice, but merely by sympathetic fingers on those austere keys. I listened, as I say, and into my heart crept something—I know not what—that gave me a feeling of fulness of heart, of a surcharge of strange and not wholly painful sentiment.

I was still battling with these sensations when the music ceased and the player arose. She started slightly on seeing me, and I found myself stammering an excuse for my presence.

"I was looking for Sir John Barraclough."

"Come," she said, after a moment's pause, "I will find him for you."

I followed her into the corridor, until she paused outside a door and opened it abruptly without knocking. I waited without, but I heard her voice, strangely harsh and clear.

"Sir John Barraclough, you are being sought by Dr. Phillimore."

Three minutes later Barraclough joined me, red and discomposed. "Anything the matter?" he growled.

I knew now that I had been used as a definite excuse to get rid of Barraclough, whose presence was not welcome to the Princess Alix; and with that knowledge I framed my answer.

"Yes; what terms have you made with Holgate?"

He started as if I had struck him, stared at me, and his jaw came out in a heavy obstinate fashion he had.

"What's that to you?"

"Only this," said I, "that my life is as valuable to me as yours or the Prince's to you or him, and that therefore I have a right to know."

He laughed shortly. "I'm commanding officer."

"Oh, I'm sick of these airs!" I replied. "If you will not answer me, I will go to the Prince and get an answer from him. He, at least, will see the reasonableness of my request for information."

He changed his attitude at that. "You needn't do that, Phillimore," said he. "I can tell you all you need know. After all, as you say, you've a certain right." He looked at me with his hard unfriendly look, and I met him with one of expectancy. "You know what my opinion is," he resumed. "It's only a bluff to say that we have a chance against Holgate. He's got the ship, and he's got the men. I want to see if we can't make some arrangement."

"And he will?" I inquired sceptically.

Barraclough hesitated. "He's inclined to. He's to let me know. I think he's a bit impressed by our bluff all the same, and if we could hit on a suitable middle course——" He stopped. "Hang it, there are the women, Phillimore!" he said vehemently.

"And you suppose Holgate will take them into consideration?" I said. "Well, perhaps he may. I don't think either you or I really know much of Holgate. But I think I know more than you. He's sociable and friendly, isn't he? One wouldn't take him for a rascally mutineer."

"He's a most infernal ruffian," said he with an oath.

"Yet you would trust him in the matter of terms," I suggested.

Barraclough frowned. "We've got to," he said curtly, "unless you can show me a way to hold out."

"Oh! men have been in worse cases than ours and emerged all right—a little battered, no doubt. And then there's the coal. We can't cruise indefinitely. Holgate's got to put in somewhere."

"Oh, he's not going to wait for that!" said Barraclough moodily. "Look here, Phillimore; have you a guess at what he means to do?"

"I have about ten guesses," I replied, shaking my head, "and none of them fits the case. What's he going to do with us? That's his real difficulty and ours. The money problem's simple. I can't see what's at the back of that black mind, but I don't think it's hopeful for us—women included."

"There you are," he exploded savagely. "Anything if we can prevent the worst."

"Yes," I assented. "Provided you can trust to Holgate's word. But would he let us off at any price and run the risk? And, moreover, the Prince. What of him?"

"He would refuse. He wouldn't budge. He's a nuisance," said Barraclough moodily. "He's our stumbling-block."

"Quite so; and if we all caved in but Mr. Morland, what must his fate be? And we should look on, shouldn't we? And then go home in a tramp steamer, a happy family party with a nice little secret of our own. Ten, twelve, well, say, sixteen of us. I can see Holgate trusting to that, and comfortably lolling back in Yokohama deck-chairs; and I can also see Sir John Barraclough reporting the total loss of the yacht *Sea Queen*, captain and owner and so-and-so going down with her. I can read it all in the papers here, and now; it will be excellent food for the ha'pennies!"

The frown deepened on his face as I proceeded, but, contrary to my expectation, he did not display any temper at my mocking speech. He shrugged his

shoulders.

"I'll admit the difficulties. It looks like impossibility, but so's the alternative. I'm in despair."

"There's only one thing will solve the problem," I said. He looked up. "Action."

"You mean——"

"Holgate won't wait till his coal's out. He's free for an attack now."

"In God's name, let him!" said Barraclough viciously.

CHAPTER XV

The Fight in the Music-Room

The *Sea Queen* was making way on her northerly course athwart the long rollers of the Pacific. The wind blew briskly from the west, and the sea ran high, so that the yacht lay over with a strong list as she battled through the rough water. My watch began at twelve o'clock that night, and I took the precaution to lie down for a rest about eight. I fell asleep to the sound of the sea against my porthole window, but awoke in good time. It was full dark, and, save for the screw and the eternal long wash

without, there was silence. Somehow the very persistence of these sounds seemed profounder silence. I groped my way into the passage, with the screw kicking under my feet, and passed Barraclough's cabin. Still there was no sound or sign of life, but I perceived the glimmer of a light beyond, and seeing that it issued from Pye's cabin I turned the handle of the door. It was locked.

"Who is that?" demanded a tremulous voice.

"It's I. Let me in," I called back.

The door was opened slowly and little Pye stood before me. In the illumination of the incandescent wire he stood out ghastly white.

"It's you, doctor," he said weakly.

The smell of spirits pervaded the cabin. I looked across and saw a tumbler in the rack, half full of whisky and water. He noticed the direction of my gaze.

"I can't sleep," said he. "This heavy water has given me a touch of sea-sickness. I feel awfully queer."

"I don't suppose whisky will do you any good," said I.

He laughed feebly and vacantly. "Oh, but it does! It stays the stomach. Different people are affected different ways, doctor." As he spoke he took down the glass with quivering fingers and drank from it in a clumsy gulp.

"I shall be better if I can get to sleep," he said nervously, and drank again.

"Pye, you're making trouble for yourself," said I. "You'll be pretty bad before morning."

"Oh, for goodness' sake, don't talk about morning!" he broke out in a fit of terror.

I gazed at him in astonishment, and he tried to recover under my eyes.

"That's not your first glass," said I.

He did not deny it. "I can't go on without it. Let me alone, doctor; for heaven's sake let me alone."

I gave him up. "Well, if you are going to obfuscate yourself in this foolish manner," I said, my voice disclosing my contempt, "at least take my advice and don't lock yourself in. None but hysterical women do that."

I was closing the door when he put a hand out.

"Doctor, doctor...." I paused, and he looked at me piteously. "Could you give me a sleeping draught?"

"If you'll leave that alone, I will," I said; and I returned to my cabin and brought some sulphonal tabloids.

"This will do you less harm than whisky," I said. "Now buck up and be a man, Pye."

He thanked me and stood looking at me. His hands nervously adjusted his glasses on his nose. He took one of the tabloids and shakily lifted his whisky and water to wash it down his throat. He coughed and sputtered, and with a shiver turned away from me. He lifted the glass again and drained it.

"Good-bye, doctor—good-night, I mean," he said hoarsely, with his back still to me. "I'm all right. I think I shall go to sleep now."

"Well, that's wise," said I, "and I'll look in and see how you go on when my watch is over."

He started, turned half-way to me and stopped. "Right you are," he said, with a struggle after cheerfulness. His back was still to me. He had degrading cowardice in his very appearance. Somehow I was moved to pat him on the shoulder.

"That's all right, man. Get to sleep."

For answer he broke into tears and blubbered aloud, throwing himself face downwards on his bunk.

"Come, Pye!" said I. "Why, what's this, man?"

"I'm a bit upset," he said, regaining some control of himself. "I think the sea-sickness has upset me. But I'm all right." He lay on his face, and was silent. And so (for I was due now in the corridor) I left him. As I turned away, I could have sworn I heard the key click in the door. He had locked himself in again.

Lane was on duty at the farther end of the corridor, and I had the door near the entrance connecting with the music balcony. Two electric lights shed a faint glow through the length and breadth of the corridor, and over all was silence. As I sat in my chair, fingering my revolver, my thoughts turned over the situation helplessly, and swung round finally to the problem of Barraclough and Mademoiselle. The Princess and I had guessed what was forward, and Lane also had an inkling. Only the Prince was

ignorant of the signal flirtation which was in progress under his nose. I suppose such a woman could not remain without victims. It did not suffice for her that she had captured a prince of the blood, had dislocated the policy of a kingdom, and had ruined a man's life. She must have other trophies of her beauty, and Barraclough was one. I was sorry for him, though I cannot say that I liked him. The dull, unimaginative and wholesome Briton had toppled over before the sensuous arts of the French beauty. His anxiety was for her. He had not shown himself timorous as to the result before. Doubtless she had infected him with her fears. Possibly, even, it was at the lady's suggestion that he had made advances to Holgate.

Suddenly my thoughts were diverted by a slight noise, and, looking round, I saw Lane advancing swiftly towards me.

"I say, Phillimore," he said in a hoarse whisper, "I've lost the key."

"Key!" I echoed. "What key?" For I did not at once take in his meaning.

"Why, man, the purser's key—the key of the strong room," he said impatiently.

I gazed in silence at him. "But you must have left it below," I said at last.

"Not I," he answered emphatically. "I'm no juggins. They're always on me. I go to bed in them, so to speak. See here." He pulled a ring of keys from his pocket. "This is how I keep 'em—on my double chain. They don't leave me save at nights when I

undress. Well, it's gone, and I'm damned if I know when it went or how it went."

He gazed, frowning deeply at his bunch.

"That's odd," I commented.

"It puts me in a hole," said he. "How the mischief can I have lost it? I can't think how it can have slipped off. And it's the only one gone, too."

"It didn't slip off," said I. "It's been stolen."

He looked at me queerly. "That makes it rather worse, old chap," he said hesitatingly. "For it don't go out of my hands."

"Save at night," said I.

He was silent. "Hang it, what does any blighter want to steal it for?" he demanded in perplexity.

"Well, we know what's in the strong room," I said.

"Yes—but——" There was a sound.

"To your door," said I. "Quick, man."

Lane sped along the corridor to his station, and just as he reached it a door opened and Princess Alix emerged. She hesitated for a moment and then came towards me. It was bitterly cold, and she was clad in her furs. She came to a pause near me.

"I could not sleep, and it is early yet," she said. "Are you expecting danger?"

"We have always to act as if we were," I said evasively.

She was examining my face attentively, and now looked away as if her scrutiny had satisfied her.

"Why has this man never made any attempt to get the safes?" she asked next.

"I wish I knew," I replied, and yet in my mind was that strange piece of information I had just had from Lane. Who had stolen the key?

The Princess uttered a little sigh, and, turning, began to walk to and fro.

"It is sometimes difficult to keep one's feet when the floor is at this angle," she remarked as she drew near to me; and then she paced again into the distance. She was nervous and distressed, I could see, though her face had not betrayed the fact. Yet how was I to comfort her? We were all on edge. Once again she paused near me.

"What are our chances?"

"They are hopeful," said I, as cheerfully as I might. "The fortress has always more chances than the leaguers, providing rations hold out, and there is no fear of ours."

"Ah, tell me the truth!" she cried with agitation.

"Madam, I have said what is exactly true," I replied gravely. "I have spoken of chances."

"And if we lose?" she asked after a pause.

Her eyes encountered mine fully. "I have no information," I said slowly, "and very little material to go on in guessing. But I hope we shall not lose," I

added.

"This can't go on forever, Dr. Phillimore," she said with a little catch in her voice. "It has gone on so long."

My heart bled for her. She had been so courageous; she had shown such fortitude, such resistance, such common sense, this beautiful proud woman; and she was now breaking down before one of her brother's employees.

"It can't go on much longer," I said, again gravely. "It will come to its own conclusion presently."

"Ah, but what conclusion?" she cried. "Who knows! Who knows?"

The sight of her agitation, of that splendid woman nigh to tears, thrilled me to the marrow with a storm of compassion and something more. I was carried out of myself.

"God be witness," I cried, "that while I live you shall be safe from any harm. God be my witness for that."

She uttered a tiny sob and put out her hand impulsively.

"You are good," she said brokenly. "I am a coward to give way. But I was alone. I have brooded over it all. And Frederic—Thank you, oh, thank you! To have said so much, perhaps, has helped me. Oh, we shall all live—live to talk of these days with shudders and thankfulness to God. You are right to call God to witness. He is our witness now—He looks down on us both, and He will help us. I will pray to Him this

night, as I have prayed three times a day."

She spoke in a voice full of emotion, and very low and earnest, and her hand was still in mine. And, as she finished, the two electric lights in the corridor went out, leaving us in pitch darkness. I felt the Princess shudder.

"Be brave," I whispered. "Oh, be brave! You have called to God. He will hear you."

"Yes, yes," she whispered back, and clutched my hand tighter, drawing nearer me till her furs rested against my breast. "But what is it? What does it mean?"

"It may mean nothing," I replied, "but it may mean ——"

I put my ear to the door, still holding her, and listened. Through the noises of the sea I could make out other and alien sounds. "They come... You must go. Can you find your way?"

"Let me stay," she murmured breathlessly.

"No, no; go," I said. "Your place is in your cabin just now. Remember, I know where it is and I can find you."

"Yes, find me," she panted. "Please find me. See, I—I have this." She put the butt of a revolver into my hand. "That has been by me since the first. But come; find me—if—if it is necessary."

I raised her hand to my lips and she melted away. I turned to the door.

"Lane!" I called. "Lane!"

His voice sailed back to me. "What's gone wrong with the lights?"

"They're coming," I said. "Look to your door." And even as I spoke a bar crashed upon mine from without. In an instant the corridor was full of noises. The mutineers were upon us, but they had divided their forces, and were coming at different quarters. It remained to be seen at which spot their main attack was to be delivered. I put my revolver through one of the holes we had drilled in the door, and fired. It was impossible to say if my shot took effect, but I hoped so, and I heard the sound of Lane's repeater at the farther end. The blows on the door were redoubled, and it seemed to me to be yielding. I emptied two more cartridges through the hole at a venture, and that one went home I knew, since I had touched a body with the muzzle as I pulled the trigger. Ellison was on guard in the saloon below, and Grant and the cook in the music saloon; and I judged from the sounds that reached me in the *melée* that they also were at work. By this time Barraclough and Jackson and the Prince had arrived on the scene, the last with a lantern which he swung over his head. Barraclough joined me, and Jackson was despatched to grope his way into the saloon to assist Ellison. The Prince himself took his station with Lane, and I heard the noise of his weapon several times. My door had not yet given way, but I was afraid of those swinging blows, and both Barraclough and I continued to fire. The corridor filled with smoke and the smell of powder.

"Do you think he's made up his mind to get through

here?" asked Barraclough.

"I don't know," I shouted back. "He's attacking in three places, at any rate. We can't afford to neglect any one of them."

"Confound this darkness!" he exclaimed furiously. "Oh, for an hour of dawn!"

The blows descended on the door, but still it held, and I began to wonder why. Surely a body of men with axes should have destroyed the flimsy boards by this time. It looked as if this was not the real objective of the attack. I sprang to the bolt and was drawing it when Barraclough called out, for he could see in the dim light of the lantern.

"Good heavens, man, are you mad?"

"No," I called back. "Stand ready to fire. I believe there's practically no one behind this"; and, having now released the bolt, I flung open the door. Simultaneously Barraclough fired through the open darkness, and a body took the deck heavily, floundering on the threshold. The rest was silence. No one was visible or audible. But at my feet lay two bodies.

"I thought so," I said excitedly. "This was mere bluff. And so's the attack on Lane's door. See, there's no force there. I will settle that."

I delivered a pistol shot along the deck in the direction of some shadows, and retreated, bolting the door behind me.

"Where is it?" gasped Barraclough, out of breath.

"One at each door will do," said I. "Fetch Lane here. I think its the music-room. You and I had better get there as fast as we can."

Without disputing my assumption of authority, he ran down the corridor, and explained our discovery, returning presently with Lane. Then we made for the music-room.

It was pitch black on the stairs, but we groped our way through, guided by the sounds within. Barraclough struck a match and shed a light on the scene. For an instant it flared and sputtered, discovering to us the situation in that cockpit. The place was a shambles. Grant was at bay in a corner, the cook lay dead, and half a dozen mutineers were struggling in the foreground with some persons I could not see: while through the broken boards of the windows other men were climbing. With an oath Barraclough dropped his match and rushed forward. My revolver had barked as he did so, and one of the ruffians who was crawling through the window toppled head first into the saloon. But the darkness hampered us, for it was impossible to tell who was friend or enemy; and I believe it had hampered the mutineers also, or they must have triumphed long ere this. I engaged in a hand-to-hand struggle with some one who gripped me by the throat and struck at me with a knife. I felt it rip along my shoulder, and a throb of pain jumped in my arm. But the next moment I had him under foot and had used the last cartridge in my chamber.

"Where are you, Grant, Barraclough, Ellison?" I called out, and I heard above the din of oaths and feet and bumping a voice call hoarsely to me. Whose it was I

could not say and upon that came an exclamation of pain or cry. "My God!"

With the frenzy of the lust of blood upon me, I seized some one and drove my revolver heavily into his skull. I threw another man to the floor from behind, and was then seized as in a grasp of a vice. I turned about and struggled fiercely, and together my assailant and I rocked and rolled from point to point. Neither of us had any weapon, it appeared, and all that we could do was to struggle in that mutual and tenacious grip and trust to chance. I felt myself growing weaker, but I did not relax my hold and, indeed, came to the conclusion that if I was to survive it must be by making a superhuman effort. With all the force of my muscles and the weight of my body I pushed my man forward, at the same time striving to bend him backward. He gave way a little and struck the railings that surrounded the well of the saloon, bumping along them heavily. Then recovering, he exerted all his strength against me, and we swayed together. Suddenly there was a crack in my ears, the rail parted asunder, and we both toppled over into space. A thud followed which seemed to be in my very brain, and then I knew nothing.

When I was next capable of taking in impressions with my senses I was aware of a great stillness. Vacantly my mind groped its way back to the past, and I recalled that I had fallen, and must be now in the saloon. Immediately on that I was conscious that I was resting upon some still body, which must be that of my opponent who had fallen under me. What had happened? I could hear no sounds of any conflict

in progress. Had the enemy taken possession of the state-rooms, and were all of our party prisoners or dead? I rose painfully into a sitting posture, and put out a hand to guide myself. It fell on a quiet face. The man was dead.

It was with infinite difficulty that I got to my feet, sore, aching, and dizzy, and groped my way to the wall. Which way was I to go? Which way led out? The only sound I seemed to hear was the regular thumping of the screw below me, which was almost as if it had been in the arteries of my head, beating in consonance with my heart. Then an idea struck me, flooding me with horror, and bracing my shattered nerves. The Princess! I had promised to go to her if all was lost. I had betrayed my trust.

As I thought this I staggered down the saloon, clutching the wall, and came abruptly against a pillar which supported the balcony above. From this I let myself go at a venture, and walked into the closed door forthright. Congratulating myself on my luck, I turned the handle and passed into the darkness of the passages beyond. And now a sound of voices flowed toward me, voices raised in some excitement, and I could perceive a light some way along the passage in the direction of the officers' cabins. As I stood waiting, resolute, not knowing if these were friends or foes, and fearing the latter, a man emerged toward me with a lantern.

"If that fool would only switch on the light it would be easier," he said in a voice which I did not recognise. But the face over the lantern was familiar to me. It was Pierce, the murderer of McCrae, and the chief figure after Holgate in that mutiny and

massacre. I shrank back behind the half-open door, but he did not see me. He had turned and gone back with an angry exclamation.

"Stand away there!" I heard, in a voice of authority, and I knew the voice this time.

It was Holgate's. The mutineers had the ship.

What, then, had become of the Prince's party? What fate had enveloped them? I waited no longer, but staggered rather than slipped out of the saloon and groped in the darkness toward the stairs. Once on them, I pulled myself up by the balustrade until I reached the landing, where the entrance-hall gave on the state-rooms. I was panting, I was aching, every bone seemed broken in my body, and I had no weapon. How was I to face the ruffians, who might be in possession of the rooms? I tried the handle of the door, but it was locked. I knocked, and then knocked louder with my knuckles. Was it possible that some one remained alive? Summoning my wits to my aid, I gave the signal which had been used by me on previous occasions on returning from my expeditions. There was a pause; then a key turned; the door opened, and I fell forward into the corridor.

CHAPTER XVI

Pye

I looked up into Barraclough's face.

"Then you're all right," I said weakly; "and the Princess——"

"We've held these rooms, and by heaven we'll keep 'em," said he vigorously.

I saw now that his left arm was in a sling, but my gaze wandered afield under the lantern in search of others.

"The Prince and the Princess are safe," said he, in explanation. "But it's been a bad business for us. We've lost the cook, Jackson, and Grant, and that little beggar, Pye."

I breathed a sigh of relief at his first words; and then as I took in the remainder of his sentence, "What! is Pye dead?"

"Well, he's missing, anyway," said Barraclough indifferently; "but he's not much loss."

"Perhaps he's in his cabin. He locked himself in earlier," I said. "Give me an arm, like a good fellow. I'm winged and I'm all bruises. I fell into the saloon."

"Gad, is that so?" said he; and I was aware that some one else was listening near. I raised my head, and, taking Barraclough's hand, looked round. It was Princess Alix. I could make her out from her figure, but I could not see her face.

"You have broken an arm?" she said quickly.

"It is not so bad as that, Miss Morland," I answered. "I got a scrape on the shoulder and the fall dazed me."

I was now on my feet again, and Barraclough dropped me into a chair. "They got in by the windows of the music-room," I said.

"Yes," he assented. "Ellison and Jackson ran up from the saloon on the alarm, apparently just in time to meet the rush. Ellison's bad—bullet in the groin."

"I must see to him," I said, struggling up. A hand pressed me gently on the shoulder, and even so I winced with pain.

"You must not go yet," said the Princess. "There is yourself to consider. You are not fit."

I looked past her towards the windows, some of which had been unbarred in the conflict.

"I fear I can't afford to be an invalid," I said. "There is so much to do. I will lie up presently, Miss Morland. If Sir John will be good enough to get me my bag, which is in the ante-chamber, I think I can make up on what I have."

Barraclough departed silently, and I was alone with the Princess.

"I did not come," I said. "I betrayed my trust."

She came a little nearer to my seat. "You would have come if there had been danger," she said earnestly. "Yet why do we argue thus when death is everywhere? Three honest men have perished, and we are nearer home by so much."

"Home!" said I, wondering.

"Yes, I mean home," she said in a quick, low voice.

"Don't think that I am a mere foolish woman. I have always seen the end, and sometimes it appears to me that we are wasting time in fighting. I know what threatens, what must fall, and I thank God I am prepared for it. See, did I not show you before?" and here she laid her hand upon her bosom, which was heaving.

I shook my head. "You are wrong," said I feebly. "There is nothing certain yet. Think, I beg you, how many chances God scatters in this world, and how to turn a corner, to pause a moment, may change the face of destiny. A breath, a wind, the escape of a jet of steam, a valve astray, a jagged rock in the ocean, the murmur of a voice, a handshake—anything the least in this world may cause the greatest revolution in this world. No, you must not give up hope."

"I will not," she said. "I will hope on; but I am ready for the worst."

"And the Prince?" I asked.

"I think he has changed much of late," she said slowly. "He is altered. Yet I do think he, too, is ready. The prison closes upon us."

She had endured so bravely. That delicate nature had breasted so nobly these savage perils and mischances that it was no wonder her fortitude had now given way. But that occasion was the only time she exhibited anything in common with the strange fatalism of her brother, of which I must say something presently. It was the only time I knew that intrepid girl to fail, and even then she failed with dignity.

Barraclough returned with my bag, and I selected from it what I wanted. I knew that, beyond bruises and shock, there was little the matter with me, and for that I must thank the chance that had flung me on the body of my assailant, and not underneath it. There was need of me at that crisis, as I felt, and it was no hour for the respectable and judicious methods of ordinary practice. I had to get myself up to the norm of physique, and I did so.

"Well," said Lane, who had been attending to Ellison, "they've appropriated the coker-nut. It wasn't my fault, for the beggars kept me and the Prince busy at the door, and then, before you could say 'knife,' they were off. A mean, dirty trick's what I call it!"

"Oh, that's in the campaign!" I said. "And what said the Prince?"

"Swore like a private in the line—at least, I took it for swearing, for it was German. And then we ran as hard as we could split to the row, but it was too late. There wasn't any one left. All was over save the shouting."

"Then the Prince is well?" I asked.

"Not a pimple on him, old man," said the efflorescent Lane, "and he's writing like blue blazes in his cabin."

What was he writing? Was that dull-blue eye eloquent of fate? When he should be afoot, what did he at his desk? Even as I pondered this question, a high voice fluted through the corridor and a door opened with a bang. It was Mademoiselle. She dashed across, a flutter of skirts and a flurry of agitation, and disappeared into the apartments

occupied by the Prince. Princess Alix stood on the threshold with a disturbed look upon her face.

"She's gone to raise Cain," said Lane, with a grimace.

"We've got enough Cain already," said I, and walked to the window opposite. Dawn was now flowing slowly into the sky, and objects stood out greyly in a grey mist. From the deck a noise broke loudly, and Lane joined us.

"Another attack," said he. "They're bound to have us now."

I said nothing. Barraclough was listening at the farther end, and I think Princess Alix had turned her attention from Mademoiselle. I heard Holgate's voice lifted quite calmly in the racket:

"It's death to two, at all events. So let me know who makes choice. You, Garrison?"

"Let's finish the job," cried a voice. "We've had enough," and there was an outcry of applause.

Immediately on that there was a loud rapping on the door near us.

"When I've played my cards and fail, gentlemen," said Holgate's voice, "I'll resign the game into your hands."

"What is it?" shouted Barraclough. "Fire, and be hanged!"

"You mistake, Sir John," called out Holgate. "We're not anxious for another scrap. We've got our bellies full. All we want is a little matter that can be settled

amicably. I won't ask you to open, for I can't quite trust the tempers of my friends here. But if you can hear me, please say so."

"I hear," said Barraclough.

"That's all right, then. I won't offer to come in, for William Tell may be knocking about. We can talk straight out here. We want the contents of those safes, that's all—a mere modest request in the circumstances."

"You've got the safes," shouted Barraclough. "Let us alone."

"Softly, Sir John, Bart.," said the mutineer. "The safes are there safe enough, but there's nothing in 'em. You've got back on us this time, by thunder, you have. And the beauty of the game was its simplicity. Well, here's terms again, since we're bound to do it in style of plenipotentiaries. Give us the contents of the safes, and I'll land you on the coast here within twelve hours with a week's provisions."

There was a moment's pause on this, and Barraclough looked toward me in the dim light, as if he would, ask my advice.

"They've got the safes," he said in perplexity. "This is more treachery, I suppose."

"Shoot 'em," said Lane furiously. "Don't trust the brutes."

"Wait a bit," said I hurriedly. "Don't let's be rash. We had better call Mr. Morland. There's something behind this. Tell them that we will answer presently."

Barraclough shouted the necessary statement, and I hurried off to the Prince's cabin. I knocked, and entered abruptly. Mademoiselle sat in a chair with a face suffused with tears, her pretty head bowed in her hands. She looked up.

"What are we to do, doctor? The Prince says we must fight. But there is another way, is there not?" she said in French. "Surely, we can make peace. I will make peace myself. This agitates my nerves, this fighting and the dead; and oh, Frederic! you must make peace with this 'Olgate."

The Prince sat awkwardly silent, his eyes blinking and his mouth twitching. What he had said I know not, but, despite the heaviness of his appearance, he looked abjectly miserable.

"It is not possible, Yvonne," he said hoarsely. "These men must be handed over to justice."

I confess I had some sympathy with Mademoiselle at the moment, so obstinately stupid was this obsession of his. To talk of handing the mutineers over to justice when we were within an ace of our end and death knocking veritably on the door!

"The men, sir, wish to parley with you," I said somewhat brusquely. "They are without and offer terms."

He got up. "Ah, they are being defeated!" he said, and nodded. "Our resistance is too much for them." I could not have contradicted him just then, for it would probably have led to an explosion on the lady's part. But it came upon me to wonder if the Prince knew anything of the contents of the safes.

They were his, and he had a right to remove them. Had he done so? I couldn't blame him if he had. He walked out with a ceremonious bow to Mademoiselle, and I followed. She had dried her eyes, and was looking at me eagerly. She passed into the corridor in front of me, and pressed forward to where Barraclough and Lane stood.

"The mutineers, sir, offer terms," said Barraclough to the Prince. "They propose that if we hand over the contents of the safes we shall be landed on the coast with a week's provisions."

The Prince gazed stolidly and stupidly at his officer.

"I do not understand," said he. "The scoundrels are in possession of the safes."

"That is precisely what we should all have supposed," I said drily. "But it seems they are not."

"Look here, Holgate," called out Barraclough after a moment's silence, "are we to understand that you have not got the safes open?"

It seemed odd, questioning a burglar as to his success, but the position made it necessary.

"We have the safes open right enough," called Holgate hoarsely, "but there's nothing there—they're just empty. And so, if you'll be so good as to fork out the swag, captain, we'll make a deal in the terms I have said."

"It is a lie. They have everything," said the Prince angrily.

"Then why the deuce are they here, and what are

they playing at?" said Barraclough, frowning.

"Only a pretty little game of baccarat. Oh, my hat!" said Lane.

"It seems to me that there's a good deal more in this than is apparent," I said. "The safes were full, and the strong-room was secure. We are most of us witnesses to that. But what has happened? I think, Sir John, it would be well if we asked the—Mr. Morland forthwith if he has removed his property. He has a key."

"No, sir, I have not interfered," said the Prince emphatically. "I committed my property to the charge of this ship and to her officers. I have not interfered."

Barraclough and I looked at each other. Lane whistled, and his colour deepened.

"There, doctor, that's where I come in. I told you so. That's a give-away for me. I've got the other key—or had."

"Had!" exclaimed the Prince, turning on him abruptly.

"Yes," said Lane with sheepish surliness. "I was telling the doctor about it not long ago. My key's gone off my bunch. I found it out just now. Some one's poached it."

The Prince's eyes gleamed ferociously, as if he would have sprung on the little purser, who slunk against the wall sullenly.

"When did you miss it?" asked Barraclough sharply.

"Oh, about an hour and a half ago!" said Lane, in an offhand way.

"He has stolen it. He is the thief!" thundered the Prince.

Lane glanced up at him with a scowl. "Oh, talk your head off!" said he moodily, "I don't care a damn if you're prince or pot-boy. We're all on a level here, and we're not thieves."

Each one looked at the other. "We're cornered," said Barraclough. "It will make 'em mad, if they haven't got that. There's no chance of a bargain."

"It is not my desire there should be any bargain," said the Prince stiffly.

Barraclough shrugged his shoulders and said nothing. But it was plain to all that we were in a hole. The mutineers were probably infuriated by finding the treasure gone, and at any moment might renew their attack. There was but a small prospect that we could hold out against them.

"We must tell them," said I; "at least, we must come to some arrangement with them. The question is whether we shall pretend to fall in with their wishes, or at least feign to have what they want. It will give us time, but how long?"

"There is no sense in that," remarked Prince Frederic in his autocratic way. "We will send them about their business and let them do what they can."

"Sir, you forget the ladies," I said boldly.

"Dr. Phillimore, I forget nothing," he replied

formally. "But will you be good enough to tell me what the advantage of postponing the discovery will be?"

Well, when it came to the point, I really did not know. It was wholly a desire to delay, an instinct in favour of procrastination, that influenced me. I shrank from the risks of an assault in our weakened state. I struggled with my answer.

"It is only to gain time."

"And what then?" he inquired coldly.

I shrugged my shoulders as Sir John had shrugged his. This was common sense carried to the verge of insanity. There must fall a time when there is no further room for reasoning, and surely it had come now.

"You will be good enough to inform the mutineers, Sir John Barraclough," pursued the Prince, having thus silenced me, "that we have not the treasure they are in search of, and that undoubtedly it is already in their hands, or in the hands of some of them, possibly by the assistance of confederates," with which his eyes slowed round to Lane.

The words, foolish beyond conception, as I deemed them, suddenly struck home to me. "Some of them!" If the Prince had not shifted his treasure, certainly Lane had not. I knew enough of the purser to go bail for him in such a case. And he had lost his key. I think it was perhaps the mere mention of confederates that set my wits to work, and what directed them to Pye I know not.

"Wait one moment," said I, putting my hand on Barraclough. "I'd like to ask a question before you precipitate war," and raising my voice I cried, "Is Holgate there?"

"Yes, doctor, and waiting for an answer, but I've got some tigers behind me."

"Then what's become of Pye?" I asked loudly.

There was a perceptible pause ere the reply came. "Can't you find him?"

"No," said I. "He was last seen in his cabin about midnight, when he locked himself in."

"Well, no doubt he is there now," said Holgate, with a fat laugh. "And a wise man, too. I always betted on the little cockney's astuteness. But, doctor, if you don't hurry up, I fear we shall want sky-pilots along."

"What is this? Why are you preventing my orders being carried out?" asked the Prince bluffly.

I fell back. "Do as you will," said I. "Our lives are in your hands."

Barraclough shouted the answer dictated to him, and there came a sound of angry voices from the other side of the door. An axe descended on it, and it shivered.

"Stand by there," said Barraclough sharply, and Lane closed up.

Outside, the noise continued, but no further blow was struck, and at last Holgate's voice was raised again:

"We will give you till eight o'clock this evening, captain, and good-day to you. If you part with the goods then, I'll keep my promise and put you ashore in the morning. If not——" He went off without finishing his sentence.

"He will not keep his promise, oh, he won't!" said a tense voice in my ear; and, turning, I beheld the Princess.

"That is not the trouble," said I, as low as she. "It is that we have not the treasure, and we are supposed to be in possession of it."

"Who has it?" she asked quickly.

"Your brother denies that he has shifted it, but the mutineers undoubtedly found it gone. It is an unfathomed secret so far."

"But," she said, looking at me eagerly, "you have a suspicion."

"It is none of us," I said, with an embracing glance.

"That need not be said," she replied quickly. "I know honest men."

She continued to hold me with her interrogating eyes, and an answer was indirectly wrung from me.

"I should like to know where Pye is," I said.

She took this not unnaturally as an evasion. "But he's of no use," she said. "You have told me so. We have seen so together."

It was pleasant to be coupled with her in that way,

even in that moment of wonder and fear. I stared across at the door which gave access to the stairs of the saloon.

"It is possible they have left no one down below," I said musingly.

She followed my meaning this time. "Oh, you mustn't venture it!" she said. "It would be foolhardy. You have run risks enough, and you are wounded."

"Miss Morland," I answered. "This is a time when we can hardly stop to consider. Everything hinges on the next few hours. I say it to you frankly, and I will remember my promise this time."

"You remembered it before. You would have come," she said, with a sudden burst of emotion; and somehow I was glad. I liked her faith in me.

"What the deuce do you make of it?" said Barraclough to me.

I shook my head. "I'll tell you later when I've thought it over," I answered. "At present I'm bewildered—also shocked. I've had a startler, Barraclough." He stared at me. "I'll walk round and see. But I don't know if it will get us any further."

"There's only one thing that will do that," said he significantly.

"You mean——"

"We must make this sanguinary brute compromise. If he will land us somewhere——"

"Oh, he won't!" I said. "I've no faith in him."

"Well, if they haven't the treasure, they may make terms to get it," he said in perplexity.

"*If* they have not," I said. He looked at me. "The question is, who has the treasure?" I continued.

"Good heavens, man, if you know—speak out," he said impatiently.

"When I know I'll speak," I said; "but I will say this much, that whoever is ignorant of its whereabouts, Holgate isn't."

"I give it up," said Barraclough.

"Unhappily, it won't give us up," I rejoined. "We are to be attacked this evening if we don't part with what we haven't got."

He walked away, apparently in despair of arriving at any conclusion by continuing the conversation. I went toward the door, for I still had my idea. I wondered if there was anything in it. Princess Alix had moved away on the approach of Sir John, but now she interrupted me.

"You're not going?" she asked anxiously.

"My surgery is below," said I. "I must get some things from it."

She hesitated. "Won't—wouldn't that man Holgate let you have them? You are running too great a risk."

"That is my safety," I said, smiling. "I go down. If no one is there so much the better; if some one crops up I have my excuse. The risk is not great. Will you be good enough to bar the door after me?"

This was not quite true, but it served my purpose. She let me pass, looking after me with wondering eyes. I unlocked the door and went out into the lobby that gave on the staircase. There was no sound audible above the noises of the ship. I descended firmly, my hand on the butt of a revolver I had picked up. No one was visible at the entrance to the saloon. I turned up one of the passages toward my own cabin. I entered the surgery and shut the door. As I was looking for what I wanted, or might want, I formulated my chain of reflections. Here they are.

The key had been stolen from Lane. It could only have been stolen by some one in our own part of the ship, since the purser had not ventured among the enemy.

Who had stolen it?

Here was a break, but my links began a little further on, in this way.

If the person who had stolen the key, the traitor that is in our camp, had acted in his own interests alone, both parties were at a loss. But that was not the hypothesis to which I leaned. If, on the other hand, the traitor had acted in Holgate's interests, who was he?

Before I could continue my chain to the end, I had something to do, a search to make. I left the surgery noiselessly and passed along the alley to Pye's cabin. The handle turned and the door gave. I opened it. No one was there.

That settled my links for me. The man whom I had encountered in the fog at the foot of the bridge was

the man who was in communication with Holgate. That pitiful little coward, whose stomach had turned at the sight of blood and on the assault of the desperadoes, was their creature. As these thoughts flashed through my mind it went back further in a leaf of memory. I recalled the room in the "Three Tuns" on that dirty November evening; I saw Holgate and the little clerk facing each other across the table and myself drinking wine with them. There was the place in which I had made the third officer's acquaintance, and that had been brought about by Pye. There, too, I had first heard of Prince Frederic of Hochburg; and back into my memory flashed the stranger's talk, the little clerk's stare, and Holgate's frown. The conspiracy had been hatched then. Its roots had gone deep then; from that moment the *Sea Queen* and her owner had been doomed.

I turned and left the cabin abruptly and soon was knocking with the concocted signal on the door. Barraclough admitted me.

"I have it," said I. "Let's find the Prince."

"Man, we can't afford to leave the doors."

"We may be attacked," said he.

"No; they won't venture just yet," I replied. "It's not their game—at least, not Holgate's. He's giving us time to find the treasure and then he'll attack."

"I wish you wouldn't talk riddles," said Barraclough shortly.

"I'll speak out when we get to the Prince," I said; and forthwith we hastened to his room.

"Mr. Morland," I burst out, "Pye came aboard as representing your solicitors?"

"That is so," he replied with some surprise in his voice and manner.

"He was privy then to your affairs—I refer to your financial affairs?" I pursued.

"My solicitors in London, whom I chose in preference to German solicitors, were naturally in possession of such facts relating to myself as were necessary to their advice," said the Prince somewhat formally.

"And Pye knew what they knew—the contents of the safes in the strong-room?"

He inclined his head. "It was intended that he should return from Buenos Ayres, after certain arrangements had been made for which he would lend his assistance."

"Then, sir," said I, "Pye has sold us. Pye is the source of the plot; Pye has the treasure."

"What do you mean?" exclaimed the Prince, rising.

"Why, that Pye has been in league with the mutineers all along, and—good Lord, now I understand what was the meaning of his hints last night. He knew the attack was to be made, and he is a coward. He locked himself up to drink. Now he is gone."

"Gone!" echoed Barraclough and Lane together; and there was momentary silence, which the latter broke.

"By gum, Pye's done us brown—browner than a

kipper! By gum, to think of that little wart getting the bulge on us!"

"I should like to know your reasons, doctor," said Prince Frederic at last.

"I'm hanged if I can puzzle it out yet myself," said Barraclough. "If they've got it, why the deuce do they come and demand it from us?"

"Oh, *they* haven't got it," I said. "It's only Holgate and Pye. The rank and file know nothing, I'll swear. As for my reasons, sir, here they are"; and with that I told them what I knew of Pye from my first meeting with him, giving an account of the transactions in the "Three Tuns," and narrating many incidents which now seemed in the light of my discovery to point to the treachery of the clerk. When I had done, Lane whistled, the Prince's brow was black, but Barraclough's face was impassive. He looked at me.

"Then you are of opinion that Holgate is running this show for himself?" he asked.

"I will wager ten to one on it," I answered. "That's like him. He'll leave the others in the lurch if he can. He's aiming at it. And he'll leave Pye there, too, I shouldn't wonder. And if so, what sort of a man is that to make terms with?"

Barraclough made no answer. For a man of his even nature he looked troubled.

"If this it so, what are you in favour of?" he said at last.

The Prince, too, looked at me inquiringly, which

showed that he had fully accepted my theory.

"Go on as we are doing and trust to luck," said I.

"Luck!" said the Prince, raising his fingers. "Chance! Destiny! Providence! Whatever be the term, we must abide it. It is written, gentlemen; is has been always written. If God design us our escape, we shall yet avoid and upset the calculations of these ruffians. Yes, it is written. You are right, Dr. Phillimore. There must be no faint heart. Sir John, give your orders and make your dispositions. I will take my orders from you."

This significant speech was delivered with a fine spontaneity, and I must say the man's fervour impressed me. If he was a fatalist, he was a fighting fatalist, and I am sure he believed in his fortune. I was not able to do that; but I thought we had, in the vulgar phrase, a sporting chance. And that I was right events proved, as you will presently see.

CHAPTER XVII

The Third Attack

Holgate had given us till eight o'clock, but it was of course, uncertain if he would adhere to this hour. If I were right in my suppositions (and I could see no flaw in my reasoning), he would present himself at that time and carry out the farce. It was due to his men, to the other scoundrels of the pack whom he was cheating. And what would happen when we maintained that we had no knowledge of the treasure? It was clear that the men would insist on an assault. And if so, what chance had we against the infuriated ruffians? On the other hand, we had nothing to hope for from a compromise with such men. Altogether, the outlook was very black and lowering. When the Prince and all that remained with him were swept away, and were as if they had never been, Holgate would be free to deal with the mutineers according to his tender mercies; and then, with such confederates as he might have in the original plot, come into possession of the plunder for which so many innocent lives and so many guilty ones would have been sacrificed.

By now the wind had sprung into a gale, and the *Sea Queen* was running under bare sticks. The water rolled heavily from the southwest, and the yacht groaned under the buffets. It became difficult to stand—at least, for a landsman. We had hitherto experienced such equable, fine weather that I think we had taken for granted that it must continue. But now we were undeceived. The yacht pitched uneasily and rolled to her scuppers, and it was as much as we could do to keep our legs. Holgate, too, must have been occupied by the duties of his position, for he was a good mariner, which was, perhaps, as well for us. Chance decides according to her fancy, and the most trivial accidents are important in the scheme of destiny. Mademoiselle had an attack of *mal de mer* and had recourse to me. Nothing in the world mattered save her sensations, which were probably very unpleasant, I admit. But the yacht might go to the bottom, and Holgate might storm the state-rooms at the head of his mutineers—it was all one to the lady who was groaning over her symptoms on her bed. She kept me an unconscionable time, and when I at length got away to what I regarded as more important duties I was followed by her maid. This girl, Juliette, was a trim, sensible, and practical woman, who had grown accustomed to her mistress's vagaries, took them with philosophy, and showed few signs of emotion. But now a certain fear flowed in her eye.

Would Monsieur tell her if there were any danger? Monsieur looked up, balanced himself neatly against the wall, as the yacht reared, and declared that he had gone through much worse gales. She shook her head with some energy.

"No, no, it was not that. There were the sailors—those demons. Was it true that they had offered to put us all ashore?"

"Yes," said I, "if we give them what we have not got. That is what they promise, Juliette. But would you like to trust them?"

She considered a moment, her plain, capable face in thought. "No." She shook her head. "Mademoiselle would do well to beware of them. Yes, yes," and with a nod she left me.

Now what did that mean? I asked myself, and I could only jump to the conclusion that Mademoiselle had thoughts of making a bargain with Holgate on her own account. I knew she was capable of yielding to any caprice or impulse. If there had not been tragedy in the air it would have amused me to ponder the possibilities of that conflict of wits and brains between Holgate and the lady. But she was a victim to sea-sickness, and our hour drew near. Indeed, it was then but two hours to eight o'clock.

It was necessary to take such precautions as we might in case Holgate kept his word. But it was possible that in that wind and sea he would not. However, to be prepared for the worst, we had a council. There were now but the Prince, Barraclough, Lane and myself available, for Ellison was in a bad way. The spareness of our forces was thus betrayed by this meeting, which was in effect a council of despair. We made our arrangements as speedily as possible, and then I asked:

"The ladies? We must have some definite plan."

The Prince nodded. "They must be locked in the *boudoir*," he said. "It has entrances from both their cabins."

"The last stand, then, is there?" I remarked casually.

He echoed the word "there."

I had my duties in addition to those imposed by our dispositions, and I was not going to fail—I knew I should not fail. Outside in the corridor we sat and nursed our weapons silently. I don't think that any one was disposed to talk; but presently the Prince rose and retired to his room. He returned presently with a magnum of champagne, and Barraclough drew the cork, while Lane obtained some glasses.

"Let's have a wet. That's a good idea," said the purser.

The Prince ceremoniously lifted his glass to us and took our eyes.

Lane quaffed his, emitting his usual gag hoarsely.

"Fortune!"

How amazingly odd it sounded, like the ironic exclamation of some onlooking demon of sarcasm.

"Fortune!"

I drank my wine at a gulp. "To a good end, if may be," I said. "To rest, at least."

Barraclough held his glass coolly and examined it critically.

"It's Pommery, isn't it, sir?" he asked.

I do not think the Prince answered. Barraclough sipped.

"I'll swear it is," said he. "Let's look at the bottle, Lane."

He solved his doubts, and drank and looked at his watch. "If they're coming, they should be here now."

"The weather's not going to save us," I observed bitterly; "she goes smoother."

It was true enough. The wind and the sea had both moderated. Barraclough examined the chambers of his revolver.

"Sir John Barraclough!"

A voice hailed us loudly from the deck. Sir John moved slowly to the door and turned back to look at us. In its way it was an invitation. He did not speak, but I think he invoked our aid, or at least our support, in that look. We followed.

"Yes," he called back, "I'm here."

"We've come for the answer," said the voice. "You've had plenty of time to turn it over. So what's it to be —the terms offered or war?"

"Is it Holgate?" said Lane in a whisper.

"Oh, it's Holgate, no doubt. Steady! Remember who has the treasure, Barraclough."

"The treasure is not in our possession," sang out Barraclough. "But we believe it to be in the possession of Holgate—one of yourselves."

"Oh, come, that won't do—that game won't play," said a familiar wheezy voice from behind us, and we all fell back in alarm and amazement.

The boards had fallen loose from one of the windows, and Holgate's head protruded into the corridor. In a flash the Prince's fingers went to his revolver, and a report echoed from the walls, the louder for that confined space. Holgate had disappeared. Barraclough ran to the window and peered out. He looked round.

"That opens it," he said deliberately, and stood with a look of perplexity and doubt on his face.

"Since you have chosen war and begun the offensive we have no option," shouted Holgate through the boarding.

"All right, drive ahead," growled Lane, and sucked his teeth.

Crash came an iron bar on the door. Barraclough inserted his revolver through the open window and fired. "One," said he.

"Two, by thunder!" said Lane, discharging through one of the holes pierced in the door.

"They'll play us the same trick as before," said I, and dashed across to the entrance from the music-room.

Noises arose from below. I tested the locks and bars, and then running hastily into one of the cabins brought forth a table and used it to strengthen the barricade. Prince Frederic, observing this, nodded and gave instructions to Lane, who went on a similar

errand on behalf of the other door.

Crash fell the axe on my door, and the wood splintered. Lane and Prince Frederic were busy firing through the loopholes, with what result I could not guess, and probably they themselves knew little more. Barraclough stood at his peephole and fired now and then, and I did the same through the holes drilled in my door. But it must have been easy for any one on the outside to avoid the line of fire if he were careful. I was reminded that two could play at this game by a bullet which sang past my face and buried itself in the woodwork behind me. The light was now failing fast, and we fought in a gloaming within those walls, though without the mutineers must have seen better. The axe fell again and again, and the door was giving in several places. Once there was a respite following on a cry, and I rejoiced that one of my shots had gone home. But the work was resumed presently with increased vigour.

And now of a sudden an outcry on my left startled me. I turned, and saw Prince Frederic in combat with a man, and beyond in the twilight some other figures. The door to the deck had fallen. Leaving my own door to take care of itself, I hastened to what was the immediate seat of danger, and shot one fellow through the body. He fell like a bullock, and then the Prince gave way and struck against me. His left arm had dropped to his side, but in his right hand he now held a sword, and, recovering, he thrust viciously and with agility before him. Before that gallant assault two more went down, and as Lane and Barraclough seemed to be holding their own, it seemed almost as if we should get the better of the

attack. But just then I heard rather than saw the second door yielding, and with shouts the enemy clambered over the table and were upon us from that quarter also. Beneath this combined attack we slowly gave way and retreated down the corridor, fighting savagely. The mutineers must have come to the end of their ammunition, for they did not use revolvers, but knives and axes. One ruffian, whom in the uncertain light I could not identify, bore a huge axe, which he swung over his head, and aimed at me with terrific force. As I dodged it missed me and crashed into the woodwork of the cabins, from which no effort could withdraw it. I had stepped aside, and, although taking a knife wound in my thigh, slipped a blade through the fellow. But still they bore us back, and I knew in my inmost mind, where instinct rather than thought moved now, that it was time to think of the *boudoir* and my promise. We were being driven in that direction, and if I could only reach the handle I had resolved what to do.

But now it seemed again that I must be doomed to break my word, for how was it possible to resist that onset? There were, so far as I could guess, a dozen of the mutineers, but it was that fact possibly that helped us a little, as, owing to their numbers, they impeded one another. Prince Frederic was a marvellous swordsman, and he swept a passage clear before him; but at last his blade snapped in the middle, and he was left defenceless. I saw some one rush at him, and, the light gleaming on his face, I recognised Pierce. With my left hand I hurled my revolver into it with all the power of my muscles. It struck him full in the mouth, that ugly, lipless mouth which I abhorred. He uttered a cry of pain and

paused for a moment. But in that moment, abstracted from my own difficulties, I had given a chance to one of my opponents, whose uplifted knife menaced me. I had no time to draw back, and if I ducked I felt I should go under and be trodden upon by the feet of the infuriated enemy. Once down, I should never rise again. It seemed all over for me as well as for the Prince, and in far less time than it takes to relate this the thought had flashed into my head—flashed together with that other thought that the Princess would wait, and wait for me in vain. Ah, but would she wait? If I knew her fine-tempered spirit she would not hesitate. She had the means of her salvation; she carried it in her bosom, and feared not. No, I could not be afraid for her.

As I have said, these reflections were almost instantaneous, and they had scarcely passed in a blaze of wonder through my brain when the yacht lurched heavily, the deck slipped away from us, and the whole body of fighting, struggling men was precipitated with a crash against the opposite wall. Some had fallen to the floor, and others crawled against the woodwork, shouting oaths and crying for assistance. I had fallen with the rest, and lay against a big fellow whose back was towards me. I struggled from him and was climbing the slope of the deck, when she righted herself and rolled sharply over on the other side. This caused an incontinent rush of bodies across the corridor again, and for a moment all thought of renewing the conflict was abandoned. I recognised Prince Frederic as the man by me, and I whispered loudly in his ears, so that my voice carried through the clamour and the noises of the wind that roared outside round the state-rooms.

"Better make our last stand here. I mean the ladies...." He nodded.

"It will be better," he answered harshly. "Yes ... better."

He turned about, with his hand on the door-knob behind him, and now I saw that we had reached the entrance to the *boudoir*.

"Alix! ... Yvonne!" he called loudly through the keyhole. "You know what to do, beloved. Farewell!"

I had refilled my revolver in the pause and, with a fast-beating heart, turned now to that horrid cockpit once more. The first person my eyes lighted on was Holgate, broad, clean-faced, and grinning like a demon.

"He shall die, at any rate," said Prince Frederic, and lifted his revolver which he had reloaded. It missed fire; the second shot grazed Holgate's arm and felled a man behind him.

"No luck, Prince," said the fellow in his mocking voice, and in his turn raised a weapon of his own. But he did not fire. Instead, he turned swiftly round and made a dash towards the other end of the corridor.

"To me, men; this way! By heaven and thunder!"

His voice, fat as it was, pierced the din, and acted as a rallying cry. Several of the mutineers, now confronting us again, turned and followed him, and there was the noise of a struggle issuing from the darkness of the top end of the corridor.

"What the deuce is this?" screamed Barraclough in my ear.

"I don't know. Let's fall on. There's an alarm. They're ——! Now, by the Lord, it's Legrand, thank God! Legrand, Legrand!"

"Bully for Legrand!" cried Barraclough, wiping some blood from his face, and he set upon the mutineers from the rear. Those left to face us had scarcely recovered from their astonishment at the alarm when the Prince shot two, and a third went down to me. The others retreated towards their companions, and the three of us followed them up. I say the three, for I could not see Lane anywhere, and I feared that he had fallen.

The conflict thus renewed upon more equal terms found, nevertheless, most of the participants worn and exhausted. At least I can answer for myself, and I am sure that my companions were in a like case. The twilight that reigned disguised the scene of the struggle, so that each man saw but little beyond his own part in the affair; yet I was conscious that the mutineers were being pushed back towards the deck door. They had been caught between the two parties as it appeared, and Legrand's unexpected onset from the music-saloon entrance had thrown them into confusion. It was obvious that Legrand and his men were armed, for I heard a shot or two issuing from the *mêlée*, and above the noise of the oaths and thuds and thumpings was the clash of steel. Presently my man, who had engaged me over-long, dropped, and before me was a little vacancy of space, at the end of which, hard by the door, I discerned the bulky form of Holgate. He was leaning against the wall, as if

faint, and a revolver dropped from his fingers.

"By God, doctor, if I'd had any idea of this I'd have crucified 'em all," he said to me savagely; "but I'll get square yet. First you, and now Legrand! I'll be square yet."

As he spoke, panting, he heaved himself higher against the wall and levelled his revolver. In a flash my arm descended and knocked the weapon to the floor. I could see his grin even in the dim light.

"Well, it was empty, anyway, man," he said, "but I'll give you best for the present. I've my ship to look after."

I could have struck him down then and there, and I raised my point to do so; but he seized my arm. "Don't be a fool, my lad. She'll be gone in this wind, if I don't take charge. Have your fling if you want it," he screamed in my face above the clamour. For the noise of the wind was now increased and grown into a roar. It sounded as a menace in the ears, and I involuntarily paused and looked out of the doorway. The heavens were black, the waters ran white to the gunwale, and the *Sea Queen* staggered like a drunkard on her course. Holgate's practised eye had taken in the situation, and he had seen that he was necessary to the navigation of the yacht. And yet I marvelled at his coolness, at the strength of will and heroic resolution which could turn him of a sudden from one filled with the lust of blood and greed and battle into the patient sailor with his ship to save. These thoughts ran through my head as I paused. It was only a brief pause, so brief that it was no time ere I rejoined my companions in their attack on the

failing mutineers; but in it I had a glimpse deep into the chief mutineer's nature.

I let him go. His argument came home to me. I do not know that I could be said to have considered; rather his individuality dominated me in this appeal to something beyond our immediate quarrel, to a more ultimate good. Perhaps his very assurance, which was almost contemptuous in its expression, helped to dissuade me. I dropped my arm and he went. Outside, as I turned back, I saw him stay a moment and look upon us, that pack of desperate wolves and watch-dogs. Almost I could think he lifted his lips in a grin over his fancy. Then he disappeared into the gathering gloom, and, as I say, I returned to the attack. A few minutes later the mutineers broke and scattered. Their resistance was at an end, and they fled out into the night, leaving our party breathless, wounded, but secure and triumphant.

I say secure, but alas, the price of that security had been heavy! Legrand with two of his men had escaped unhurt, but two were dead and two seriously wounded. Lane had his face cut open; Barraclough had come off with a nasty stab in the ribs, and Prince Frederic was not to be found. We hunted in that scene of carnage, and I discovered him at last under the body of a dead mutineer. When we had got him forth he was still unconscious, but breathed heavily, and I found traces of internal injuries. I administered what was necessary, including a restorative, and he came to presently.

"Well, sir," said he weakly, "what's the report?"

"By heaven, sir, we've licked them," I cried. "Good news, sir. The dogs have run."

"They shall be hanged in due course," said he in a loud voice. "My luck holds, doctor." He waved his hand weakly down the corridor. "Tell the ladies. Acquaint—her Royal Highness."

It was the first time he had given his sister her proper style, and in a way this might be taken by those who look for omens as auspicious. Did his luck indeed hold, as he said?

I took the office on myself. The *Sea Queen* was galloping like a racer, and plunged as she ran. Two steps took me to the *boudoir* door, before which lay the body of one of our enemies. As the ship rolled it slipped away and began to creep down the corridor. The yacht reared before she dipped again, and a cascade of spray streamed over the side and entered by the broken door. I rapped loudly and called loudly; and in a trice the door opened, and the Princess Alix stood before me, glimmering like a ghost in the darkness.

"They are gone," I shouted. "We have won."

"Thank God! He has heard us," she exclaimed. "I could hear nothing for the sound of the sea and the wind. But oh, the suspense was terrible! My hair should be white!"

"Mademoiselle?" I asked.

"Mademoiselle sleeps," said she, and I thought there was something significant in her voice.

It was well that Mademoiselle slept. I left her and went back to the Prince, for more than he needed my care, and as I reached the group the roll of the yacht sent me flying. Legrand caught me.

"We can't spare you yet, doctor," he shouted.

"Thank God for you," I answered fervently. "You came in the nick of time."

"I thought we might have cut our way out last night, but I found we couldn't," he explained. "You see, we only had one knife, and it has been a tough job to get through the heavy wood of the partition."

"Thank God," I repeated, and clutched at him again as the floor rose up. "I'm not accustomed to this," I said with a laugh. "It's worse than the mutineers."

He answered nothing, for his gaze was directed towards the door.

"We must take charge," he shouted. "Good Lord, there's no time to lose."

"Holgate's there," I screamed back. "He went to look after the ship."

We stood holding on to each other, and Barraclough, Lane and the Prince were holding on by the brass rods on the cabin doors. She rolled and kicked and stood up at an angle of 45°.

"What is it?" I screamed.

Legrand pointed to the blackness without. "We'll get it in a little. I hope to God it will be no worse than this. She can't stand on her head with safety."

Suddenly the roar swelled louder, and dismal shrieks and whistlings sounded in the ears. The *Sea Queen* sank, and a whole tide of sea rushed over the bulwarks and flooded the state-rooms. The water ran knee-deep and set the bodies of the dead awash. One struck against me in the whirlpool. It was a ghastly scene, set in that gathered darkness.

"Nothing can be done. We've got to hold on," said Legrand. "He's a good seaman; I'll say that for him. But how many's he got with him? He's undermanned. It's all on the engine-room now."

We were silent again, mainly because it was almost impossible to hear anything through that tempest of wind and volcanic sea. She came right for a moment, and our grip of each other relaxed.

"I'm going, Legrand," I called to him.

"Don't be a fool," said he.

"Oh, I'm all right. I've forgotten something," I shouted. "I'll see to myself"; and I cut myself adrift from him.

I crossed the corridor successfully, and then the yacht heeled and I was almost precipitated to the other end of it. She was being knocked about like a tin pot in a gale. I seized a door-handle and hung on, and when the vessel recovered somewhat I twisted it, but it did not give. The *boudoir* must be farther on.

I crept on by means of the brass railing and at last reached a door which gave. I opened it and called out:

"Princess! Princess!"

Blackness filled the room. I could hear and see nothing human. I entered, and the door swung to behind with a clang.

"Princess!" I shouted, but I could hear no answer.

I groped in the darkness with both hands, and then I touched an arm! I seized it, and drew the owner to me gently.

"Princess!" I called, and this time an answer reached me through the raging elements:

"It is I."

"Thank God, you're safe. Do not be alarmed," I said, speaking into her ear. "The yacht's caught in a hurricane, but——"

There fell at that instant a resounding crash far above the noise of the storm, and we were thrown headlong against the outer wall of the *boudoir*. I knew that only, and then I knew no more.

CHAPTER XVIII

At Dead of Night

Consciousness flowed back upon me slowly, and I emerged in pain and in intense bewilderment from my swoon. The first sound that came to me in my awakening was the terrific roar of the water against the side of the yacht, the next a woman's scream. Recalling now the incidents exactly preceding my fall, I stirred and endeavoured to sit up, and then I was aware of being pinned down by a weight. It was, as will be remembered, pitch dark, but I put out my hand and felt the beating of a heart. There was also unmistakably a woman's bodice under my fingers. It was Princess Alix, who had fallen with me.

But what had happened? And what noise was screaming through the night, even above all that awful tumult of waste water and wild wind? I answered the second query first. It was Mademoiselle. Well, she could wait. My first concern must be for the Princess, who lay upon me a dead weight, but, as I knew, a living, breathing body. I carefully extricated myself and raised her. The yacht was stooping at an angle, and I was forced back against the wall with my burden. If it had been only light and I had known which way to move! I laid the Princess on the couch, which I discovered by groping, and tried to open the door. It was jammed. Then it dawned upon me that the screw had stopped. The noise of its beating was not among the many noises I heard. If it had stopped, only one thing could have happened. The *Sea Queen* must be ashore. That was the explanation. We had struck.

I was now the more anxious, as you may conceive, to get out of the cabin, for if we had struck it was essential to know how we stood and what degree of

risk we ran. For all I knew, the yacht might be sinking at that moment or breaking up upon rocks. Finding egress through the door impossible, I made my way with difficulty to the other side of the *boudoir*, where I knew there was a communication with the bedrooms. This door stood open, as it had been flung by the shock, and I was now able to locate the sounds of the screaming. They came from the cabin beyond, which I knew to be Mademoiselle's. I guided myself as well as I could to the door giving access to the corridor and unlocked it. As I did so a speck of light gleamed in the darkness and arrested me. It enlarged and emerged upon me till it took the shape of a candle, and underneath it I beheld the capable face of the French maid Juliette.

"It is necessary I should have something to quiet Mademoiselle, monsieur," said she in her tranquil way.

"I am in search of something now for the Princess, Juliette," I explained. "Thank God for your light. How did you get it?"

"I always have a candle with me when I travel, Monsieur," she replied. She was the most sensible woman I had ever met, and I could have embraced her.

"The yacht has gone aground," I said. "I will find out how much damage has been done. I will bring back what is necessary. The Princess lies in there. See to her."

With that I left her and stepped into the corridor.

Like the cabins, it was opaque with the night, but I groped my way across it without hearing any sounds of living people—only that terrible turmoil of waters without. I knew where my bag was. It was in the small cabin which the Prince used as his smoking-room, and in which we had sometimes played cards to pass the time during those days of anxiety and trouble. The first door I opened seemed to give me access to the open sea. The wind ramped in my face, and would have thrown me back, and I was drenched with a cascade of water. I thought I must have opened the door to the deck until I remembered that that had been destroyed in the fight. I put out a hand, and it touched a piece of furniture, and then once again the sea broke over me. There could be no other solution of the puzzle than this—that the outer wall of the cabin had been carried away. I judged that I was in the Prince's room.

I retraced my way, opening the door with difficulty, and, once more in the shelter of the corridor, felt my way along the railing. There seemed to be a foot of water about my legs, and it was icy chill. The next handle I hit upon I turned as before, and the door came back upon me with a rush, almost sending me headlong. I entered the cabin, and by dint of groping I reached the upholstered couch at the back. My bag was not where I had left it, but it could not be far away. The salt water flowed and oozed on the floor, but I dropped to my knees and hunted for it, and was at last rewarded by finding it jammed into a corner under a cupboard. Getting back into the corridor, I had now to determine whether to return at once to the Princess or to go in search of news.

I stood wavering, reluctant to leave her in her swoon all untended, and yet conscious that it would be wiser to ascertain the extent of our damages. Happily the decision was not forced upon me, for I saw in the distance a swinging lantern, which seemed to be advancing towards me down the corridor. I shouted, and the dim figure behind it stopped and turned the light upon me.

"You, Phillimore?"

It was Barraclough's voice. "What has happened?" I asked.

"Struck on a reef," he roared back. "She's tight yet, I think. But where are the ladies?"

"Let me have your lantern and I'll take you to them," said I, and, thanking Providence for that signal mercy, I crossed the corridor with him. The lantern shed a benign light upon the wreck of the *boudoir*. The Princess lay where I had left her; but her eyes were open, and I made use of my flask of cognac with beneficial results. Then I was plucked by the arm, and Barraclough claimed my attention.

"Mademoiselle Trebizond is ill," he called. "Give her something. You must see to her."

Of course that was my duty, and I took such steps as seemed necessary for one of so neurotic a nature.

"She is all right," I explained. "If the ship's in no danger just now they are best here. The maid has a candle."

I returned to Princess Alix and found her recovered,

and I bade her be of good cheer, shouting (for it was always shouting) that we had defied the mutineers successfully, and that we should also successfully defy the elements. Then I went back, for I had other work to do.

Barraclough informed me that the Prince had been taken to the music saloon, and Lane also was there. I therefore joined the relics of our company in that devastated chamber, and did what my skill availed to do for the injured. The Prince had been struck on the head and in the body, but the marks were not very apparent. He breathed heavily, but had still his old air of authority. Lane bubbled over with alternate fumes of petulance and passion; but he had his excuse, as he was suffering a great deal of pain. Ellison, too, wounded as he was, had dragged himself from his temporary hospital to the music-room. But one of Legrand's men had vanished, and it was supposed he had gone overboard in one of the great tides of sea that swept over the yacht. Legrand had ventured on deck, and clinging to the railings, had endeavoured to get some notion of the position of things. But he had seen and heard nothing beyond the storm.

"She's firm so far," he shouted in my ears, "and the night's clearing. I can see a star."

"The Star of Hope," I answered.

He shrugged his shoulders. "They may be at the pumps. But the sea's moderating and the wind's dropping. We shall know presently."

Something was now drawing me irresistibly back to

the Princess. My heart pined for the sight of her and the assurance that she had suffered no injury. I grew restless at the inaction, and, weary and bruised as I was, I think passion gave me wings and endurance. I left the music saloon and emerged into the lobby where the stairs went down to the saloon below. The sea was breaking through the shattered door on the one side, but on the lee the *Sea Queen* was tilted upwards, and it was there she lay in irons, no doubt upon some rocks, or shores. If only the day would dawn! As I stood awhile, before entering the corridor through another shattered doorway, the glimmer of a light caught my eye. It came from the door upon the farther side of the lobby, seeming to shine through the keyhole. As I watched, the door opened and let in a blast of wind that shook the broken woodwork; it also let in the figure of a man, and that man, seen dimly in the shades of the light he carried, was Holgate. I drew myself up into the fastness of the gloom and stared at him. He had turned the shutter in his lantern now, for it was a bull's-eye, and the darkness was once more universal, but I had a feeling that he had a companion, and although I necessarily lost sight of Holgate I was assured in myself that he had descended the stairway. Any noise his heavy feet might make would be absorbed into the general racket of the night. I stood and wondered. What was Holgate's object in this silent expedition?

I confess my curiosity rose high—to a pitch, indeed, at which it might not be denied. A surmise sprang into my mind, but I hardly allowed it time to formulate, for not a minute after the recognition I, too, was on my way down the stairs. It was

comparatively easy to descend, for, as I have said, there was no danger of discovery from noise, and I had the balustrade under my hand. When I had reached the floor below I caught the gleam of the lantern in the distance, and I pursued it down one of the passages. This pursuit took me past the cabins towards the kitchen; and then I came to an abrupt pause, for the lantern, too, had stopped.

I could make out Holgate's bulky form and the light flashing on the walls, and now, too, I found that my senses had not deceived me, and that there was a second man. He stood in the shadow, so that I could not identify him; and both men were peering into an open door.

My position in the passage began to assume a perilous character, and I made investigations in my neighbourhood. Near me was the door of a cabin, which I opened without difficulty and entered. Now, by putting out my head, I could see the mutineers, while I had a refuge in the event of their turning back. They were still bent forwards, peering into the room. I thought that, with good luck, I might venture farther while they were so engrossed with their occupation. So, leaving my hiding-place, I stole forwards boldly to the next cabin and entered it as I had entered the former. I was now quite close to them, and suddenly I saw who was Holgate's companion. It was Pye.

With equal celerity did my brain take in the situation and interpret it. Indeed, I should have guessed at it long before, I think, had not the events of the night thrown me into a state of confusion. It was the treasure they looked at, and this was where Pye had

concealed it. As this truth came home to me Holgate lifted his head and I drew back, setting the cabin door ajar. Presently after the bull's-eye flashed through the crack of the door, and stayed there. For a moment I thought all was up, and that my retreat had been discovered, but I was soon reassured. The noise of the water had fallen, and above it, or rather through it, I could hear Holgate's voice fatly decisive.

"She'll hold, I tell you, for twenty-four hours at any rate, even without pumps. Hang it, man, do you suppose I can take the risk now? They're sick enough as it is—all blood and no money. We must let it lie for a bit and take our opportunity."

Pye's voice followed; I could not hear what he said, but Holgate's was in answer and coldly impatient.

"You've the stomach of a nursery governess. Good heavens, to run in harness with you! What the deuce do I know? We're cast away, that's certain. But I will be hanged if I lose what I've played for, Mr. Pye; so put that in your pipe."

The light went out and the voice faded. Presently I opened the door and looked out upon profound darkness.

I knew my way about the yacht by that time, and was not discomposed by the situation. The mutineer and his treacherous confederate were gone, and I must make the best of my time to follow them. Nothing could be effected without a light, and I had no means of procuring one in those nether regions. I retraced my way more or less by instinct until I came out at the foot of the stairway, and knew it was easy

to regain the upper regions. Instead of going to the *boudoir*, I sought the group in the music-room, and was challenged by Barraclough.

"Who's that?"

"Phillimore," I answered. "We must have more light. Have we no more lanterns?"

"Yes, sir," said Ellison's cheerful voice. "There's some in the steward's room."

"Good for you," said I. "If some one will give me matches I think I'll go on a hunt."

The other sailor produced a box of vestas from his pocket, and as he was unwounded I took him with me on my return journey. In the steward's room we found several lanterns, as well as some bottles of beer and some cold fowl. We made a selection from this and got safely back to our friends. Here we lit two or three of the lanterns, and I opened some of the beer and left them to a repast. You will be thinking that I had not kept my word, and had neglected what should have been my prime duty. I had not forgotten, however. Was it likely? And I made haste at once to the quarters of the ladies, taking with me something which should make me welcome—which was a lighted lantern. Princess Alix was quite recovered, but showed great anxiety for news of her brother. I was able to quiet her fears by describing the supper at which I had left him, and her eyes brightened.

"He is so good and brave!" she said simply. "He is so noble! He has always thought of others."

That the Prince was fond of his sister was manifest, and it was patent, too, that he was attached to the woman for whom he had thrown all away and was thus imperilled. Yet I should not have attributed to him inordinate unselfishness. I made no reply, however, beyond urging her to follow her brother's example and fortify herself with food. She waved it aside.

"No, no, I am not hungry! I am only anxious," she said. "Tell me, are we safe?"

"For the present," I said. "I gather that most of the mutineers are at the pumps."

"Then we are sinking?" she cried.

"It does not follow," I answered. "Holgate has his own hand to play, and he will play it. We are safe just now. God answered your prayers, Princess."

She looked me earnestly in the face and sighed.

"Yes," she said softly.

Meanwhile I discovered that Mademoiselle had picked up her spirits. She complained of the noise, of the darkness, and of the lack of sleep, but she found some compensations, now that it was clear that we were not going to the bottom.

"It was magnificent, Monsieur, that storm!" she exclaimed. "I could see the demons raging in it. Oh, *ciel*! It was like the terrors of the Erl König, yes. But what have you there, doctor? Oh, it is beer, English beer. I am tired of champagne. Give me some beer. I love the bocks. It calls to mind the boulevards. Oh,

the boulevards, that I shall not see, never, never in my life!"

I consoled her, comforting her with the assurance that we were nearer the boulevards now than we had been a few hours ago, which in a way was true enough. She inquired after the Prince pleasantly, also after Barraclough, and asked with cheerful curiosity when we were going to land.

I said I hoped it would be soon, but she was content with her new toy, which was English bottled ale, and I left her eating daintily and sipping the foam from her toilette glass with satisfaction. I returned to the music-room and joined the company; and, after a little, silence fell upon us, and I found myself drift into the slumber of the weary.

I awoke with the grey dawn streaming in by the shattered skylights, and, sitting up, looked about me. My companions were all wrapped in slumber, Lane tossing restlessly with the pain of his wound. I walked to the door and looked out. The sea had gone down, and now lapped and washed along the sides of the *Sea Queen*. The sky was clear, and far in the east were the banners of the morning. The gentle air of the dawn was grateful to my flesh and stimulated my lungs. I opened my chest to draw it in, and then, recrossing the lobby, I peered out through the windows on the port side. The dim loom of land saluted my eyes, and nearer still a precipice of rocks, by which the seafowl were screaming. We had gone ashore on some sort of island.

This discovery relieved one of the anxieties that had weighed upon me. At last we had a refuge not only

from the violence and treachery of the ocean, but also from the murderous ruffians who had possession of the yacht. It was, therefore, with a lighter heart that I descended into the cabins and made my way along the passage to the point where I had seen Holgate and Pye stop. I identified the door which they had opened, and after a little manœuvring I succeeded in getting it open. It was the cook's pantry in which I now found myself, and I proceeded to examine carefully every drawer and every cupboard by the meagre light of the dawn. I had not been at work ten minutes before I came upon the contents of the safes, safely stowed in a locker. Well, if the documents and gold could be shifted once they could be shifted again; and forthwith I set about the job. It pleased me (I know not why) to choose no other place than Pye's cabin in which to rehide them. I think the irony of the choice decided me upon it, and also it was scarcely likely that Holgate and his accomplice would think of looking for the treasure in the latter's room.

It took me quite an hour to make the transfer, during which time I was not interrupted by any alarm. Whatever Holgate and his men were doing, they evidently did not deem that there was any center of interest in the saloon cabins at that moment. My task accomplished, I returned to the music-room, in which the wounded men still slept restlessly. I occupied my time in preparing a meal, and I took a strong glass of whisky and water, for my strength was beginning to ebb. I had endured much and fought hard, and had slept but little. As I stood looking down on my companions, I was aware of a grey shadow that the slender sunlight cast as a ghost

upon the wall. I turned and saw the Princess.

She was clad as for a journey, and warmly against the cold, and her face was pale and anxious.

"You are astir, Dr. Phillimore," she said.

"Yes," said I. "I could not sleep."

"Nor I," she returned with a sigh. "I sometimes feel that I shall never sleep again. The sound of the storm and the noises of the fight—the oaths—the cries—they are forever beating in my brain."

"They will pass," I replied encouragingly. "I do believe we are destined to safety. Look forth there and you will see the morning mists on the island."

"Yes," she assented. "I saw that we had struck on an island, and that is why I am here. Our chance is given us, Dr. Phillimore. We must go."

I looked doubtfully at the sleeping men.

"Yes, yes, I know, but my brother will be more reasonable now," she pursued; "he will see things in another light. He has done all for honour that honour calls for."

"He has done too much," said I somewhat bitterly, for I realised how greatly he had imperilled his sister.

She made no answer to that, but approached and looked down at the Prince, who lay with his head pillowed on the cushioned seat.

"He is well enough?" she asked.

"He is well enough to leave the yacht if he will

consent," I answered.

Perhaps it was the sound of our voices, though we had both pitched them low. At any rate, Prince Frederic stirred and sat up slowly.

"Good-morning, Alix," he said affectionately, and his eyes alighted on me, as if wondering.

The Princess went forward and embraced him. "Dr. Phillimore has kindly got breakfast for you," she said. "You must eat, Frederic, for we are going to leave the yacht this morning."

She spoke decisively, as if she had taken control of affairs out of his hands, and he smiled back.

"Are those your orders, Alix? You were always wilful from a child."

"No, no," she cried, smiling too, "I always obeyed your orders, Frederic. It was you who were hero to me, not Karl or Wilhelm—only you."

He patted her hand and glanced at the food I had obtained. "We owe to Dr. Phillimore a debt of gratitude," he said in his friendliest manner. The talking had disturbed Barraclough also, who now awoke and saluted us. He made no difficulty of beginning at once on his breakfast, cracking a joke at my expense. It was a strangely pacific gathering after the terrible night; but I suppose we were all too worn to take things in duly.

There is a limit to the power of facts to make impressions on one's senses, and I think we had reached it. For the most part we were just animals

with an appetite. But there was my news, and I hastened to break it. It was not startling, but it had an interest for us all. The Prince deliberated.

"It is fate," he said slowly. "It is the luck of the Hochburgers."

Barraclough's comment was from a different aspect. "That's a trick to us. We've a shot in the locker yet."

"What is it you mean?" asked the Prince.

"Why, that we can drive a bargain with them," replied Barraclough. "We've got the whip-hand."

"There shall no bargain be made with murderers," said the Prince in his deep voice.

"Frederic," said Princess Alix in a quick, impulsive way, "let us escape while there is time. The way is clear now. We can get to the island and be quit forever of those dreadful men and horrible scenes."

The Prince let his glance fall on her. "There is something to be done here," he said at last. "The luck of the Hochburgers holds."

He was ill for certain; perhaps he was more than ill; but at that moment I had no patience with him. I turned on my heel and left the room.

CHAPTER XIX

The Tragedy

It was quite obvious that we could not offer any resistance to another attack if one should be made. All told, and excluding the women, there were but seven of us, and three of these were disabled by their wounds. We did not, of course, know how the mutineers had fared, but it was certain that their assault had cost them dear. The heavy seas had washed overboard dead and dying, and it was impossible for us to say how many enemies were left to us. It might be that with their diminished numbers they would not risk another attack, particularly as they had found us develop so fierce a resistance. But, on the other hand, the rank and file of the mutineers believed us to be in possession of the treasure (as we actually were once more), and it was likely that they would make yet another attempt to gain it. But they on their side could not tell how we had suffered, and they would be sure to use caution. For these reasons I did not think that we need fear an immediate assault, but we thought it advisable to concentrate our forces against an emergency. We therefore abandoned the music-room and secured ourselves as well as possible in the wreck of the state-rooms, using furniture and trunks and boxes as barricades.

For my part, my heart echoed the Princess's wish. I was in favour of abandoning the yacht and trusting to the chances of the island. As the sun rose higher we got glimpses of this through the windows, and

the verdure looked inviting after so many weary weeks of desolate water. The tops of the hills seemed barren, but I had no doubt that there was more fertility in the valleys, which were not swept by the bluff winds of the wild sea. But the Prince was obstinate, and, relying upon his luck, was dragging down with him the lives of the two women he loved, to say nothing of the rest of our company. We had therefore to make the best of the situation, and to sit down and await issues with what composure we might.

The Prince himself had recovered wonderfully, though I did not like the look of the dent on his head, which had been dealt apparently by the back of an axe. His power of recuperation astonished me, and I was amazed on leaving the cabin in which Lane was housed, to find him entering the doorway that led from the lobby. I remonstrated with him, for it was evident that he had been wandering, and I wanted him to rest, so as to have all his strength for use later should it be necessary. He smiled queerly.

"Yet you would have me take a turn on the island, doctor," he said. "I saw it in your eyes. I will not have you encourage the Princess so. It is my wish to stay. I will see my luck to the end."

This was the frame of his mind, and you will conceive how impossible to move one so fanatically fixed on his course; indeed, the futility of argument was evident from the first, and I made no attempt. Barraclough, too, retired defeated, though it was by no means his last word on the point, as you shall hear.

I was seated in the corridor some three hours later, near what should have been four bells, when I heard my name called softly. I looked about me without seeing any one. The wounded men were resting, and Legrand was at the farther end of the corridor, acting as sentinel over our makeshift of a fortress. I sat wondering, and then my name was called again—called in a whisper that, nevertheless, penetrated to my ears and seemed to carry on the quiet air. I rose and went towards Legrand.

"Did you call?" I asked.

He shook his head. "No," said he.

"I heard my name distinctly," I said.

"Oh, don't get fancying things, Phillimore," he said with impatient earnestness. "My dear fellow, there's only you and Barraclough and me now."

"Well, I'd better swallow some of my own medicine," I retorted grimly, and left him.

I walked back again and turned. As I did so, the call came to me so clearly and so softly that I knew it was no fancy on my part, and now I involuntarily lifted my eyes upwards to the skylights. One of these had been shattered in the gale.

"Doctor!"

I gazed in amazement, and suddenly Holgate's face passed momentarily over the hole in the glass.

"Doctor, can you spare me ten minutes?"

What in the name of wonder was this? I paused,

looked down the corridor towards Legrand, and reflected. Then I took it in at a guess, and I resolved to see him.

"Where?" I asked, in a voice so modulated that it did not reach Legrand.

"Here—the promenade," came back the reply.

I whistled softly, but made no answer. Then I walked away.

"Legrand," said I, "I'm going for a turn. I've got an idea."

"Don't let your idea get you," said he bluffly.

I assured him that I was particular about my personal safety, and with his assistance the door was opened behind the barricade. For the first time for two days I found myself on the deck and in the open air. Hastily glancing about me to make sure that no mutineers were in the neighbourhood, I walked to the foot of the ladder that gave access to the promenade-deck above and quickly clambered to the top. At first I could see no sign of Holgate, and then a head emerged from behind the raised skylights and he beckoned to me.

"Sit here, doctor," said he. "You'll be safe here. No harm shall come to you."

He indicated a seat under cover of one of the extra boats which was swung inside the promenade-deck for use in the event of emergencies, and he himself set me the example of sitting.

"I suppose you've come armed," he said. I tapped my

breast-pocket significantly.

"So!" said he, smiling. "Well, you're plucky, but you're not a fool; and I won't forget that little affair downstairs. I'll admit you might have dusted me right up, if you'd chosen. But you didn't. You had a clear head and refrained."

"On the contrary," said I, "I've been thinking ever since what a dolt I was not to shoot."

"You don't shoot the man at the wheel, lad," said he with a grin.

"Oh, you weren't that; you were only the enemy. Why, we struck half an hour later."

"Yes," he assented. "But we're not down under yet. And you can take your solemn Alfred that that's where we should be now if you hadn't let me pass. No, doctor, you spared the rod and saved the ship."

"Well, she's piled up, my good sir," I declared.

"So she is," he admitted. "But she's saved all the same. And I'll let you into a little secret, doctor. What d'ye suppose my men are busy about, eh? Why, pumping—pumping for all they're worth. I keep 'em well employed, by thunder." He laughed. "If it's not fight, it's pump, and if it weren't pump, by the blazes it would be fight. So you owe me one, doctor, you and those fine friends of yours who wouldn't pick you out of a gutter."

"Supposing we get to the point," I suggested curtly.

"That's all right. There's a point about here, sure enough. Well, we're piled up on blessed Hurricane

Island, doctor, as you see. We struck her at a proper angle. See? Here lies the *Sea Queen*, with a bulge in her and her nose for the water. She'd like to crawl off, and could."

He waved his hand as he spoke, and for the first time my gaze took in the scene. We lay crooked up upon a ridge of rock and sand; beyond, to the right, the cliffs rose in a cloud of gulls, and nearer and leftwards the long rollers broke upon a little beach which sloped up to the verdure of a tiny valley. It was a solitary but a not unhandsome prospect, and my eyes devoured it with inward satisfaction, even with longing. Far away a little hill was crowned with trees, and the sun was shining warmly on the gray sand and blue water.

I turned, and Holgate's eye was on me.

"She's piled up for certain, but I guess she could get up and waddle if we urged her," he said slowly.

"Come, Holgate, I have no idea what this means," said I. "I only know that a few hours ago you would have annihilated us, and that we must look for the same attempt again. I confess there's nothing else plain to me."

"I'll make it plain, lad," said he with his Lancashire accent uppermost. "I'm not denying what you say. I told you long ago that I was going through with this, and that holds. I'm not going to let go now, no, by thunder, not when I'm within an ace of it. But there's been a bit of manœuvring, doctor, and I think we can help each other."

"You want a compromise," I said.

"You can call it that if you will," he said. "But the terms I offered yesterday I repeat to-day."

"Why do you take this method of offering them?" I inquired. "Why not approach the Prince officially?"

"Well, you see, doctor, I don't hanker after seeing the Prince, as you might say; and then, between you and me, you're more reasonable, and know when the butter's on the bread."

"And there's another reason," said I.

He slapped his thigh and laughed. "Ah! Ah! doctor, there's no getting behind you. You're a fair daisy," he said good-humouredly. "Yes, there's another reason, which is by way of manœuvring, as I have said. My men are at the pumps or they would be at you. You see you've got the treasure."

"Oh, only a few hours since," I said lightly. His fang showed.

"That's so. But so far as my men know you've had it all along. Now I wonder where you hid it? Perchance in a steward's pantry, doctor?"

"Very likely," I assented.

His sombre eyes, which never smiled, scrutinised me.

"I'd put my shirt on it that 'twas you, doctor," he said presently. "What a man you are! It couldn't be that worm, Pye, naturally; so it must be you. I'm nuts on you."

I rose. "I'm afraid, Holgate, you can't offer any terms which would be acceptable," I said drily.

"Well, it's a fair exchange," he said. "I guess I can keep my men aloof for a bit, and we can get her off. There's not much the matter with the yacht. I'll land your party on the coast in return for the boodle."

"The Prince would not do it," I answered. "Nor would I advise him to do so—for one reason, if for no other."

I spoke deliberately and looked him in the face fully.

"What may that be?" he asked, meeting my gaze.

"You would not keep your word," I said.

He shook his head. "You're wrong, doctor, you're wholly wrong. You haven't got my measure yet, hanged if you have. I thought you had a clearer eye. What interest have I in your destruction? None in the world."

"Credit me with some common sense, Holgate," I replied sharply. "Dead men tell no tales."

"Nor dead women," he said meaningly, and I shuddered. "But, good Lord! I kill no man save in fight. Surrender, and I'll keep the wolves off you. They only want the money."

"Which they would not get," I put in.

He smiled, not resenting this insinuation. "That's between me and my Maker," he said with bold blasphemy. "Anyway, I'm not afraid of putting your party at liberty. I know a corner or two. I can look after myself. I've got my earths to run to."

"It's no use," I said firmly.

"Well, there's an alternative," he said, showing his teeth, "and that's war; and when it comes to war, lives don't count, of either sex; no, by blazes, they don't, Dr. Phillimore!"

He stood up and faced me, his mouth open, his teeth apart, and that malicious grin wrinkling all but his smouldering feral eyes. I turned my back on him without a word and descended to the deck. I had not a notion what was to be done, but I knew better than to trust to the ravening mercies of that arch-mutineer.

Holgate was aware that the treasure was gone, and he wished to jockey us into a surrender. That was the gist of my interview, which I hastened to communicate to my companions. Legrand and Barraclough listened with varying faces. Expressions flitted over the former's as shadows over a sea, but the baronet was still as rock, yes, and as hard, it seemed to me.

"You people have all got a bee in your bonnet in respect of a compromise," he said with a sneer. "You follow the Prince, and God knows he's no judge. He's a fanatic. Hang it, Phillimore, haven't you tumbled to that yet?"

He was a fanatic, it was true, but I did not like Barraclough's tone. "Then you would trust the lives of this company, including the ladies, to Holgate?" I asked sharply.

"With proper reservations and safeguards," he said.

I threw out my hands. "You talk of safeguards, and you're dealing with a cut-throat. What safeguards

could you have?"

"Well, we might stipulate for a surrender of all the firearms," said Barraclough, knitting his brow.

"It wouldn't wash," said Legrand decidedly. "Do you think they'd give up all they had? No, it would only be a pretence—a sham. I agree with the doctor that Holgate's safety is only spelled out by our deaths. There you have it in a nutshell. The man can't afford to let us go free."

Barraclough assumed a mule-like look. "Very well," said he. "Then we're wiped out as soon as he cares to move," and he turned away angrily.

An hour later I was passing the ladies' cabins when a door flew open, and Mademoiselle jumped out on me in a state of agitation.

"What is this, doctor?" she cried. "This 'Olgate offers to put us on shore safe, and you refuse—refuse to give him up the money. You must not. You must bargain with him. Our lives depend on it. And you will arrange that he leaves us sufficient to get to civilisation again."

"Mademoiselle," said I quietly, "I am not in authority here. It is the Prince."

"The Prince, he is ill," she went on in her voluble French. "He is not master of himself, as you well know. He is not to be trusted to make a decision. Sir John shall do it. He is captain."

"It should be done with all my heart and now, Mademoiselle," I said, "if we could put any reliance

on the man's word. But how can we after his acts, after this bloody mutiny?"

She clasped her hands together in terror. "Then we shall be doomed to death, Monsieur. Ah, try, consent! Let us see what he will offer. Sir John shall do it for me whose life is at stake."

I was sorry for her fears, and her agitation embarrassed me. Heaven knew I understood the situation even more clearly than she, and to me it was formidable, pregnant with peril. But what could I do? I did what I could to reassure her, which was little enough, and I left her weeping. The singing-bird had become suddenly conscious of her danger, and was beating wildly against the bars of her cage. Poor singing-bird!

Princess Alix had taken upon herself the office of nurse to her brother, and although he refused to acknowledge the necessity of a nurse, he seemed glad to have her in his room. When I entered early in the afternoon after tending my other patients, they were talking low together in German, a tongue with which, as I think I have said, I was not very familiar. But I caught some words, and I guessed that it was of home they spoke, and the linden-trees in the avenue before the castle of Hochburg. The Princess's face wore a sad smile, which strove to be tender and playful at once, but failed pitifully. And she dropped the pretence when she faced me.

"Dr. Phillimore, my brother is not so well. He—he has been wandering," she said anxiously under her breath.

I had been afraid of the dent in the head. I approached him and felt his pulse.

"It will not be long, doctor, before we have these scoundrels hanged," he said confidently, nodding to me in his grave way. "We have nearly finished our work."

"Yes," said I, "very nearly."

I did not like his looks. He raised himself in his chair. "'*Den Lieben langen Tag*,' Alix. Why don't you sing that now? You used to sing it when you were but a child," he said, relapsing into German. "Sing, Alix." He stared about as if suddenly remembering something. "If Yvonne were here, she would sing. Her voice is beautiful—ach, so beautiful!"

There was a moment's silence, and the Princess looked at me, inquiringly, as it appeared to me. I nodded to her, and she parted her lips. Sweet and soft and plaintive were the strains of that old-world song. Ah, how strangely did that slender voice of beauty touch the heart, while Mademoiselle had sung in vain with all her art and accomplishment:

Den Lieben langen Tag

Hab ich nur Schmerz und Plag

Und darf am Abend doch nit weine.

Wen ich am Fendersteh,

Und in die Nacht nei seh,

So ganz alleine, so muss ich weine.

Her voice had scarce died away gently when a sound from without drew my ears, and I turned towards the door. The Prince had closed his eyes and lay back in his chair as if he slept, and his face was that of a happy child. Motioning to the Princess to let him stay so, undisturbed, I moved to the door and opened it noiselessly. I heard Legrand's voice raised high as if in angry altercation, and I stepped into the corridor and closed the door behind me. I hurried down to the barricade and found Barraclough and Legrand struggling furiously.

"Shame!" I called, "shame! What is it?" and I pulled Legrand back. "He has only one arm, man," I said reproachfully.

"I don't care if he has none. He's betrayed us," cried Legrand, savagely angry.

I stared. "What does it mean?"

"Why, that his friends are outside, and that he wants to admit them," said Legrand with an oath.

Barraclough met my gaze unblinkingly. "It's more or less true," he said bluntly, "and I'm going to let them in. I'm sick of this business, and I've taken the matter in hand myself. I'm captain here."

He spoke with morose authority and eyed me coolly. I shrugged my shoulders. We could not afford to quarrel, but the man's obduracy angered me. Alas! I did not guess how soon he was to pay the penalty!

"Then you have come to terms, as you call it, on your own account, with Holgate?" I asked.

"Yes," he said defiantly.

"And what terms, may I ask?"

He hesitated. "They can have the treasure in return for our safety. You know my views."

"And you know mine," said I. "Then, I may take it you have revealed the secret of the treasure?"

"What the devil's it got to do with you?" he replied sullenly. "Stand out of the way there! I'm going to open the door!"

"And why, pray, if they already have the treasure?"

"You fool! it's only Holgate, and he's here to get us to sign a document."

"Meaning," said I, "that we are not to split on him, and to keep silent as to all these bloody transactions."

"It's our only chance," he said savagely. "Out of the way!"

I hesitated. If Holgate were alone, there was not much to be feared, and, the treasure being now in his hands, what could move him to visit us? Surely, he could have no sinister motive just then? Could he, after all, be willing to trust to his luck and release us, his predestined victims, as the unhappy Prince had trusted to his? The omen was ill. The barricades had been removed evidently before Legrand had arrived on the scene to interfere, and even as I hesitated Barraclough turned the key, and the door fell open. Holgate waddled heavily into the corridor and took us all three in with his rolling eyes. His face seemed

to be broader, more substantial, and darker than ever, and his mouth and chin marked the resolute animal even more determinedly. The open door was behind him.

"As Sir John will have told you," he began slowly, moving his gaze from one to another, "I have come on a little business with him which we've got to settle before we part."

Legrand stood in angry bewilderment, and, as for me, I knew not how to take this. Had he come in good faith?

"I would be damned if I would have struck a bargain with you, Holgate, or dreamed of trusting you," said Legrand, fuming. "But as it's done, and you have the spoils, what's your game now?"

Holgate sent a quick look at him, and passed his hand over his forehead. Then he eyed me.

"What do you suppose I'm here for?" he asked, his eyes looking out as tigers waiting in their lair. "All unarmed, and trusting, as I am, it is only reasonable to suppose that I come to fulfill my promise to Sir John here. He knows what that was, and he's done enough to have got his money's worth."

"We will sign if you produce the document," said Barraclough curtly. "You'll sign, Phillimore, and you?" he said, looking at Legrand.

It had the air of a command, but what else could we do? We were at Holgate's mercy, and the act of signature could do us no harm. On the other hand, it might save us.

"Yes," I said reluctantly, "I'll sign, as it's come to that."

"I'll follow," growled Legrand. "But if I'd known——"

"Hang it! let's get it over!" said Barraclough. "You shall have our word of honour as gentlemen."

"It's a pretty big thing you're asking," said Legrand moodily. "I don't know. Let's think it out."

"And the Prince?" said Holgate; "he must sign. You can manage him?"

Barraclough frowned. After all, it seemed more complex now with the cold light of reason on the compact.

"Look here, man," said he, and I never was nearer liking him, "if you'll put us ashore within forty-eight hours after floating—and you can—on the Chili coast, you'll have a fortnight's start, and can chance the rest. Hang it! Holgate, take your risks."

Holgate showed his teeth in a grin. "I have lived forty years," said he slowly, "and, by thunder, I've never taken an unnecessary risk in my life—no! by God I haven't!" and he whistled shrilly through his teeth.

Instantaneously (for they must have been in waiting) half a dozen of the mutineers dashed through the doorway, and, before any of us could finger a weapon, we were in their grip. It was the simplest booby-trap that ever was laid, and yet it was prepared with consummate skill. He had come alone and unarmed; he had held us in converse; and when we had lost our sense of suspicion and precaution he

had brought his men upon us. Down went the lid of the trap! I could have kicked myself.

Legrand struggled, as did Barraclough; but what did resistance avail? The infamous Pierce, who had me on one side, twisted my arm in warning lest I should kick futilely against the pricks.

"Steady!" said I. "It is not a question of war just now, but of parley," and I raised my voice so as to be heard above the noise. "What does this mean, Holgate? More treachery of a special black die?"

He seated himself on the barricade. "You may call it revenge," said he, considering me. "I exonerate Sir John, and I think Legrand there, but cuss me if I'm sure about you."

"You're a black traitor!" cried Barraclough, impotently fierce.

"Whoa there, Sir John, whoa there!" said the mutineer equably. "I've already said I exonerate you; but, hang it, man, you're a flat. They've diddled you. I'm no traitor. I'd have struck to my bargain and trusted you, but by the Lord, what am I to do when I find I'm dealing with a pack of hucksters?"

"What's your game?" repeated Legrand, blowing hard. Holgate indicated Barraclough. "If he had carried out his part I was prepared to carry out mine; as he hasn't——" He left his end in space.

"You haven't the treasure?" I cried in surprise; but Holgate's gaze had gone beyond us and was directed at something down the corridor. I moved my head with difficulty, and, as I did so, I saw Holgate take a

revolver from one of his men. He sat fingering it; and that was all I observed, for my eyes, slewing round, had caught sight of the Prince and Princess. The Prince moved heavily towards us, with an uncertain gait, and Alix's face was full of terror and wonder. In that instant I remembered something, and I saw in my mind's eye the figure of the Prince labouring through the doorway that gave access to the stairs to the lower deck. It was he who had removed the treasure, and Holgate had been cheated a second time.

Even as this revelation came to me, I wondered at the self-restraint of the man. He was as cool as if he sat at dinner among friends, merely resting a finger on the trigger of his weapon, the muzzle of which he held to the ground.

"What is this, sir?" demanded the Prince, coming to a pause and staring at the scene. Holgate answered nothing. I doubt if the Prince had seen him from where he stood, for he addressed Barraclough, and now he repeated his question with dignity. At that moment a door opened somewhere with a click, and Mademoiselle entered the corridor. Barraclough made no sign, but with his teeth on his under lip stared before him helplessly.

"But you have the treasure," suddenly cried a tremulous voice in broken English, and Mademoiselle was in our midst. "Go back, Messieurs: you have broke your word. You have the treasure."

The Prince stared at her. "What treasure?" he asked with a puzzled expression.

"Sir John has made peace with them," she cried excitedly. "He has delivered up the treasure, and they will let us go free. It is all settled. Let him go, 'Olgate. You shall let him go."

"Why," said the Prince with a singular expression on his face, "it means I am surrounded with traitors. There is treachery everywhere. Yvonne, you have betrayed me."

"Ah, *non*, *non*!" she cried plaintively, clasping her hands together. "We shall be saved. Sir John sees to that."

"So you made terms," said the Prince to Barraclough in his deep voice of fury.

"I acted for the best," said Barraclough; and now that he met the storm he faced it with dignity. Perhaps I alone knew the measure of his temptation. He had fallen a victim to the arts of a beautiful woman. There was nought else could have melted that obdurate British heart or turned that obstinate British mind. This obtuseness had been his ruin, and he must have recognised it then; for he had admitted the enemy and our stronghold was in their hands. But the last blow had yet to fall.

"Fool!" said the Prince with a bitter laugh. "The treasure is not there. You have played without cards."

"I will be damned if I didn't think it was his royal highness," said Holgate in his even voice, and as he spoke he rose into sight.

It was grotesque as it sounded, certainly not a bit

like the prelude of high tragedy; yet that was on the way, and fell at once. Holgate's voice arrested the Prince, and he started, as if now for the first time aware of the presence of the mutineers. Till that moment he had merely been bent on rating a servant. With the swiftness of lightning he drew and levelled a revolver; I saw Holgate's fat bull neck and body lean to one side and drop awkwardly, and then an exclamation sprang up on my left, where Gray and another were holding Barraclough captive. The bullet had gone over Holgate's head as he dodged it and had found its home in Sir John's heart. His body dropped between the captors. The Princess gave a cry of horror. Holgate cast a glance behind him.

"You're too mighty dangerous," he said easily, and put up his own weapon. But before it could reach the level, the Prince with a slight start clapped the revolver to his own head and pulled the trigger. "Alix!" he cried weakly, and then something low in German, and as he fell the life must have left him.

His sister bent over him, her face white like the cerements of the dead, and Mademoiselle ran forward.

"Frederic!" she cried. "*Mon Frederic!*" and broke into violent sobs.

"Good God!" said Legrand, trembling.

CHAPTER XX

The Escape

The shock of the tragedy which had taken place in so brief a space and so unexpectedly threw me into confusion. I knew I was gazing at the Princess, who was bent over her brother, and I heard the weeping of Mademoiselle Trebizond punctuating the deep silence which had fallen after those two reports. There was some movement among the mutineers which I did not understand, and presently I found that Legrand and I were being marched to one of the cabins.

"Doctor, do you know anything of this?" sounded a voice in my ear, and I was aware that Holgate was speaking. "The treasure, man, the treasure!" he added, seeing, I suppose, some bewilderment in my face.

"No," said I shortly; "the only man who did is dead."

"Very well," said he sharply, "I'll deal with you when I have time," and he hurried off.

Our captors shoved Legrand and myself into what had been the Prince's smoking-room, and gave us to understand that we were to be shot down if we made any attempt to escape. The rest of these pirates, I conceived, must be in full cry after the spoils, for I heard the sound of the doors being opened and the noise of voices exchanging calls and sour oaths. Presently the door was thrust aside, and the Princess

and Mademoiselle were ushered in unceremoniously by the foul-faced Pierce. They were resolved to box us up in our prison until they had settled on a fate for us.

The Princess was pale, but quiet, in contrast with her companion, who was still in a storm of sobs. She declared that she was doomed, that she was betrayed, and in a breath vowed that her Frederic would have saved her had he been alive. She appealed to us in turn for aid, and called God to witness that we were cowards and would desert her and hand her over to death. In a word, she behaved with that hysterical exhibition of nerves which I had noted in her at the outset of our hapless voyage. Princess Alix, on the other hand, was still and silent. She made no attempt to calm her companion, and it was as if she heard not those weak and selfish wailings. Once her blank gaze fell upon me as it wandered, and I was alarmed, so tragic were the eyes. I got up, and put my hand impulsively on her arm.

"Princess," I said in a low voice.

Her lip quivered. She hid her face. I went back to my seat. Who was I that I should intervene upon that infinite private sorrow? No, the past was not for me; the future faced me, pressed upon me, staring bleakly and cruelly upon our condition. Was all over? Had we to remain there, merely at Holgate's pleasure helpless victims to his will, sheep ready for the slaughter that he destined for us? I swore in my heart in that hour that it should not be—not without a struggle. I took God to witness in my inmost soul that I would die before harm should touch the

Princess. No, all was not lost yet—not so long as we were free to move and breathe and think intelligently.

But, if anything were to be done, it must be attempted ere Holgate remembered us again. He had placed the guard upon us, and he would not turn his thoughts our way again until he had either found what he was looking for or despaired of finding it. How long would the search go on? As I resolved the situation in my head, ideas began to assume form in my quickening brain. In the cabin, under watch and ward, were the two ladies, Legrand, and myself. Lane and Ellison were elsewhere, if they had not been killed by the mutineers, as I almost feared. Also, there was Juliette, Mademoiselle's maid. What had become of her? It was not death I feared for her. But the mutineers, it was quite certain, would think of nothing but running to earth the treasure for the present. The Prince had successfully concealed it, but, of course, the space on a yacht is limited, and it seemed as if in time the discovery must be made. How long would it be? But then came in a flash a disturbing thought. They would abandon their hunt when the light failed until the following morning, and the interlude would direct their attention to their unfortunate prisoners. If they found the treasure by that time, it might be too late for us, but if they went on till dark—I thought I saw light at last in these reflections. We must wait, and act as soon as darkness fell.

One thing that gave me hope was that our guards showed no special vigilance. I suppose this was partly because we were considered to be safely

disposed of, and partly because they were interested in the progress of the search. Now and then one of them opened the door and glanced in, shutting it again abruptly, to resume conversation with his companion. We had been deprived of our weapons, and the outward windows towards the deck were so small as to forbid the possibility of escape that way, even had the intermittent visitations of our sentries been wanting. Another thing encouraged me, which was, that we were free to talk unheeded. What could the communion of helpless, unarmed prisoners matter? I glanced at Legrand, who sat back, his eyes staring at the ceiling, his arms folded, a deep frown bitten in his forehead.

"Legrand," I whispered. His eyes dropped to my level. "They will be busy till dark. What about dusk?"

He stirred, and shifted towards me. "Odd. I've been thinking the same," he answered in a low tone. "We may have one more chance if we make it."

"We must make it," said I.

"I'll tell you what it is, Phillimore," said he. "There's something we can't do without, in our circumstances, and I think I know where to find it." He rose, and opened a cupboard in the wall, from which he brought out a bottle of brandy, some glasses and some tinned foods. "There's always been some kept here," he added. "And, as I live, a knife, if only a jack-knife. Well, she'll do, man—first to open the tins, and then——" He left his meaning in the air.

When the tins were opened, I endeavoured to persuade the Princess to eat. She refused at first from

lips of marble, but I used my authority as a doctor.

"Come," I said with asperity, "you're under orders here, Princess. You must do as you're told."

Her lips quivered. "I will try," she said in a strangled voice.

Mademoiselle had sat up some time ago and dried her tears. I think she had worn herself out with that passion of weeping, and her nimble wits began to flow again.

"You are right, doctor," she said. "It is well to eat, otherwise we become weak. I will eat and then see what may be done."

"Bravo, Mademoiselle!" said I. "That is spoken like a sensible woman."

"Yes," she went on, "I will try my eloquence upon them—those beasts. They will not harm me, if I speak to them. It was Sir John before, and he was only a man, and clumsy. I will sing to them, if necessary. I will charm them. Have I not done it before?"

I wondered if the poor lady had any guess in her mind, had any realisation at all, of what human passions, let loose as upon that ship, amounted to. She spoke as a child, as a vain and hopeful child, boasting of her influence. But it was the mood I wanted rather than the hysterical state of tears. We ate, and drank a little brandy and water, without interruption from without, and turned once more to the thought of escape. The search was still going on, as sounds that came to our ears indicated, and slowly

the room darkened with the enveloping night. I could just see the Princess across the cabin. Legrand whispered to me:

"They're still hard at work. We shall have our chance soon."

Our plan was simple, if we could once get quit of our guards. One of the smaller boats lay on the starboard side, and, hanging outwards from the davits, could, from the slant of the *Sea Queen* as she lay on the rocks, be easily dropped and floated. If we could lower her into the water and get the ladies into her, it would be possible, under cover of the darkness and the preoccupation of the mutineers, to reach the island. Once there, we must, of course, trust to our luck for food and shelter.

Legrand got to his feet and moved noiselessly towards the door. The yacht was comparatively still, and we could hear the lapping of the quiet sea beyond the broken windows. I followed him.

"We have one jack-knife," I whispered in his ear. He nodded.

"And there are two men," he whispered back.

"Is the door locked?" He fumbled softly.

"I don't think so. They did not turn the key last time. But it's a question of who's outside. If the body of the mutineers are still there, we're done. If the two are alone——"

"They are alone," I whispered. "I can hear no noise. They're hunting elsewhere."

"The darkness about suits us now. Explain to the ladies," he said under his breath. "Let them be ready directly we are."

I went back to the couch and poured out my story through the darkness. I spoke to two shadows, and as I did so a hand moved in the air and touched mine. I took it, and it was cold like the snows in January. I pressed it softly.

"Be of good heart. I will come back. And do not cry out."

Even as I stole back in that critical moment, my heart bounded, for I knew to whom the hand belonged. Body of Love! should not I know it in the grave? I reached Legrand.

"Ready," I said.

"You take the nearest," said he. "A jack-knife carries farther."

"I shall want it," I said. "I have only my fingers."

"You shall have it," he said grimly. "One at a time. Fingers or throat, mind you, and no noise. Have you got your muscles back? You're a strong man, Phillimore, but, by heaven! all rests on your fingers. And you have been wounded?"

"I could tear down the pillars of Gaza at this moment," I replied. "My blood's afire."

"God be with us!" he muttered, and slowly turned the handle.

The door opened inwards, and in the darkness

loomed a single figure. Legrand sprang, and the two disappeared in a heap upon the floor. I had leapt to one side and was feeling in the air for my enemy, but my hands took nothing, nor could my eyes make out any other figure in the gloom. Presently something rose from the floor, and I heard Legrand's voice.

"He's alone. There was only the one."

"Yes," I whispered back. "And the mutineers are gone from here."

Faint noises issued from below, acquainting us in what direction the search had flowed.

"All the better," said Legrand. "The way's clear for us. Where are the women?"

I found my way into the cabin again and called them in a low voice. "Give me your hand," said I to the first that reached me. I recognised the tall figure. Mademoiselle was *petite*. I conducted both through the doorway, and the Princess stumbled and gave vent to a little moan. It was the dead man. I pulled her to me.

"Legrand," said I, "you must take Mademoiselle; she will not find her way alone, and I must have an arm free."

"I want two," he growled.

At that moment a beam of light flashed from the cabins across the way. Legrand gave vent to a hiss of warning and moved off. I could see his shadow for a moment, and then it was swallowed in the blackness. He was waiting and watching outside the cabin. The

light streamed out in a fan towards us, and revealed, in the opening of a door, a man's form, and even as it did, Legrand struck. The man went down in silence, and Legrand bent over and picked up the lantern which had clashed to the floor. He stooped and examined the face of his victim. Then he crossed to us, and on my arm a hand was trembling like a leaf in the wind.

"Courage," I whispered, and I groped for Mademoiselle on the other side.

"It was the other man," said Legrand calmly. "I don't know what he did there, but we've got a bull's-eye, which is so much to the good. Come, let's get on."

We passed down the corridor and through the bare doorway to the deck. Here the breath of the night blew softly on our faces. Legrand moved along the bulwarks till he reached the davits from which the boat depended. Standing into the opaque blackness, he cut at the ropes above. Presently I heard a splash. I did not offer to assist, for he had the knife and the knowledge; the two women were my charge. It must have been twenty minutes that we waited there silently, deep in the security of the darkness.

"She's down," said Legrand in my ear. "It's not a long drop, but it's a job for women. Do you think you can manage it?"

"I'm going to try," I said, and I whispered to the Princess, "Will you trust yourself to me? I must lower you into the boat?"

"Yes—yes," she answered in a low voice.

"Legrand," said I, "you go first. I'll lower them, and then I'll follow."

He made no answer, but slipped over the railing, and presently his voice sounded softly from below: "Now."

I took the Princess's hand from my arm. "You must go," said I; "Legrand is awaiting you. If I put you over, can you hang by the rope and lower yourself? He will catch you."

"Yes," she said in the same voice.

I lifted her gently to the top of the bulwarks and put the rope in her hands, and I felt her go down slowly. I had faith in her, yet I waited anxiously until I heard the voice below: "Safe."

I turned to where I had left Mademoiselle, but my hands moving in the darkness encountered nothing. She was gone.

What had become of her? I moved a little way, and almost fell on my face over some obstacle, which was soft and moved. I stooped, and felt there on the deck with a sudden misgiving. It was Mademoiselle Trebizond, who had gone off in a swoon! What was to be done? I racked my brains, and could not see any means by which she could be lowered in that unconscious state to the boat. I called out to Legrand softly, informing him of the situation, and I heard an oath float on the air. Suddenly a thought came to me and I leaned over. "Wait," I said, "I have an idea. I will be back shortly."

I had the bull's-eye, and now I turned it on and

lighted myself back into the corridor. In a flash I had had a thought as to what the second guard had wanted in the cabin, and I retraced my way to it along the deserted corridor, and found the door open and the man's body blocking it. I stepped over this and threw the light about. I had guessed it was the *boudoir*. I pushed into the farther room, which had been Mademoiselle's, and a cry greeted me. I had conjectured rightly. The second man had been set as guard on other prisoners. Juliette ran to me quickly.

"Mademoiselle?" said she.

"Is safe," I answered, "but wants your help. Come." I cast the light on Lane. "Can you walk, Lane?"

"Yes," he said; "I'm fit for anything."

"Ellison?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, follow me. If you'd known it, your prison was open for you. Be as silent as you can. There's no time to lose."

As I issued from the doorway, I stopped and took the revolver and cartridge-belt from the dead man, and Ellison followed my example in respect of the other sentry. We reached the deck without a word, and I shut off the lantern. I called to Legrand, and he answered.

"Hush!" he said. "There's been some one along here just now. Be careful."

I told him what had happened, and, as there was no time for more words, stooped to find Mademoiselle's

unconscious form. It was not there!

Perplexed, I communicated my discovery to my companions, and we searched in the dark for some minutes. But it then became apparent that she had vanished utterly. I heard Legrand's voice in warning below.

"There's a light coming aft. Quick. We can't wait."

I was fairly distracted, and knew not what to do. It was plain that, if we lingered there, we should be detected, and it seemed equally plain that there was no chance of discovering Mademoiselle. Some one who had passed that way had lighted upon her unconscious body.

"Quick, man," said Legrand. "All will be lost."

I ordered Juliette down the rope, and as she protested, talking of her mistress, I told her all would be well if she would only descend. Thus reassured—for she had understood but imperfectly what had happened through her ignorance of English—she jumped on the rail alertly and disappeared. Lane followed, and Ellison, despite his wound, was lithe as a cat. Then I mounted.

Heaven was a vault of darkness, and the sea poured multitudinous small noises in my ears as it rippled against the side of the *Sea Queen*. There was visible but the loom of the funnel and the stack of the state-rooms turning night into deeper night. Noises now arose from the saloon and streamed up to me. I put my hands on the rope, and then a voice wheezed almost in my ear.

"I'll lay it's the doctor."

It was Holgate, as civil and indifferent as if he were greeting a friend on the quarterdeck. I started and gripped my revolver tightly.

"It couldn't be any one else," pursued Holgate; and now his bulk was a blacker shadow than the empty blackness around. "Got a little party down there, I dare say? Well, now, I never thought of that, doctor. For one thing, I hadn't an idea that you would have left a lady all alone in a faint. It wasn't like your gallantry, doctor. So I didn't tumble to it. But it's no odds. You're welcome. I make you a present of your party. Good-night, doctor."

I slipped down the rope and reached the boat ere this astounding speech was ended. He was a fiend. Why did he torture us thus?

"Let her go, man," said I fiercely to Legrand. "He's the Devil in the flesh."

The rope was overboard, and the oars dipped. A lantern flashed from the side of the yacht, and a trail of light spread faint over the quiet water.

"Shall I give him a barrel, sir?" asked Ellison respectfully.

"No," said I shortly; "we shall have enough to do with our barrels presently. Besides, you wouldn't hit him."

The boat sped out beyond the channel of light.

"Good-night, doctor," called out Holgate. "We've got a little business on, but when that's over I hope to drop in to tea. You're not going far."

No one answered, and the wash of the water foamed about the nose of the boat as she turned seaward.

CHAPTER XXI

On the Island

We were not, however, bound to sea, a course which would in our situation have been madness. Better have perished under the bloody hands of the mutineers than adventure on a wide ocean, without sail or food or compass, to die of thirst, exposure, or starvation. Legrand took the boat well out upon that tranquil water before swinging her round to reach the island far away from the *Sea Queen*. We had no guess as to what size the island might be, but hoped that it might be sufficiently large to provide us a hiding-place, as well as with opportunities of securing food.

The night was placid, and the sea like a smooth lake. When we had got some way out, and the sounds of the water on the yacht, together with the human noises of her crew, had faded, a singular silence fell. The plash of the oars was the only sound that broke on the ears. The air was soft and serene; nature seemed to have at last relented, and to be out of key with those tragic deeds committed on the sea. As I

sat, passing such reflections in my mind, I heard a voice at my ear in French:

"But, Monsieur, where is my mistress?"

It was Juliette, faithful still. I had to explain, and she cried out in alarm, and then was silent. She was above all a practical woman, as I had gathered, and no doubt she saw the position. Mademoiselle was gone, and it was patent how she was gone. Holgate's words had put her fate beyond uncertainty. She was in the hands of the mutineers, but with what object I could not guess. Possibly, Holgate had some thought that she was privy to the hiding of the treasure. If he had, I knew better. But, meanwhile, whatever design he had, it was not likely that Mademoiselle was in danger. Probably, indeed, she was suffering less discomfort at the moment than she had endured during the last few hours. If we were destined to destruction by the mutineers, as I had no doubt, Holgate was biding his time. It might be that he still had some suspicion that one or more of us knew the secret he sought. So he held his hand.

Under Legrand's guidance, the boat grounded with a dull, soft, swishing noise on sand, and in the darkness we effected our landing. That done, it remained to conceal our craft in case of emergencies, which we succeeded in doing under a spreading patch of bushes well above the reach of the tides. Then the question of shelter faced us.

This part of the island appeared, from the trend of the ground, to move gently upwards among dwarf trees and shrubs, and, plunging almost at random in the night, we hit upon a knoll at the base of which

was a hollow screened by some bushes. Here we decided to stay till the sun was up. Legrand helped Lane, who was badly fatigued, and Ellison made himself useful all round, paying complimentary attentions to the French maid. As for me, I am not ashamed to say that I had but one thought just then, and that was to render the Princess comfortable. I found some dry ferns and piled them up as a couch, so that she was protected from the hard, unyielding earth, and then I bade her sleep. She had not spoken since we had entered the boat, and she rendered herself submissively as a helpless child to my directions. She lay down, and I was aware that she was looking into the depth of heaven, where a few stars shone dimly. She was thinking of her brother, and (dear heart) I pitied her. I yearned towards her as a lover yearns to his mistress, with the single desire that he may comfort and solace and protect her. Ah, well! my secret had been no secret to me for many days. There was only one divine woman on earth, and she lay upon a rude couch in a savage island, under the naked stars, and stared disconsolately to heaven.

I fell asleep at last, and when I awoke, stiff from the earthy bed, the night was receding westward. The dawn was merging in pearls and gray, and a little light was suffused about the hollow. It was still warm. My companions slept, some tossing restlessly, but the Princess lay almost as if she had been sleeping under the hand of death. Her bosom moved regularly, her parted lips disclosed the even white of her teeth; she was safe from fears and immune from sorrows now at least, and I thanked God. I got up and pushed my way through the bushes towards the

beach on which the high tide rumbled monotonously. Each moment the light grew stronger, and I had walked only a little way before I was enabled to make out the loom of the yacht some half-mile or more away. I mounted the rise behind our sleeping-place, and now perceived that the land ran upwards from where we were into a central ridge, dotted on the slopes with trees. On the south-easterly side the island appeared to be broken and to conclude in rocks, and here was where the *Sea Queen* lay, with a seaward list. It was plain, then, that so small a sanctuary would not offer us adequate protection from Holgate if he wished to pursue us, and my heart sank as I considered the position. Would he at the best leave us to our fate on the island? And if so, would that be more merciful than despatching us by the bullet of the assassin?

I returned to my companions to find Legrand and the French maid awake. Juliette was serviceable as of old. She inquired of me sweetly what chance her mistress had and took my assurances philosophically. She would do her duty, I was sure, but I doubted the depth of her affections. She came of sound, sensible peasant blood. And this was what was needed at the moment, for we had to see to some breakfast, Legrand agreed to mount guard while I went on an excursion of investigation along the north shore. Here I was hidden from the eyes of those on board the *Sea Queen* by the intervening range of hills. It took me just twenty minutes of strolling to reach the farther end of the island, where the barren rocks swarmed with gulls and other sea birds, from which you may draw some idea as to the dimensions of our domain. I obtained some sea-gulls' eggs from the

nests on the rocks, having to beat off some of the infuriated creatures to secure my booty, and, thus supplied, returned to the camp. The remainder of the party were now awake, and Juliette prepared the eggs, roasting them in the sand by the aid of hot ashes. As we were well-nigh famished, I think we all ate with appetite, except the Princess, who was still very silent and listless.

"Princess," I said to her presently, "if a man lose half his treasure, will he then throw away the other half recklessly?"

She looked at me in wonder. "You have lost a brother," I continued, "but you have your own life which God gave you to guard."

"Yes," she said slowly, "I know you are right, but it is hard. I will try, but——" She shivered. "It is hard—so hard to forget. I live in a nightmare by day; it is only in sleep I can forget."

But she ate her breakfast after that, and a little later accompanied me to a spring Ellison had discovered for a drink of water. As we stood there in the morning sunshine, the fair wind tossing her skirts, she faced me gravely.

"You have not given up hope, then?"

"No," said I frankly. "We are not beaten yet. I think I shall be able to restore you to Europe, to hand you back to your uncle's palace."

She looked away to sea. "We were to have given up that for always—Frederic and I," she said softly. "—we arranged it between us."

"Princess," I said, "you did not approve. I have always known it. You consented out of love for him. And now you shall go back."

She shook her head. "It is too late. The mill will never grind with the waters that are passed. I did not —I was afraid. Yes, but I made up my mind. He was all I had, and now I have nothing—I am alone."

It was impossible to assure her. There was no consolation possible now, whatever might come hereafter. Her eyes encountered mine.

"But I am grateful—oh! so grateful, to those who stood by him to the end and risked their lives for him," she said in a broken voice and with tears in her eyes, and she put out her hand impulsively. I took it, and my voice was almost as broken as hers.

"It is not true you are alone," I said, "for those who stood by your brother belong to you. They would die for you."

"My friend," she murmured. "No; I am not alone."

Legrand expressed great anxiety that we should improve our position, which, indeed, left us a prey to any attack. We therefore wended our way along the northern beach towards the rocks, in the hope of hitting upon a situation in which we might have some chance of defence. The scarp descended boldly into the blue water here, and the edges were planted with brushwood. Brushwood, too, covered the slope of the hills, interspersed with larger trees. Here and there the rough rock outcropped and was broken, no doubt, by the winds of that tempestuous sea or by the frosts. Legrand and I mounted, leaving the others

below, and ascended to the top of the rise, from which the shafts of our eyes went down upon the southern beach. But the *Sea Queen* was concealed from view by the abutment of hill which sloped outwards and formed an arm to a pleasant little ravine. From the top of this a stream bubbled out of the rock and fell downwards in a jet of silver. Legrand stooped to refresh himself with a draught preparatory to turning back, for it was not advisable that we should venture lower upon that side of the hills. As he did so he stopped suddenly and straightened himself. With his hand he beckoned to me, pointing to the hillside. I looked and saw what was in his mind. Just under the summit the rock-stratum emerged in mass, and on one side the earth yawned in a hole.

Cautiously we approached. It was the mouth of a shallow cavern some twelve feet through and some twenty feet in width. The cave admitted us by stooping.

"The very place," said he significantly. "It's near water too, and has this advantage, that we can overlook the beach by which any movement will be made."

That was in my thoughts also, and we rejoined our companions well satisfied. But some preparations were necessary before we installed ourselves in our new quarters. We made a larder of eggs and piled a heap of brushwood before the door of our house. So long as there were no mutineers in sight we should have liberty to come and go over the brow of the hill; and upon the north side, in a little dip, we built our fireplace, so that the smoke should not rise and

attract the notice of the *Sea Queen*.

These arrangements occupied a great part of the morning, during all which time we saw nothing of Holgate's men. No doubt they were busily engaged in their hunt for the Prince's treasure.

The day passed wearily enough but in safety; and with the fall of night we felt even more secure, for our hiding-place could not be discovered in the darkness. I reckoned that we were not, as the crow flies, more than a few hundred yards from where the yacht lay aground, and in the greater stillness that seems to fall at night sounds reached us from the mutineers. As I sat at the door of the cave, with the stars overhead, I caught a snatch of song rolling up from below, and presently other voices joined in. A little later there was a riotous burst of noise, as from a quarrel in progress. Had the treasure been found, and were the sailors celebrating their triumph, or was this merely a drunken debauch? It sounded as if the latter were the true alternative. In their disappointment the mutineers had gone to the rum cask for consolation. As time went on the sounds increased, and I listened to them with a trembling fear for the unfortunate woman who was still aboard. Black of heart as those men undoubtedly were in their sober moments, and under the influence of the lust of gold, what would they be when inflamed by spirits and in the throes of angry chagrin?

As I watched I was conscious that some one had issued from the cave on light feet and stood by my side. A low voice addressed me, but before she had spoken I knew who it was. My heart could not have failed to recognise her.

"Do you fear attack?"

"No, Princess," said I, "not to-night. They don't know where we are; and, besides, they are quarrelling among themselves."

She was silent for a time, and then, "That unhappy woman!" she sighed.

"She has lost all she cared for. I am sorry for her," I answered.

"Yes," she said slowly. "I suppose so; but what does any one of us care for? What does it all mean? The puzzle is too great for me. I am shaken."

"You must trust yourself," I said impulsive. "Trust to those who care for you."

"You are—good," she replied softly.

"Princess——" I began, but she interposed quickly.

"Do not call me that. I am no Princess. I have given all up. I am just Alix Morland."

"You will go back," said I, "and resume your rightful place in courts, and this will only remain to you as a horrid nightmare."

"I shall remember the evil dream. Yes," she said; "but I shall also remember some heroic souls and noble deeds. But it will not be in courts."

She was silent again, but presently said, in a hesitating voice: "Dr. Phillimore, I never wanted that marriage; I was always against it; and now I am sorry. Poor Frederic! I was a traitor to him."

"No, no," I said, "but a loyal and devoted heart. Why are you here? Because, even though you mistrusted his judgment, you sacrificed yourself to your affection for him. The test of true affection is to stand by when you disapprove. Any one can stand by if he approves."

"And it has all come to this!" she said with a sigh.

"This is not the end," said I stoutly.

Suddenly she laid her hand on my arm. "What has become of her?" she asked. "What has been her fate?"

To say the truth, I knew not what to reply, and the trouble in her voice declared itself again. "Can we do nothing?" she asked distressfully. "I did not like her, but can we do nothing? It is dreadful to——"

I found my voice then. "Not to-night, but to-morrow," I replied soothingly. "She will take no harm to-night;" but I wished I had been as sure as I seemed.

About noon on the following day we took our first sight of the mutineers. A knot emerged into view on the beach below and spread out presently towards the wooded valley. This gave me some concern, for I guessed that they might be searching for us by Holgate's directions. He had threatened to visit us. Was he now fulfilling that threat? In any case, if they were hunting for us, we must in the end be run to earth in that small island. And then would come the final act. We had two revolvers and a limited amount of ammunition to defend ourselves against the resources of the mutineers, to whom the yacht was open. We saw no more of them, however, for two hours, and then they came straggling back towards

the little bluff behind which the *Sea Queen* lay. If they had been looking for us, they were so far foiled. But that was not the last of them. The boat which had landed the first lot of mutineers had returned to the yacht, and now again struck the beach with a fresh complement of hands. Were they to renew the pursuit? I looked down from our eyrie, scarcely more than half a mile away, with some misgivings. Legrand was upon the other side of the hill on an exploration of his own, and Lane and Ellison were still wounded men. I peered from behind our pile of brushwood and awaited events. The second gang of mutineers had brought a keg with them, and I saw them tap it. Only too clearly was its nature revealed. They had come ashore to an orgie. I counted ten of them, and thought I recognised one or two of the figures—Gray's and Pierce's for certain. Holgate evidently was not with them, for his form would have been unmistakable, nor could I discern Pye. But why were they there? I could only answer my question on the assumption that they had found the treasure and were making merry. Yet it was not like Holgate to give them the reins so completely unless he had some purpose to serve by his complaisance.

Hurricane Island, as the mutineer had dubbed it, lay under the broad face of the sun, and the cascade sparkled at my feet on its run to the sea. Down below the ruffians were engaged in drinking themselves into a condition of maudlin merriment. Well, so much the better, I reflected, for I had made up my mind that now, if ever, was the time to inquire into the fate of Mademoiselle. When Legrand returned, the debauch had developed, and the boat was clumsily put to sea by two of the hands. Evidently a

fresh supply of rum had been requisitioned, for shortly afterwards the boat returned and two more kegs were rolled out upon the beach. This time it also brought Holgate himself, together with a companion, whom I made out to be Pye. The men lolled in the sun, smoking and drinking, and now singing snatches of songs. What was Holgate about, to let them get into this condition?

Well, Holgate probably knew his own affairs. If he had not carefully calculated every step in this situation, I should have been much astonished. He himself, as far as I could see, took little part in the orgie, but the clamour of voices grew louder, and reached us in our retreat very distinctly. We could even catch the names and some of the words that flew about. The talk was boisterous, but I doubted if it was overmerry. Had they been baffled by the treasure after all? I counted them again, and came to the conclusion that almost the whole of the decimated company must be ashore. If that were so, it was time for my excursion. Presently, when the dark came, it might be too late.

My plan, as I explained it to Legrand, was this. I would descend across the spur of the hill, under cover of the bushes, and climb down the steeper heights that faced the *Sea Queen*. She lay scarce more than a hundred yards from the Island, and it would be easy to reach her by swimming. If Mademoiselle were safe on board as I conjectured, we could take advantage of a boat to reach the northern beach, and so make our escape without being seen by any of the mutineers ashore. As for the mutineers on the ship, if there were any, I must deal with them as chance

suggested.

Legrand was doubtful as to my venture, his philosophy being summed up in the adage, "Let well alone"; but he consented that the experiment should be tried when I pressed it. He had, in the course of his ramblings, discovered in the north side of the hill another cavern, which he declared would serve us on an emergency as a second hiding-place. It was quite possible that we might be driven from burrow to burrow like rabbits, and so it behooved us to examine well the lines of our retreat.

I started on my journey just as the sun went down, spreading a deep rose colour on the western waters. I walked cautiously and deliberately, making deviations in my slanting course across the spur, so as to keep within the screen of the bushes. I had not gone more than a hundred yards when I was aware that I was being followed, and I stopped and looked back. To my amazement, I saw the Princess coming up rapidly in my wake. She had evidently sped down the ravine, and was a little out of breath. This had imparted some colour to her pale face—a colour which made her radiantly beautiful.

"Princess!" I said in surprise.

"I am come after you," she said hurriedly, "because I don't want you to go. Oh, don't go, please! I did not know you were going until you were gone. Mr. Legrand told me so when I asked after you. But you must not go. I know you are going because of what I said last night. But you must not.... It is too dangerous. Oh, did you not see that band of assassins there? They are wolves, they are ravening, fierce

wolves. You will perish."

My heart throbbed hard—harder than it had done before through all those terrible days of anxiety. I took her hand. "Princess," I said, "I must go." I held her hand tightly. "You see that I must go. But ah, I will not forget your kindness!"

"They will kill you!" she burst out.

"No"; I shook my head and smiled. "God bless you! You are the most kind and most beautiful woman in life. God bless and keep you!"

I kissed her hand and turned and went down.

She stood awhile, as if lost in thought, and when I looked back I thought I could read upon her face trouble and fear. I would have gone back to her if I had dared, but had I done so I must have taken her in my arms.

I kept my face steadily towards the descent, and when I at last summoned courage to adventure the gaze, she had turned and was slowly mounting the hill.

My eyes left her and went downwards to the beach. I was almost at the top of the spur which rolled over towards the bay on which the yacht had stranded. What was my horror to notice some excitement among the mutineers, and to see a man with his face towards the hill and an uplifted arm. Good heavens! The Princess had been discovered.

I stood stock-still, rooted to the ground with my apprehensions, and then several of the mutineers

began to run towards the ravine. I started at once on a race up the slope. Looking down I saw the full pack streaming up the valley, and I redoubled my exertions. I was some distance away, but I had not so far to go as they. The Princess stopped, arrested by the drunken shouts from below, and then suddenly broke into a run. She had recognised her danger. I bounded through the bushes, and cut across to intercept the wolves. It was all a matter of little more than five minutes, and then I stopped and awaited their arrival.

The first man, who was without a weapon, came to a pause a dozen paces from me.

"Stand, or I fire," I said, levelling my weapon.

He looked uncertainly round for his companions. Two or three joined him, and, encouraged by this accession to the force, he said jeeringly:

"Put that down, or it will be the worse for you. We've had enough of you. And now we've got you in a mucky hole."

"That remains to be seen," said I calmly, for I noticed that they did not seem to be supplied with weapons. I could see others climbing up below, and among them Holgate. A little lull fell on the scene. It was as if fate hung undecided, not certain whether the scales should go down on this side or that. I stood facing the group of dismayed and angry ruffians, and without turning my head was aware of some one running behind me. I do not think I gave this a single thought, so preoccupied was I with the situation in front. The group was enlarged by arrivals and one of

these, stumbling, uttered an oath.

"Shoot him!" he said, and himself lifted a pistol at me.

I raised mine also, and a second and a third were now levelled at me. The scales were against me, but even as this flashed across my mind, a report sounded behind me, and the drunken creature fell. I glanced about, and there was Legrand, with his steady hand and flaming eye. My heart thrilled. A shout of fury went up in front. "Shoot them—shoot them!" and the barrels directed at us seemed to be suddenly many.

Holgate had come to a pause on the outer edge of the group and was observing the scene with interest. He made no movement. Death touched us with the breath of his passage.

An arm was flung sharply about me. "If you die, I die too!" cried a voice—a voice, ah, so well remembered and so dear! Ah, Heaven! Was it Alix?

A pistol barked, and I swerved, almost losing my feet. If we must die, we should die hard. I fired, and one of the mutineers uttered an exclamation.

"Stay there," called Holgate. "Easy, men. Don't let's kill the goose that lays the golden eggs. Let's have a few questions answered."

"Dent's down," sang out one.

"Well, there'll be all the more for those that are left," said Holgate, easily, steering his way through the knot.

A faint laugh followed on this, but I think even the mutineers, brutal as they were, were aghast at this revolting cynicism.

"Let's have a parley first," said Holgate, now in the forefront of the gang. "Business first—pleasure afterwards. Now, doctor, out with it. Where's that treasure?"

"I have told you," said I, "that the Prince removed it."

Alix's arms were about me still. I was dazed.

"Obstinate mule!" said Holgate with a grin. "See that, boys? I've given 'em every chance. Let her go."

In response to his command revolvers were raised. It marked the end, the fall of the curtain on that long tragedy. Alix's arms were about me, and suddenly my brain cleared. I saw as sharply and as definitely as if I had been aloof and unconcerned in that disturbing crisis.

"Stop, men," said I. "I have one thing to say before we go further. Two things. You shall hear about the treasure."

There was a pause. Holgate turned his black, incurious eyes on me, as if he wondered.

"I will tell you where the treasure is, if you will allow me to give you the history of a transaction," I said. My mind was quick, my nerve was cool. There was a chance in delay.

"Spit it out," said one of the men encouragingly. "The funeral will wait."

"Men, you've been taken in by that scoundrel there, your leader," I said, pointing at Holgate. "He's diddled you all through. Ask him about the treasure; ask him!"

The eyes of all went round to Holgate, who stood without a sign of discomposure.

"Well, are you going to let 'em go?" was all he said. Once again the interest of the group returned to me, but I was fighting hard for—Alix.

"Who was it planned this mutiny and the seizing of the treasure?" I cried. "Why, Holgate, you know well—Holgate and Pye. And who brought about the rising? Holgate again. Why didn't you push through and get hold of the treasure at the first? I suppose you were told it was too difficult. Well, it would have been difficult, but that wasn't the reason. It was because this man had got his accomplice aft, stealing the treasure against your coming. And so, when you came, where was it? Gone! Look here, men; I swear to you I saw this man and Pye gloating over the treasure they had removed before your coming. Oh, he's a cunning devil, is Holgate, and he's diddled you!"

There were some murmurs among the mutineers, who looked dubiously at their master, and Pierce spoke.

"That's all very well, but how are we to know it's not mere bluff? You're putting up a bluff on us."

Holgate still stood there with his unpleasing smile, and he answered nothing. It was the truth I had spoken, but now I was to bluff.

"Well, I will prove my words," said I. "You asked me where the treasure is, and I'll tell you. It was removed from Holgate's hiding-place by me and hidden in Pye's cabin, and afterwards the Prince and I removed it again and concealed it."

"Where! Where!" shouted several voices; but Holgate did not budge or speak.

If we saved this situation, we should at least have a respite, another chance. There was no alternative but death.

"Why, in its proper place, to be sure," said I. "In the strong-room, where it should be. I suppose none of you thought of that. You're too clever for that, Pierce."

"By God!" cried Pierce suddenly.

But at the moment I was startled by a change in Holgate. I had fired a barrel at random, and now he shot on me a diabolical glance. His eyes gleamed like creatures about to leap from cover; his lips in a snarl revealed his teeth. A flash of inspiration came to me, and I knew then for certain that, wherever the Prince had concealed the treasure, it was now lying in the very place I had named in the presence of all those ruffians. Holgate glanced a swift glance from left to right.

"What's he take us for?" he said in a hoarse, fat voice, in which rage burned and trembled. "Who's he stuffing with these fairy tales?"

Pierce, his thin lips moving, stared at him. "Anyway, it's worth trying," he said meaningly. "You've had

your shot; I'll have mine."

"Damn it, he's fooling you," called out Holgate furiously; but already two or three of the mutineers had started down the ravine, and the others turned. Excitement seized upon them, as it had been a panic.

And then suddenly a cry arose: "Look, by thunder, look!"

The sun was gone, but the beautiful twilight lingered, serene and gracious, and in that clear light we could descry the form of the *Sea Queen* forging slowly out to sea, and rolling as she moved on the ebb.

"Good lord! she's floated off! She came off on the high tide!" cried Pierce; and instantly there was a stampede from the hillside towards the beach. Pell-mell the mutineers tumbled down over bush and brier at a breakneck speed to reach the boat that tossed idly on the water to its moorings.

CHAPTER XXII

Holgate's Last Hand

The first thought that passed through my mind was that we had lost our one hope of escape from Hurricane Island. Insensibly I had come to look on the *Sea Queen* as the vehicle of our rescue, and there she was before my eyes adrift on a tide that was steadily drawing her seawards. There could be no doubt as to that, for, even as I gazed, she made perceptible way, and seemed to be footing it fast. I turned to Alix, who was by me, staring also.

"I will come back," I said rapidly. "I must go down."

"No, no," she said, detaining me.

"Dear, they will take no heed of me now. I am perfectly safe for the present. They are taken up with more important matters."

I squeezed her hands in both mine, turned and left her.

Holgate was some hundred yards in front of me, plunging heavily through the bushes. He called to mind some evil and monstrous beast of the forest

that broke clumsily in wrath upon its enemy.

Down on the beach I could see that Pierce and some of the others, who had already arrived, were casting the boat from her moorings. I laboured after Holgate, and came out on the beach near him. He ran down to the water's edge and called aloud:

"Put back. Put back, damn you."

The boat was some fifty yards from land by now, and was awash in a broken current. Three men bent to the oars.

Holgate levelled his revolver and fired.

One of the men lay down grotesquely on his oar. He fired again, and one of the remaining two stood up, shook a fist towards the shore and, staggering backwards, capsized the boat in the surf. He must have sunk like lead with his wound, for he never rose to the surface; but the last man, who was Pierce, battled gallantly with the flood, and endeavoured to reach the boat, which was bottom upwards. In this, however, he failed, for the tide seemed to suck him away. The boat drifted outwards, and after a few ineffectual struggles, finding probably that his strength was failing him, Pierce struck out towards the shore. He landed a hundred yards or more away from Holgate. Between the two men were gathered in a bunch, irresolute and divided in counsels, the remaining mutineers.

For the moment I think I was so taken up with the situation that I did not consider my own case. No one had eyes for me in the fast-descending dusk, and behind the shelter of a bush I watched the course of

that singular drama. Holgate had indifferently reloaded his revolver, and now stood holding it carelessly by his side.

"Gray, is that you? Come here," he called. But the knot of men did not move; and now Pierce was walking rapidly towards it. It opened to receive him, and swallowed him up again cautiously, as if there was safety in that circle against the arch-mutineer. Holgate strode leisurely towards them.

"I suppose you guess where we are?" he said, in his malevolent, fluent, wheezing tones. "You've dished us, Pierce, my man."

Pierce replied from the group with an oath, and there was an undercurrent of murmur, as if a consultation was in progress.

"Say, where's that damned little lawyer cuss?" asked a voice, that of an American, who was one of the hands. Holgate put one hand in his trousers' pocket.

"How should I know?" he said; "and what's that got to do with the situation?"

"It's your doing. You've put us in this hole. You've strung us up to-day in this blooming island," said Gray fiercely. "What did you shoot for? Haven't you any other use for your pop-gun?"

"Come out, Gray; come out, my man, and talk it over," said Holgate suavely. "You were always good at the gab. Step out in front, man," and he played with his revolver. But Gray did not budge.

I wondered why he was not shot there and then if

they were in this temper, for it was plain that some of them were armed. But I suppose that they were overawed by the bearing of the man, and, lawless ruffians, as they were, were yet under the influence of some discipline. Holgate had known how to rule in his triumph, and the ghost of that authority was with him still in his defeat.

"Look here," called out Pierce after further consultation, "this is as good as a trial, this is. You're standing for your life, Mr. Holgate, and don't you forget it. What d'ye say, Bill? Speak up. Give 'im 'is counts."

"We accuse you of treachery and not behaving like a mate on ship about the treasure," sang out Gray in a loud, high monotone. "We accuse you, Mr. Holgate, of the murder of our two companions, Smith and Alabaster. We accuse you, furthermore, Mr. Holgate, of a conspiracy to cheat the company, us all being comrades."

"Now, Bill Gray, that's a very parsonical view of yours, isn't it?" said Holgate with a sneer. "By gum, you regularly hit me off, Gray. You're the man to see his way through a brick wall. I killed Smith and Alabaster, did I? Well, what's the odds? Here was this man, Pierce, who's frightened to face me in there with you, and his two pals, making for the *Sea Queen* to rob you and me. Don't I know him and you, too? Where would we have been if I hadn't dropped 'em? Why, left, my good man, left."

"That's what we are now," said one of the mutineers, "regularly busted—busted and left. We're done."

"That's so," said Holgate suavely. "But at least Smith and Alabaster have paid their shot and lot too. And, by thunder, that skunk behind you shall do it too. Come out there, Pierce, sneak and dog, and take your gruel."

He did not raise his voice perceptibly, but it seemed to wither the mutineers, who stood about ten paces from him. He waddled towards them.

"Out of the way, men, and let me see him. Blind me, I'd sooner have taken a bug into my confidence than Pierce. He gets ahead of us with his long thin legs, and without so much as 'By your leave' swims out to sea to cop what belongs to you and me and all of us."

There was a murmur at this, and it was quite impossible to tell how the sympathies of the gang were going. But one called out again:

"Where's that damn Pye? Where's your spy?"

"So," says Holgate, "you are thinking of the doctor's story, are you? You fool, he was only playing for his life and the life of his best girl. Haven't you got the sense of a louse between you? Find Pye then, and screw it out of him. Thumbscrew him till he tells, and see how much he has to tell. It'll be worth your while, Garratt. Why, you fool, he's just a little clerk that was useful, and was going to get a tip for his pains. He wasn't standing in on our level. We came in on bed-rock."

There was a hoarse, discordant laugh.

"With the yacht gone, and us on a Godforsaken tea-tray in mid-ocean!" said a voice.

Upon that in the dwindling light a shot came from the group, and Holgate lifted his barrel deliberately.

"So, that's Pierce, by thunder, is it? Well, Johnny Pierce, you're a brave man, and I'd take off my hat to you if my hands were free. Stand aside there, men, and let's see Johnny Pierce's ugly mug. Now, then, divide, d'ye hear, divide!"

I never could determine whether Holgate in that moment realized that all was up, and the end was come, and had carried things through with a swagger, or whether he had a hope of escape. Nothing showed in his voice or in his manner save extreme resolution and contemptuous indifference. These men he had misled and cheated were to him no more than brutes of the field, to be despised and ridiculed and browbeaten. At his words, indeed, the old habit of obedience asserted itself and the knot fell apart; as it did I saw Pierce with his revolver up, but Holgate did not move. He fired carefully and Pierce uttered a curse. Then another weapon barked, and Holgate moved a pace forwards. He fired again, and a man dropped. Two or more shots rang out, and the arch-mutineer lifted his left hand slowly to his breast.

"Bully for you, Pierce," he said, and fired yet once more.

The knot now had dissolved, and Gray ran in the gathering gloom a little way up the beach. He halted, and raising his weapon, fired. It was abominable. It may have been execution, but it was horribly like murder. As Gray fired, Holgate turned and put his hand to his shoulder. Immediately he let his last

barrel go.

"Ha! That's done you, Pierce," he wheezed out. "By heavens, I thought I'd do for you!"

Crack! went Gray's pistol again from his rear, and he swung round; his weapon dropped, and he began to walk up the beach steadily towards me. In the blue gloom I could see his eyes stolidly black and furtive, and I could hear him puffing. He came within ten paces of me, and then stood still, and coughed in a sickening, inhuman way. Then he dropped and rolled heavily upon his back.

I had witnessed enough. Heaven knows we had no reason to show mercy to that criminal, but that last hopeless struggle against odds had enlisted some sympathy, and I had a feeling of nausea at the sight of that collapse. He must have fallen riddled with bullets. He had played for high stakes, had sacrificed many innocent lives, and had died the death of a dog. And there he would rest and rot in that remote and desert island.

I stole from my bush and crept upwards through the darkness. I had not gone a hundred yards before my ears were caught by a rustling on my left. Had I put up some animal? I came to a pause, and then there was a swift rush, and a man's figure broke through the undergrowth and disappeared across the slope of the hill. It was near dark, but I thought in that instant I recognised it as the figure of the little lawyer's clerk.

When I reached the cavern I found no sign of any one, and I was wondering what could have become

of my companions when I heard a voice calling low through the gloaming:

"Dr. Phillimore!"

It was Alix. I sprang to her side and took her hands. Then I learnt that Legrand had decided, as a counsel of prudence, to occupy the second cavern on the northern slope, which he considered more private than that which we had found first.

"And you came back to warn me?" I asked in a low voice.

"No; I waited," said she as low. "I was afraid, although you told me.... Ah, but you have never told me wrong yet! I believe you implicitly."

"Princess," I said with emotion.

"No, no," she whispered. "Not any more ... never any more."

"Alix," I whispered low, and I held her closer. She gave a little cry.

"What is it?" I asked anxiously.

For answer her head lay quiet on my shoulder, and the stars looked down upon a pale sweet face. She had fainted. Now the hand which clasped her arm felt warm and wet, and I shifted it hastily and bent down to her. It was blood. She was wounded. Tenderly I bound my handkerchief about the arm and waited in distress for her to revive. If we had only some of the mutineers' brandy! But presently she opened her eyes.

"Dearest ... dearest," she murmured faintly.

"You are wounded, darling," I said. "Oh, why did you not tell me?"

"It was the first shot," she said in a drowsy voice. "When—when I had my arm about you."

I kissed that fair white arm, and then for the first time I kissed her lips.

We reached Legrand's cave after Alix had rested, and I related the tragedy that had passed under my eyes on the beach below. Legrand listened silently, and then:

"He was a black scoundrel. He died as he should," he said shortly, and said no more.

Wearied with our exertions, and exhausted by the anxieties of the day, we gradually sank to sleep, and as I passed off Alix's hand lay in mine. She slept sweetly, for all the profound miseries of those past days.

I awoke to the sound of a bird that twittered in the bushes, and, emerging from the cavern, looked around. The sun was bright on the water, the foam sparkled, and the blue tossed and danced as if Nature were revisiting happily the scene of pleasant memories. It seemed as if those deeds of the previous night, that long fight against fate, those dismal forebodings, the tragedy of the Prince, were all separated from us by a gulf of years. It was almost impossible to conceive of them as belonging to our immediate precedent past and as colouring our present and our future. And as my gaze swept the

horizon for the orient towards the west it landed upon nothing less than the *Sea Queen*!

I could have rubbed my eyes, and I started in amazement. My heart beat heavily. But it was true. There rode the yacht in the offing, idly swinging and plunging on the tide and clearly under no man's control. She must have drifted in upon Hurricane Island again through the stress of some backward tide, and here she bobbed on the broken water safe from the eyes of the mutineers. As soon as I had recovered from the shock of surprise, I reëntered the cavern and woke Legrand, and in less than five minutes all of us were outside our shelter and gazing at the welcome sight.

"We have the boat hidden," said Legrand. "We must work our way back to it, and the sooner the better."

"Too much risk," said I. "I know a better way. At the tail of the island we may be seen and pursued. There are boats aboard, and she's not more than three hundred yards out."

"What, swim?" he asked, and looked rueful. He was one of the many sailors I have known who had not that useful art.

I nodded. "It won't take me long."

As I passed, Alix caught my hand. She said nothing, but her eyes devoured me and her bosom heaved. I smiled.

"My Princess!" I whispered, and her soul was in her look.

"I can't see a sign of any one on board," said Legrand, with his hand over his eyes.

"Mademoiselle would not be awake yet. It can't be later than five," said Lane, who was much better to-day.

"I make it 5:30," said Legrand. "We have some time to ourselves if we have luck. After last night those fiends will sleep well and with easy consciences." He spoke grimly.

"Have everything ready," I called as I left. "We must not lose a chance or hazard anything."

"What do *you* think?" said Lane, in his old cheerful manner.

I quickly descended to the beach, threw off my coat, waistcoat, and boots, and tightened my belt. Then I waded into the sea. It was cold, and, when I first entered, struck a chill into me. But presently, as I walked out into the deepening waters, with the sparkling reflection of the sun in my eyes from a thousand facets of ripples, I began to grow warm. I reached water waist-high, and next moment I was swimming.

The tide sucked at me in a strong current, and soon, I perceived, would carry me across the *Sea Queen's* bows unless I made a struggle. The water was racing under me, and I felt that my strength was as nothing compared with it. I was thrown this way and that as the flood moved. My passage had been taken incredibly quick, and now I was conscious that I was past the level of the yacht, and I turned and battled back. So far as I could see, I made no impression on

the space that separated me from her, and I began to despair of reaching the yacht. In my mind I revolved the possibility of going with the flood and trusting to work ashore at the tail of the island. If that were not practicable, I was lost, for I should be blown out to the open sea.

Just as these desperate reflections crossed my mind, the *Sea Queen's* stern, off which I was struggling, backed. She came round to the wind and jammed, so that the flutter of canvas which she still carried cracked above the voice of the seas. Then her nose swung right round upon me, with the bubble under her cutwater. It was almost as if she had sighted a doomed wretch and was come to his assistance. Her broadside now broke the tide for me, and I began to see that I was creeping up to her, and, thus encouraged, step by step made my way until at last I reached her, and by the aid of a trailing sheet got aboard. It had been half an hour since I left the island.

Once aboard, I waved across the intervening stretch of sea to my friends, and looked about me. There was no sign or sound of life anywhere on the yacht. She swung noisily, with creaks and groans, to the pulse of the tide, but there was no witness to human presence there. Mademoiselle immediately was in my thoughts, and I found my way to the state-rooms to reassure her, if she should be awake. They were as we had left them, save that every cabin had been ransacked and every box turned inside out. The cabins were empty, and so was the *boudoir*. Clearly, Mademoiselle Trebizond was not there. I went down into the saloon, but nothing rewarded me there; and

afterwards I turned along the passage that led to the officers' quarters, and farther on, the steward's room. Here, too, was my own surgery, and instinctively I stopped when I reached it. The door stood ajar. No doubt, I thought, like every other place, it had suffered the ravages of the mutineers. I opened it wide, and started back, for there on the floor, a bottle in her hand, and her features still and tragic, lay Yvonne Trebizond!

I stooped to her, but I knew it was useless even without glancing at the bottle she held. She had sought death in the despair of her loneliness. The *Sea Queen* had carried out upon the face of the dark waters the previous evening an unhappy woman to a fate which she could not face. She had chosen Death to that terrible solitude on the wilderness of the ocean. I lifted her gently, and carried her to one of the cabins, disposing the body on a bunk. Then I returned to the deck, for I had work to do that pressed. I experienced no difficulty in loosing one of the remaining boats, and, dropping into her, I began to row towards the island.

Legrand had the party at the water's edge, and they were in the boat in a very brief space of time. We shoved off, and now Legrand and Ellison had oars in addition to myself, so that, what with that and the tide, we made good progress. We had not, however, got more than halfway to the yacht when Legrand paused on his oars and I saw his face directed along the beach. I followed his glance, and saw, to my astonishment, a boat bobbing off the spit of the island.

"It's our boat!" said I.

"Yes," he said, "the ruffians are up and about. Give way, give way!"

We bent to the oars, but as we did so a number of figures appeared round the bend of the land where we had passed our first night. Shouts reached us. The figure in the boat was working his oars with frantic haste, and now Legrand called out suddenly,

"Pye!"

Pye it was, and it was also apparent now that he was aiming for us, and that he was striving to get away from the mutineers. He stood out to sea, and pulled obliquely towards the yacht. Obviously, he was better content to trust himself to our mercies than to the ruffians with whom he had consorted. He was a coward, I knew, and I remembered then his white face and his terror at the time of the first onslaught. I remembered, too, how vaguely, how timidly and how ineffectually he had endeavoured to warn me of the coming massacre. He was a miserable cur; he had been largely responsible for the bloody voyage; but I could not help feeling some pity for him. I hung on my oars.

"Shall we pick him up?" I asked.

Legrand's only answer was an oath. He had forgotten the presence of Alix, I think. His eyes blazed above his red cheeks.

"Let him drown," he said.

By the time we reached the *Sea Queen*, some of the mutineers, who had started running when they saw us, had got to the water's edge opposite to us, and

one or two of them plunged in. In the distance, the others were pursuing Pye and his boat.

Legrand, meanwhile, had taken the wheel, and Ellison set about the sails. I did what I could to help, and it was not many minutes ere we had the topsails going. Under that pressure the yacht began to walk slowly. Seeing this, the mutineers on the shore raised a howl, and two more jumped in to join the swimmers, who were now halfway to us. Legrand cried out an order, and Ellison had the jib-sail set, and the *Sea Queen* quickened her pace under the brisk breeze. The swimming mutineers dropped behind. There must have been half a dozen of them in the water, and now we saw that they had given up the attempt to reach us in that way and had fallen back on a new idea. They turned aside to intercept Pye.

The little lawyer's clerk was paddling for life, and knew it, but he made no way. The yacht moved faster, and he sent up to heaven a dreadful scream that tingled in my ears. I made a step towards Legrand, but he merely gave one glance backward towards the boat and then fixed his gaze on the wide horizon of interminable sea, as though he thus turned his back forever on Hurricane Island and all there. He pulled the spokes of the wheel, and the *Sea Queen*, breasting the foam-heads, began to leap. We were moving at a brisk pace.

I looked back to the unhappy man. He had fallen away now, but still laboured at his oars. The swimmers could not have been more than twenty yards from him. Just then Alix's voice was low with agitation in my ears.

"Yvonne? Where is Yvonne?"

I turned to her and took her hand. "She will need no further care of yours, sweetheart," I said. "She has played her last tragedy—a tragedy she thought destined for a comedy."

Alix, looking at me, sighed, and ere she could say more Lane intervened in huge excitement.

"Good heavens, Phillimore! the treasure's all in my safes again. By crikey, is it all a dream?"

"Yes," I answered, looking at Alix, "all a bad nightmare."

I looked away across the sea, for somehow I could not help it.

"What are you looking at?" she asked. "They cannot catch us, can they?"

The foremost mutineers had reached the boat and were climbing aboard. The little clerk, white and gasping, raised his oar and struck at them with screams of terror, striking and screaming again.

"Hush! don't look, darling," said I, and I put my hands before her eyes. "It is the judgment of God."

She shuddered. Pye's shrieks rang in my ear; I glanced off the taffrail and saw that the mutineers had possession of the boat. They were busy with the oars. I could see no one else. The boat was headed towards us.

Legrand cast a glance of indifference backwards.

"If you care to hold the wheel, Phillimore, we can rig that other sail," he said.

I took the wheel. Alix was by my side, and the breeze sang in the sheets.

"We're going home, dear heart," I whispered.

She moved closer to me, shuddered and sighed, and I think the sigh was a sigh of contentment.

The *Sea Queen* dipped her nose and broke into a sharper pace. She was going home!

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As a historical romance "Darnley" is a book that can be taken up pleasurably again and again, for there is about it that subtle charm which those who are strangers to the works of G. P. R. James have claimed was only to be imparted by Dumas.

If there was nothing more about the work to attract

especial attention, the account of the meeting of the kings on the historic "field of the cloth of gold" would entitle the story to the most favorable consideration of every reader.

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The one book of this gifted author which is best remembered, and which will be read with pleasure for many years to come, is "Captain Brand," who, as the author states on his title page, was a "pirate of eminence in the West Indies." As a sea story pure and simple, "Captain Brand" has never been excelled, and as a story of piratical life, told without the usual embellishments of blood and thunder, it has no equal.

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Details of the establishment and destruction of the Moravian "Village of Peace" are given at some length, and with minute description. The efforts to

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