

THE CLAW OF THE SEA-PUSS

"Nobody shall have them. They're mine—not yours—nor his. Give them——"

"And break my oath!" interrupted the captain. For the first time he realized what her outburst meant and what inspired it.

"What difference does that make in a matter like this? Give them to me. You dare not keep them," she cried, tightening her fingers in the effort to wrench the letters from his hand. "Sister—doctor—speak to him! Make him give them to me—I will have them!"

The captain brushed aside her hand as easily as a child would brush aside a flower. His lips were tight shut, his eyes flashing.

"You want me to lie to the department?"

"*Yes!*" She was beside herself now with fear and rage. "I don't care who you lie to! You brute—you coward—I want them! I will have them!" Again she made a spring for the letters.

"See here, you she-devil. Look at me!"—the words came in cold, cutting tones. "You're the only thing livin', or dead, that ever dared ask Nathaniel Holt to do a thing like that. And you think I'd do it to oblige ye? You're rotten as punk—that's what ye are! Rotten from yer keel to yer top-gallant! and allus have been since I knowed ye!"

Jane started forward and faced the now enraged man.