

252 The Wreck of the Rough-an'-Tumble

would not beat up to Come-Along Cove in the wind that was blowing. She was used to having her own way. She must have it now. Skipper Steve—at the wheel, then braced against the slip and sheer slant of the deck and poised over the soapy water, the beat of his heart in suspense—could not recall a time, in the flash of that peril which illuminated the whole wretched course of his connection with the perverse old schooner, when her obedience in an emergency had not amazed him. Hereafter he would humor her; he would never again drive her against her will; he would tease her and coax her and give her her way. And that was all very well: the devil was sick; the devil a monk would be. But still the *Rough-an'-Tumble* lay on her beam ends and was in two minds about righting. A heavier hand on her—a last little push of the squall—would topple her over; and the squall was not blown out—it whistled past, beating and abating, with strength left for mischief.

Presently the schooner righted.

"Ye naughty minx!" Skipper Steve determined. "I'll strip ye!"

Stripped, then, to a rag, the *Rough-an'-Tumble* lay wallowing until dawn.

The *Rough-an'-Tumble* was aged in the service. And she had nothing to learn. She knew about sleet and snow, wind and rain and the dark, breaking seas, reefs and harborless shores, drift-ice and