

THE DEPTHS OF THE SEA.

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I OFTEN think, thinks I, what a lot o' things there is down there, at the bottom of the sea."

The two men were sailors. They were on the same watch that night, and crossed one another now and then on the deck. It was Jack Smart who spoke. His

mate, Ben Steady ("Old Ben," he was called), was an older man, but not beyond middle age either.

"Yes, thinks I sometimes, a man might be *rich*, if he could get down there, and grope about a bit. Think of the ships, and the cargoes, and the clocks, and watches, and chronometers, and the money, and the silver plate, and all the rest of it! Why, it wouldn't be a bad job, Old Ben, if you and I could get safe down, and pick some of it up."

"Ah, there's more than *that* down there. Think of the lives, man! Think of those sunk and drowned! Some of 'em I've sailed with—many of 'em. I could tell you of lots."

"Well, I know a few myself," said Jack.

"No doubt you do, but not so

many as me by long chalks; you haven't lived so long. But just you turn your mind to those who've been drowned, and some of 'em gone in a moment, poor fellows, and leaving their wives and children behind 'em. You think o' *that*: the ships and cargoes don't so much signify."

"Have you ever lost anybody yourself?"

"Oh yes. My father was drowned at sea; he was on a smack. And my eldest brother, he went down in that man-o'-war that was overturned, you know; he, and I forget how many more besides."

"Have you ever been wrecked yourself?"

"Yes, years ago, when I was a youngster, not so old as you are. The ship ran up against an iceberg, and went down in ten minutes, and only I and three more were saved; the Captain and all the rest were drowned, and we lost all we had, except the clothes we stood up in."

"Oh, then, *you've* got something belonging to you down there; something that *did* belong to you."

"I hope I've got something more than my clothes down at the bottom."

"Well, you've got your money, no doubt; and your watch, if you had one."

"I hope I've got more than *that*."

"Well, you are a queer one, Old Ben. That's what we all say you are; you have got such notions. But this beats all—that you should *hope* you've got things down at the bottom of the sea. Why, man, if they were there, you'd have *lost* 'em, you'd never see 'em again."

"That's just what I don't want to do. I hope I never shall see 'em