

THE PROBLEM STATE

BY W. CLARK RUSSELL

(Continued)

CHAPTER IV.

I QUIT THE WRECK.

The east grew pale and grey at last.

The sea rolled black as the night from it,

with a rounded smooth-backed swell;

the wind was spent; only a small air,

still from the north-east, stirred.

There were a few stars dying out in

the dark west; the atmosphere was

clear, and when the sun rose I knew

he would turn the sable pall overhead into

biensies.

The hull lay very deep. I had at

one time, during the black hours, struck

into a mournful calculation, and re-  
collected that the brig would float some two

or three hours after sunrise; but when

the glorious beam flashed out at last,

and transformed the sahen hue of dawn

into a carolean brilliance and a deep

of rolling sapphire, I started with sud-  
den terror to observe how close the

covering-board was upon the water, and

how the head of every swell ran past

so high as the hull rail.

Yet for a few moments I stood con-  
templating the scene of ruin. It was

visible now to its most trifling detail.

The foremast was gone smooth off at

the deck; it lay over the starboard bow;

and the topmast floated along, as if

held by the gale. Many feet of

bulwarks were crushed level; the

pumps had vanished; the cabin was

gone; a complete nautical ruin I had

never viewed.

I rose from the seat on to which I

had sunk and looked the sail, and haul-

ing the sheet aft, to get over the over-

head, and brought the little craft's

head to an easterly course.

The draught of air was extremely weak,

and scarce furnished impulse enough to

the sail to raise a bubble alongside.

The boat was about fifteen feet long;

she would be but a small boat for summer

pleasuring in English July lake-waters,

yet here was I in her in the heart of a

west coast, many leagues south and

west of the stormiest, most inhospitable

point of land in the world, with dis-

tances before me almost infinite for

my boat as this to measure ere I

could have a civilized coast or a habitable

inland view!

"At the start I had a mind to steer

north-west and blow, as the wind would

suffer, into the South Sea, where per-

haps I might meet a whaler or a

Southernman from New Zealand; but

my heart sank at the prospect of the

leagues of water which rolled between

me and the islands and the western

American seaboard. Indeed I under-

stood that my only hope of deliverance

lay in being picked up; and that, though

by heading east I should be clinging to

the stormy parts, I was more likely to

meet with a ship hereabouts than by

sailing into the great desolation of the

north-west. The burden of my loneli-

ness weighed down upon me so crush-

ingly that I cannot but consider my

senses must have been somewhat dulled

by suffering, for had they been active

to their old accustomed height, I am

perplexed, my heart must have broken

and that I should have died of grief.

Faintly as the wind blew, it speedily

wafed me out of sight of the floating

decks of the wreck, and then all was

dark, and I was alone in the sea.

My eyes, looking in the direction pointed

by the upturned arms of the sailor, I

observed the great royal bird hanging

like a shape of marble directly over

the frothing eddies. It was as though

the spirit of the deep had taken form in

the substance of the nobility of all the

forms of its dominions, and poised on trem-

ulous wings, was surveying with the

cold curiosity of an intelligence empty

of human emotion the destruction of

one of those fabrics whose unequal con-

texts and repeated triumphs had provoked

its haughty surprise. The bird crouched

in the spot of the wreck after a while

and, lifting my eyes with involuntary

sympathy in the direction pointed out

by the upturned arms of the sailor, I

observed the great royal bird hanging

like a shape of marble directly over

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On and after WEDNESDAY, NOV. 28th, until further notice, trains will run on the

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