

CHAPTER III

L'ESPÉRANCE

THE young man caught the end of the rope and swung himself to the deck of the yacht. "I will look below and report," he said, briefly. "Keep clear of her sides, Winters, till I come back!"

With that he disappeared down the companion-way.

He was on deck again within five minutes, and waved his hand reassuringly to the party in the boat.

"There's not a soul on board!" he cried. "*L'Espérance* is a derelict, and ours by right; let us take possession at once. Here, Winters, make the boat fast at both ends; then pass up the ladies."

Winters prepared to obey. A few minutes sufficed to make their frail craft secure; then the old man, planting his sturdy legs far apart, reached out his hands to Madeline. "Come, miss," he said, "I'll take you first."

"But how am I to get up there, sir?" said Madeline, drawing back a little.

"Wall, you can't get aboard as our friend Baillot did just now, can you, miss? So I must just hand you up to the deck, like a precious bit of cargo as you be." And unceremoniously seizing the girl in both his brawny arms, he lifted her to where Baillot was waiting to receive her.

The natural embarrassment which she felt at this novel