

"Please, sir, may I remain?" said Buzzby, touching his hat.

"Obey orders," answered the captain sternly. The sailor went below with a sulky fling.

For nearly an hour the two vessels cut through the water before a steady breeze, during which time the fast-sailing schooner gradually overhauled the heavy West Indiaman, until she approached within speaking distance. Still Captain Ellice paid no attention to her, but stood with compressed lips beside the man at the wheel, gazing alternately at the sails of his vessel and at the windward horizon, where he fancied he saw indications that led him to hope the breeze would fail ere long.

As the schooner drew nearer, a man leaped on the hammock-nettings, and, putting a trumpet to his mouth, sang out lustily, "Ship ahoy! where are you from, and what's your cargo?"

Captain Ellice made no reply, but ordered four of his men on deck to point one of the stern-chasers.

Again the voice came harshly across the waves, as if in passion, "Heave to, or I'll sink you." At the same moment the black flag was run up to the peak, and a shot passed between the main and fore masts.

"Stand by to point this gun," said the captain in a subdued voice.

"Ay, ay, sir!"

"Fetch a red-hot iron; luff, luff a little—a little more steady—so." At the last word there was a puff and a roar, and an iron messenger flew towards the