

thought I shouldn't exactly like her for a wife myself, though she was really handsome, and it was no wonder that any man should be taken up with her.

"Right or wrong, I form my opinions of people pretty quickly; and I didn't like our new chief. He was quiet and mild in his manners certainly—wonderfully so for that time, in that part of the world; but there was a wild, dissipated, wicked look, if you understand me, in his eye, which seemed to me to tell that he could be very different if he chose. I could not help remarking to Macpherson, that I thought we had a rum one to deal with now; and he replied that he should like to know his history, for he guessed it was a strange one. One thing was evident to me from the first time he came into the engine-room—he was not a practical working engineer. That he knew something about engines was plain, and he gave his orders with decision, and without any apparent doubt of himself; but there was a theoretical rather than a practical twang about them, as if his knowledge of marine engines had been gained rather by study than by experience.

"His hands were too white and delicate for a man who had used the hammer and chisel and file much; and, coming into the engine-room suddenly, on the evening before we sailed, I found him doing some job at the vice which was fixed there—something for himself, I fancy, and not for the engines—and from the manner in which he handled his tools, it was plain that he was no workman. I set him down in my own mind for a civil engineer, who had come out to the diggings, had got a bad run of luck, and was glad to work his way home as best he could.

At length we were ready for sea, having taken on board a small cargo, and also some gold on its way to the States. We had beautiful weather down the coast, and for some time nothing unusual occurred. Macpherson and I kept watch and watch alternately, our new chief of course taking none; indeed, he came very seldom into the engine-room at all, and when he did, he interfered with nobody. He would just glance at gauges, open a fire door and look in, and feel the heat of the condensers; but he would make no remark, unless there was a little escape of steam, or anything of that sort, which a child might notice. He seldom found fault with anybody; and very often—indeed almost every night—he used to send down grog to the stokers and trimmers on watch, so that they began to consider him a sort of sea-angel, and to wish that they could always have him for a chief. Our captain, too, appeared to think more of his wife than of the ship, and also seemed to me to be drinking pretty much; and Macpherson soon found that he might take his little drop when he liked, having nobody to find fault with him, except myself, who was his subordinate. So, altogether, discipline became very lax, and except for the mates, who were blusters of the genuine Yankee type, we were quite a happy family at sea. I could not help fancying, however, that it was too good to last long; and so it turned out.

"We had got well down the coast, and I knew we were not far off the land, when one night—a fine night it was, but very dark—it was my watch below from midnight to four in the morning. When I say 'my watch below,' you know, sir, I do not mean my watch below in the engine-room, but my turn to be off duty. Macpherson and I occupied as a sleeping cabin one of the deck-houses abaft the paddle-wheel, in which were two bunks, one his and the other mine. At eight bells—