

voyage, the officers revelled in the idea of what her larder might contain; the probable value of her cargo was estimated carefully.

The *Hornet* was crowding on all sail in order to draw up before the *Peacock* should have had the best of the picking. Captain Biddle was on deck with his glass in hand watching the *Peacock*, when suddenly he saw her swing about (she was well to windward), and fly a signal telling that the big vessel was a ship of the line. The *Peacock* was a faster sailer than the *Hornet*, as the latter sat deep in the water, and, owing to the weight of metal she carried, was slow in stays. But it was evident, by six o'clock in the evening, three hours after Warrington had signalled Biddle to beware of approaching nearer, that the big fellow had turned the tables and was evidently the pursuer, with the intention of running down the *Hornet*. Every minute the sails rose higher and higher above the horizon until the great hull was in plain view. She weathered the little *Hornet*, and it was seen that at the rate of progress the two were making the seventy-four would be within gunshot sometime during the night.

Immediately the wedges of the lower masts were loosened, and at nine o'clock orders were given to lighten ship as much as possible. The sheet-anchor was cut away and hove overboard, and all of the cable followed it. Then the spare rigging and spars were put over the side, and before ten o'clock they