

"You have done capitally!" he said. "And now you must go on deck, for I can't talk any more; only I thank God that I am—as I believe—really getting better."

I went on deck, feeling that now there was a good hope of my being saved from becoming the sole survivor on board.

The day passed, the ship gradually drawing off shore, and the high mountain peaks of Fernando Po in sight on the starboard, until, late in the afternoon, the wind dropped. Released by the calm from navigating cares, I went forward, and after hauling down the useless jib, placed myself on the deck beside Borlase.

"I don't think I shall live through the night," said the young sailor, as I put my hand on his.

I could only press his hand in reply, for his face was so changed that, to my young eyes, he seemed even then almost dying.

"Poor mother!" he went on, "how she will miss me! Will you mind telling her, Tracy? She lives at Bristol; you will see the address in an old Bible she gave me when I first went afloat. She didn't like me to go, for father was lost at sea, and I was the only one left, she said."

He was quiet for some minutes; when he spoke again the voice was so weak that I could scarcely make out words.

"The only son of his mother, and she was a widow." Read."

Then I understood on what the sailor's thoughts were dwelling. But I had scarcely read three verses of the sacred story when the grasp of his hand relaxed. His ears were for ever closed in this world!

It was a miserable night that succeeded. The two other men lingered until the morning watch, when they both passed away, after a paroxysm of the dreadful *vomito prieto* or black vomit.

When all was over I went down to the cabin, feeling as if I *could* not stay any longer on deck. The captain was most kind, and did all he could to comfort me. But he could not yet move from his cot, and both he and I knew well that on my shoulders must rest the one remaining painful duty of committing the bodies of our four dead to the deep.

Well, I did it. By twelve o'clock on that day I had wrapped each of the bodies in a hammock, and weighted them well with shot. Then, one by one, I pushed them overboard from the gangway, watching each as it sank upright through the clear water. Very thankful was I that they did all sink, if any had floated I should not have known what to do.

When all was done, and the ship cleared of the dreadful load, I knelt on the deck, and tried to read some of the burial service out of the "prayers for those at sea." But it was no use. I regularly broke down, and could not read a word.

It was rather a good thing for me that just then a sudden squall struck the ship, a squall that soon freshened into a regular tornado. No doubt it had been threatening for some time, only I had been too absorbed in my work to notice what was going on overhead. I rushed to the wheel but the little brig was heeling over terribly, and would not answer her helm, while such was the strength of the wind, that the fore-topsail, although double-reefed, was nearly torn from the bolt-ropes.

The danger was imminent. In another minute either the sail or the mast—perhaps both—would go. There was no help for it, the sail must be lowered. So, running forward, I cast off the topsail halyards, and watched the yard as it came down by the run, doubting greatly whether I should be ever able to get it up again.

The brig, relieved from the pressure, righted at once, and all I had to do now was to manage the helm care-

fully as she ran before the wind. It was tiring work, though, and by the time the tornado had spent its fury—which was not until two or three hours had passed—my arms were aching terribly from the long spell at the wheel in such weather.

Captain Southport, when I was able to leave the deck, began to talk quite cheerfully of getting about the next day, and in fact, seemed altogether so much better that I too felt happier, and inclined to forget all the miseries we had passed through. I told him how I had been obliged to lower the topsail, and of my inward qualms as to getting it up.

"Never mind," he said, with a smile, "you must wait a day or two, until I am strong enough to take a pull at the halyards; we shall have a nice yarn to spin when the old brig is safely moored in Bristol Docks."

But we were a long way from the ancient city yet, and whether the Polly would ever again sail up the muddy Avon, who could tell!

The second night at sea was far better than the first; all was fine and clear overhead, and a gentle breeze just gave the brig steerage way over the smooth water. Had it been blowing a gale of wind it would have been all the same to me. I was dead beat. Leaving the ship to steer herself, I threw myself down on the deck, and in a moment was fast asleep.

Waking up, it was broad daylight. Refreshed and ready for anything, I took a turn round the deck, glanced at the compass to see if it were lying our course, and then scanned the horizon. On the weather bow was a strange sail, about three or four miles off, apparently standing towards us. At that distance I couldn't well make out her rig, so I fetched the captain's glass from the cabin, and after a good long look went below to make my report.

"A very queer-looking craft, with two long lateen sails, like wings, just as you see in pictures of Mediterranean seaports."

"A felucca, you mean," and the captain looked very grave. "If so, she is no honest trader."

"You think the vessel is a slaver?"

"No doubt at all as to that. I only hope she is nothing worse. But many of these ships, manned as they are by ruffians of the deepest dye, are quite ready for a little piracy, if an unarmed merchant vessel comes in their way. I wonder," he went on, after thinking a bit, "I wonder whether I could manage to get on deck and have a look at her."

There were but a few steps to go up, but it was difficult work helping him over even those few. At length, however, the captain stood once more on his own quarter-deck.

One look at the strange sail was enough to his practised eyes; and so much closer had she now drawn that he needed no glass. There was deep depression in his voice as he spoke.

"She shows no colours and the decks are crowded with men. I don't like her looks; no mere slaver would carry such a crew. Anyway, we are entirely at her mercy; you can do nothing but hoist the ensign, possibly she *may* respect the English flag."

Captain Southport almost dropped on the deck as he finished speaking. So weak was he still, that he offered no opposition to my leading him back to the cabin and placing him again in his cot. There I left him.

Now, there are two ways of getting rid of an enemy when you chance to meet with one on the high seas. You may fight, or you may show a clean pair of heels and run away. But how could I fight when I had no crew? And how could the poor old brig run away without sails?

This was my feeling when I saw the felucca coming