

her at small helm, Quarter Master, and ease her in the sea," were the orders of the Captain.

The luffs were soon put under the weather shrouds, which of course relieved the chains and channels, but many an anxious eye was turned towards the remaining bolts, for upon them depended the safety of the ship—for with one foot of canvass less she could not live fifteen minutes.

Onward plunged the over-laden frigate, and at every surge she seemed bent upon making the deep the sailor's grave, and her live oak sides his coffin of glory.—She had been fitted out at Boston, when the thermometer was below zero. Her shrouds of course, therefore, slacked at every strain, and her unwieldy masts—for she had those designed for the frigate Cumberland, a much larger ship—seemed ready to jump out of her.

And now, while all was apprehension, another bolt drew—and then another—until at last our whole stay was placed upon a single bolt less than a man's wrist in circumference. Still the iron clung to the solid wood, and bore us alongside the breakers, though in a most frightful proximity to them. This trifling incident has never, I believe, been noticed in public, but is a literal fact—which I make not the slightest attempt to embellish.

As we galloped on—for I compared our vessel's leaping to nothing else—the rocks seemed very near us. Dark as the night, the white foam scowled around their black heads, while the spray fell over us, and the thunder of the dashing surge sounded like the awful knell that the ocean was singing for the victims it was eager to engulf.

At length the light bore upon our quarter, and the bold Atlantic

rolled its white caps before us. During this time all was silent, each officer and man was at his post, and the bearing and countenance of the Captain seemed to give encouragement to every person on board. With but a bare possibility of saving the ship and those on board, he relied on his nautical skill and courage, and by carrying the mainsail which in any other situation would have been considered a suicidal act, "he weathered the lee shore, and saved the Constitution!"

The mainsail was now hauled up, by light hearts and strong hands, the jib and spanker taken in., and from the light of the Scilly, the gallant vessel, under close reefed topsails and main trysails, took her departure, and danced merrily over the deep towards the United States.

"Pipe down!" said the Captain to the First Lieutenant, "and splice the main brace."

"Pipe down!" echoed the First Lieutenant to the Boatswain.

"Pipe down!" whistled the Boatswain to the crew, and "pipe down" it was.

"How near the rocks did we go?" said I to the Master's Mate, the next morning.

He made no reply, but taking down a chart, showed me a pencil line between the outside shoal, and the Light House Island, which must have been a small strait for a fisherman to run his smack through in good weather by daylight.

For what is the noble and dear old frigate reserved!

I went upon deck; the sea was calm, a gentle breeze was swelling our canvass from our mainsail to royal, the isles of Scilly had sunk in the eastern waters, and the clouds of the dying storm were rolling off in broken masses to the northward, like the flying columns of a beaten army.