

going to do a hand's turn for himself, he might pack up his traps and go, brat and all! Who was he, that he was to eat his sister out of house and home? And all because he was too proud to beg, forsooth! Wasn't he hegging already, and wasn't she alms-giving? Yes!—only it was to be all underhanded! Nothing fair or above-board! Why should he be ashamed to ask the public for what he wasn't ashamed to take from two tolling relatives, the weaker of whom had suffered so much already from the disgusting drinking habits of the other? Jim gave way, and found excuses for his sister—he always did—in these same disgusting habits. Perhaps he was right. Anyhow, he gave way. And an old mate of his faked him up the inscription afore-mentioned, and supplied the picture of the Flying Dutchman from his narrative of the incident. And well Jim remembered how the cord he hung it from his neck had got frayed and broke, and brought back to his mind another cord his hand once grasped, as he swayed to and fro at the weather ear-ring of a topsail; and his wondering—would the frayed strands of the sheet hold under the great strain of his hack-draw, or snap and fall with him into the black gulf that was hungering for him below? He could hear again the music of the gale that sang in the shrouds, feel again the downward plunge of the hull into the trough of the sea, and breathe again the air that bore its flying foam. Then he thought to himself, would not a plunge into that black gulf, then and there, have been, after all, the best thing for him? And answered his own thought without noting a strangeness in its wording: "What!—and never seen my little lass!"

But the happy fancy that Jim did not beg, but only asked, took hold of the imagination. Of course he would not beg—he would scorn to do so—he, the strong seaman, who had lived a life of danger half of those whose footsteps passed him daily would have flinched to think of! Why should he hesitate to ask of them what he would have given so freely to any one of them himself—to any one of them left in the dark? So when Lizarann said to him one day, apropos of the fact that people's fathers were their aunt's brothers, "Bridgettickses brother's a 'Orsekeeper. Are you a 'Orsekeeper?" He replied that he wasn't, exactly.