

Though he had been taken napping, he was a good sailor, and soon had his little vessel on the other track.

"By heavens!" he said, "there are breakers ahead again, we are regularly embayed; we must have got into the midst of the reef. Ready about!"

Again and again we tacked, but at each change of course fresh dangers seemed to present themselves, which required all his skill and vigilance to avoid.

"I wish there was more sea," I heard him mutter, "for then the breakers would show us the dangers, but this bright moonlight only deceives the eye." Then raising his voice he cried, "Be smart, my men. Ready about!"

If seamanly skill could have saved us I am convinced Captain Barker would have done so, but it was not to be. With nothing but his senses to warn him, having no knowledge of the navigation, and the lead being absolutely useless, he avoided each danger which his quick eye and ear enabled him to detect. But against non-apparent obstacles he could not guard: presently there was a crash, a harsh grating, and then our progress was stopped. We had run upon a sunken reef, over which the now gentle waves passed without a sign of its presence, and in the moonlight the difference in color from the shallowness of the water was invisible.

"I fear it is all up with the old *Firefly*," said the Skipper, when he had returned from sounding carefully all round her. "We have run up nearly a foot on the reef at the top of a spring-tide, and we are so light I doubt if throwing over all our ballast will float her off."

"What is to be done then," I asked.

"We will work at lightening her till daylight," was his answer, "then, if I see no chance of getting her off, or she is too much injured—and this coral cuts like a knife—we must take to the boat. You may as well get together a few things you most value,

Mr. Trevor, while I hasten them in discharging the ballast."

I followed his advice, and went below to secure some papers and other valuables in case of need. As I glanced around I quickly detected the cause of our peril. A landsman had shipped as cook and steward, and, in his ignorance he had carefully hung up my gun by the side of the binacle which was let into the roof of the cabin and thus had completely falsified the compass. We had only sailed that morning, and in the evening, while we were on deck he had been busy stowing away my traps.

How the Captain stamped and swore and vowed that no shore-going lubber should ever enter a ship of his again, when I told him of my discovery. But he calmed down presently, for it certainly was in pure ignorance that the poor fellow had risked his own life.

By the time the sun rose, the reef we were on was nearly dry from the falling of the tide. With the first ray of light Captain Barker was in the water, examining the bottom of the vessel. Then he mounted the rigging, and from the mast-head took a careful survey around.

"The coral has cut through two planks," he said, as he joined me and his mate, a rough old seaman, "but that we could manage to patch up, if it would be of any use. The wind is rising and look how the rollers are beginning to come in through this opening: the glass is falling fast too, there's no doubt a storm is brewing. It wants nearly seven hours to high tide, and, by that time, she will be like a sieve, bumping on this coral. We must trust to the boat. What do you say, Jones?"

The old sailor cast his eyes around. "The sooner we start the better. That means mischief," he growled, as he pointed to windward.

"Then get ready for a start, Mr. Trevor," said the skipper, "but I'm afraid you'll have to give up your