

AN OCEAN MYSTERY

At this intelligence the men dropped their oars.

"Ay, masts she has!" cried Winters. "And as delicate as a lady's finger. Yonder's no wreck, but blow me if I can make her out! She's like no craft I ever saw at sea. Give way, man! we'll soon find out what she is."

Half an hour more of hard pulling brought them within hailing distance; and Baillot, standing up in the bow of the boat, and making a trumpet of his hands, shouted:

"Ship, ahoy! Ship, ahoy!"

He paused and waited, but no sign of life appeared about the vessel.

Again rang out the long musical cry across the water:

"Ship, ahoy! Ship, ahoy!"

"Can we not go nearer?" cried Madeline, her eyes shining like stars in her excitement. "Surely there can be nothing to harm us!"

The little vessel, with its dark green hull, its slender masts, against which lay the neatly furled sails, its glittering brass work, and the delicate web-like tracery of its rigging, looked like a fairy craft.

The old sailor sat staring at her, his eyes bulging out of his head, his mouth open. "Wall, I'll be everlastingly blowed if I can make her out!" he ejaculated at length. "I've seed her like on the Thames, I'm thinking. 'Tis a pleasure yacht! But how did she come here? Why ain't she blowed to pieces with the hurricane? Whar's the folks what sail her?"

"There must be some one on board," said Madame de Langres, with manifest excitement. "Perhaps they are below."

"*L'Espérance!*" cried Madeline, as she caught sight of the gilded letters which ran about the bow.