

## A LUCKY WRECK.

BY E. J. TOKER.

It was a lovely night, far too lovely for me to betake myself to the close little cabin of the schooner "Firefly" while I could enjoy the sight of such a beautiful scene on her deck. The tropical moon was beaming with a soft, bright light far surpassing anything known to the inhabitants of Europe. The constellations of the southern hemisphere, less beautiful perhaps than our own, but possessing a splendour from the vividness of their rays darting through the pure, dry atmosphere, spangled the heavens and were reflected with a lesser glory from the surface of the gently heaving sea. Our sails, whitened by the moonbeams, swelled like the breast of a swan, as they yielded to the gentle but steady breeze. The foam under the bow of the schooner and along her sides sparkled like diamonds from the phosphorescent light common in those seas, while our wake was a line of light from the same cause, and even the track of each fish or water snake was marked out by these fireworks of the deep.

I was able to enjoy the scene almost as if I were in solitude, the only waking soul near me, indeed, being the man at the helm. There were two others of the crew on deck, but they were curled up in happy oblivion under the lee of the boat, and Captain Barker, tired after a long day's work, was stretched asleep on the top of the half sunk cabin.

Why indeed should he fear to yield for a time to his drowsiness, when the course was clear before us, and any danger could be almost as plainly seen as in the light of day? Certainly it was usual to anchor for the night in the inner route between the Australian coast and the Great Barrier Reef,

but, on a night like this, such a precaution would have seemed absurd and even cowardly.

I was thinking of friends far away under other skies, of one dearer than any friend, and my mind only took in vaguely what was around me. But presently in a flaw of the wind there fell upon my ear a sound, which, dulled as my senses were, attracted my attention almost mechanically. It was a sound I knew so well, the roar of breakers on a reef. Glancing instinctively in that direction, a gleam of light, a white line upon the water caught my eye. Was it the dreaded reef, or had my fancy called up a bugbear which existed only in my imagination? I felt uneasy, unwilling to confide in my own senses: the practiced eyes and ears of a sailor would be more trustworthy, and I aroused Captain Barker.

"Thought you heard breakers; saw white water! Impossible!" he said. "Jones how have you been steering?"

"South and by east, sir," answered the sailor.

"That's our right course, and must take us clear of any danger, Mr. Trevor," said the Captain. "Never fear we will take you down all safe."

Reassured, I glanced my eye around, when it fell upon an object that startled me, a beautiful constellation, a cross of stars, yet it brought back all my fears.

"Look, Captain," I exclaimed, "the compass must be wrong, for there is the Southern cross, broad on our beams instead of ahead."

"Then we are steering straight for the Barrier. And you were right: there is broken water. Watch below there, turn out! Hands 'bout ship!" he shouted.