

softness, as the summer moon grew bright.

Then the quiet waves began—as their plaited lines rolled onward into frills of whiteness—in the very curl and fall, to glisten with a flitting light. Presently, as each puny breaker overshone the one in front, not the crest and comb alone, but the slope behind it, and the crossing flaws inshore, gleamed with hovering radiance and soft flashes vanishing; till, in the deepening of the dusk, each advancing crest was sparkling with a mane of fire, every breaking wavelet glittered like a shaken seam of gold. Thence the shower of beads and lustres lapsed into a sliding tier, moving up the sands with light, or among the pebbles breaking into a cataract of gems.

Being an ancient salt, of course I was not dismayed by this show of phosphorus, nor even much astonished, but rather pleased to watch the brightness, as it brought back to my mind thoughts of beautiful sunburnt damsels whom I had led along the shore of the lovely Mediterranean. Yet our stupid landsmen, far and wide, were panic-struck; and hundreds fell upon their knees, expecting the last trump to sound. All I said to myself was this: “No wonder I had such sport to-day; change of weather soon, I doubt, and perhaps a thunderstorm.”

As I gazed at all this beauty, trying not to go astray with wonder and with weariness, there, in the gateway of black rock, with the offing dark behind her, and the glittering waves upon their golden shoulders bearing her—sudden as an apparition came a smoothly gliding boat. Beaded all athwart the bows and down the bends with drops of light, holding stem well up in air, and the forefoot shedding gold, she came as straight toward this poor and unconverted Davy as if an angel held the tiller, with an admiral in the stern-sheets.

Hereupon such terror seized me, after the wonders of the day, that my pole fell downright into the water (of which a big fish wronged me so as to slip the hook and be off again), and it was no more than the turn of a hair but what I had run away head over heels. For the day had been so miraculous, beginning with starvation, and going on with so much

heat and hard work and enjoyment, and such a draught of fishes, that a poor body's wits were gone with it; and therefore I doubt not it must have been an especial decree of Providence that in turning round to run away I saw my big fish-basket.

To carry this over the rocks at a run was entirely impossible (although I was still pretty good in my legs), but to run away without it was a great deal more impossible for a man who had caught the fish himself; and beside the fish in the basket, there must have been more than two hundredweight of bass that would not go into it. Three hundred and a half in all was what I set it down at, taking no heed of prawns and lobsters; and with any luck in selling, it must turn two guineas.

Hence, perhaps, it came to pass (as much from downright bravery, of which sometimes I have some little) that I felt myself bound to creep back again, under the shade of a cold wet rock, just to know what that boat was up to.

A finer floatage I never saw. and her lines were purely elegant, and she rode above the water without so much as parting it. Then, in spite of all my fear, I could not help admiring; and it struck me hotly at the heart, “Oh, if she is but a real boat, what a craft for my business!” And with that I dropped all fear. For I had not been able, for many years, to carry on my fishing as skill and knowledge warranted, only because I could not afford to buy a genuine boat of my own, and hitherto had never won the chance without the money.

As yet I could see no soul on board. No one was rowing, that was certain, neither any sign of a sail to give her steerage-way. However, she kept her course so true that surely there must be some hand invisible at the tiller. This conclusion flurried me again, very undesirably, and I set my right foot in such a manner as to be off in a twinkling of anything unholy.

But God has care of the little souls which nobody else takes heed of; and so He ordained that the boat should heel, and then yaw across the middle of the pool; but for which black rocks alone would have been her welcome.