

before. He wore a rough seaman's jacket and a wide-awake; he had given up shaving, and altogether looked more like a low-class adventurer than an honest son of toil.

The nights and days passed on, Jake had made no male friends, and was generally voted a sullen, disagreeable fellow. Yet the purifying breath of the sea had not altogether failed to do its work. He was calmer now and not so restless; as determined as ever to have it out with his enemy, but not so cruel. We are creatures of the elements we breathe, and oxygen, if absorbed in full measure, will disintegrate even revenge, as well as solder secretions.

Only one person in the intermediate cabin had awakened his interest in the slightest measure. This was a young woman of about his wife's age, and not unlike her in features, dressed in widows' weeds, and accompanied by a little girl about five years old. Her look of abstraction and deep unhappiness had first attracted him. Here, he thought, is some one almost as miserable as myself.

During the rough weather out, the woman was very ill, and as she was quite helpless and alone, Jake paid her some little friendly attentions, for which she seemed very grateful. One evening, when the vessel was labouring in a calm but heavy sea, they got into conversation, and after some hesitation she told him something of her story.

Her maiden name, she said, was Ellen Windover, and she was going home to join a married sister at Plymouth. Six years before she had married, or so she thought, a gentleman who said he was an officer in the army, and who had met her when she was a governess in a wealthy quaker family, in the suburbs of Philadelphia. For about a year, and up to the birth of her child, she lived a life of comparative happiness, despite the fact that her husband was of idle and dissipated habits. At last, however, he left her almost without a word, and almost simultaneously she was informed that he had another wife living—a discovery which, she said, almost broke her heart.

"The villain!" cried Jake, indignantly. He added, with flashing eyes, "Aye, the parsons are right—there *must* be a Hell!"

"I have forgiven him long ago," said the woman, sadly. "My only grief now is for my little girl."

"And you have never seen him since?"

"Never, sir!"

"Well, maybe it's better so. The Lord will punish him somehow, make no mistake about that!"

The woman lifted her eyes timidly to his face, and with genuine intuition, almost guessed his secret.

"I think," she said, "that *you*, too, have been unfortunate. I only hope your misery has not been as great as mine."

Flushing to the temples, he forced a laugh.

"No, my lass," he returned. "I ha' had my troubles like other men, but a man wi' health can defy the blue devils. It's strange, though, that in so bonny a world there should be so many wicked devils unfit to live. Aye, aye, there *must* be a Hell! There are some men—and maybe some women, too—that need purging in fire. Your mate was one of them, and I know another! It's him I'm follering across the sea."

And with a forced laugh and a nod, he walked away, and looked sullenly across the lonely waste of waters.

Days and nights passed away, till the vessel was within a few days' sail of the North of Ireland, when suddenly there swept upon her a furious southeasterly gale, laden with the spume of Antarctic frost and fog. It was an anxious and awful time. The passengers were kept prisoners below for forty-eight hours; but Jake Owen, who knew something of sea-craft, offered to make himself useful, and was allowed to keep his place on deck and assist the men. It was a strange scene, a curious mingling of the picturesque and the diabolic, and he watched it with a sort of savage delight.

The great iron ship lay helpless as a straw in the trough of the sea, and as the mighty waves came rolling up with crash of thunder and flash of foam,

they washed her stern to stem, staved in her boats to starboard, cleared her decks of every loose fragment, and on one occasion, upleaping high as the funnel, nearly put out her engines. For twelve hours together, it was necessary to keep her head to the gale, but despite the power of full steam, she swung this way and that way at the mercy of the billows, and had she not been built of malleable stuff, would have split to pieces.

The old captain kept the bridge, trumpet in hand, and had the Caledonian hymn-book in his pocket. For days together, his sole sustenance was whisky in moderate doses, qualified with natural piety. The hubbub below, the thunder above and all around, were deafening, but the grim old Scot never lost his head. He gave his orders as calmly as if he were giving the psalm from the precentor's desk, and regarded the vast Ocean as just so much contemptible matter in disturbance, which a word from the Almighty could stop at once.

At last the gale ceased, and there came a great peaceful lull. The captain dived down into his cabin to snatch a little sleep, the seamen crept hither and thither repairing damages, and the chief officer guided the good ship on her way to port. The next morning, however, she found herself in a fog so dense that it was impossible to see the end of her own nose—that is to say, of her bowsprit; and as it was some days since the sun had been visible, or it had been possible to take any reckoning, the engines were slowed to half speed, and she stole through the fog leadenly, like a blind woman groping her way.

The fog increased, till all was black as Erebus on every side. The air was so bitter cold that the masts and shrouds were frozen, and the decks crackled like ice underfoot. There was not a breath of wind. The sea, still rolling with the force of the tempest which had subsided, was sinister looking and black as ink.

Jake watched the old captain and his officers in frequent consultation, and saw by their looks that they were very anxious. At last, the engines stopped altogether, and the ship rolled in the seas like a log, while they waited for the fog to clear. Every now and then soundings were taken, and entered in the ship's log.

Thoroughly tired out by the exertions of the last few days, Jake went down to his berth and slept like a log for many hours. He was awakened at last by a hard roaring and crashing, and simultaneously he found himself nearly swinging out of his berth by a lurch of the vessel to leeward. Hurrying on his clothes, he ran on deck, and found that the fog had partially cleared, and that another tempest, from the south-east this time, was blowing great guns.

It was just about daybreak, or so it seemed by the dim, wan, doubtful light which flickered now and again in the eye of the howling wind. Clinging on the bridge, the captain was trying to get a reckoning, and after infinite struggles he partially succeeded. The result did not seem reassuring, for the ship, instead of being allowed to continue on her way, was put round to face the gale, and the engines increased to full speed.

Such was the fury of the tempest, however, that she seemed to make no way whatever, and again and again she fell off and drifted sidelong in the trough of the sea. The clouds and vapours, trailing low upon the water, swept over her and mingled with the upleaping waves.

All day long, if day it could be called where all was a doubtful and sinister twilight, this state of things continued. When night came, the blast had somewhat slackened its fury, but the violence of the enormous seas was greater than ever.

Meantime the passengers were tossed about with mingled feelings of discomfort and terror. Again and again, as some more than unusually violent sea struck the ship, making it quiver through and through till destruction seemed imminent, the cries of women and children rose from the cabin. Many fell upon their knees, clinging to the quivering woodwork, and prayed.

Among those who seemed least panicstricken was the poor woman named Ellen Windover. Pale but calm, she watched by the side of her little girl, who was too prostrate with sea-sickness to com-

prehend the danger. On the night of which we now speak Jake found her kneeling by the child's side, and wetting its lips with a little milk and brandy.

"Things be mending, I think," he said, going over to her. "At any rate the wind has fallen. How be the little lass?"

"Very ill, sir. She has eaten nothing for so long, and was never very strong."

"And you? I'm glad you keep up your courage. Many men aboard might take a lesson from you."

She looked sadly up into his face.

"If it were not for my darling, I should not mind much what happened."

"Come, don't say that!"

"Ah, sir, my life is wasted, and I have little left to live for. Perhaps it would be better for both of us if we sunk down this night into the deep sea."

As if in very answer to her words, at that moment there was a crash like thunder, the cabin in which they stood seemed rent and riven, she herself was thrown violently forward on her face, and Jake was shot like a bullet right away to leeward. The after part of the cabin shot up to an angle of fifty degrees, forming an inclined plane, at the bottom of which struggled a mass of shrieking human beings. Another crash! and another! Then instead of righting herself, the ship stood firm, raised up aft and dipping down forward, while thunder after thunder of raging seas roared around her.

She had struck!

With a wild cry of horror and surprise, Jake crawled rather than ran up the companion, and came out upon the deck. What a sight met his eyes! The breakers were white as milk around the ship, rising and whirling high up into the air, and on every side was horrible darkness. The wailing of the wind, the loud quivering of the vessel, the crash of the seas as they smote upon her, the shrieking of the officers and the bewildered crew, all stunned the ear and filled the sense with horror!

The truth soon became apparent. Beaten backward before the blast, now fronting the seas and now blowing sidelong, she had at last drifted on some terrible reef or shore. The engines were going at full speed, but she was wedged in between the sharp teeth of the submerged rocks. Nor was this all. The propeller, half broken away and dangling by the steering chains, was beating like a sledge hammer on the ship's sides, threatening momentarily to stave them in, and as Jake stood listening and gazing, an enormous sea, sweeping over the vessel forward, rolled right over the decks, swept into the engine room, and put out the fires.

What next happened he scarcely knew. The crew seemed distracted, and the terror-stricken passengers, shrieking and struggling, many in their night-dresses, swarmed the deck. Upon the bridge still stood the old Captain, roaring out his orders and trying to still the tumult.

Suddenly a wild shriek went up that she was going to pieces. Another enormous sea swept her from stem to stern, carrying away with it many human beings. At this moment Jake Owen saw the young woman clinging to the door of the intermediate companion, holding her child in her arms. He rushed to her assistance. As he did so there was another crash which stunned him. He seemed to be drawn down, down, into some whirling gulf of darkness, and when he recovered consciousness he was clinging to a spar and struggling like a straw in the trough of the foaming waters.

After many hours, he and two others, seamen of the ship, were picked up by a passing vessel. All the rest, including the brave old Captain and Jake's one friend, had been swept, with the "John Macadam," to the bottom of the sea.

## CHAPTER XX.—THE PRODIGAL RETURNED.

The mutual recognition of husband and wife, and Gillian's swoon, following upon it, happened so swiftly that the witnesses of the scene did not at first comprehend what had happened. Venables was the first to recover his presence of mind. He laid Gillian on the sofa, and taking from a table near at hand a glass flower-stand dipped his fingers