

could be seen bearing down on the ship even while the words were being uttered.

"Close reef to-o-o-p-s'ls!" roared Master Trench, with the energy of a man who means what he says.

We are not sure of the precise nautical terms used, but the result was a sudden and extensive reduction of canvas; and not a moment too soon, for the operation had scarcely been completed when the squall struck the ship, almost capsized her, and sent her careering over the billows "like a thing of life."

This was the first of a succession of squalls, or gales, which blew the *Water Wagtail* far out upon the Atlantic Ocean, stove in her bulwarks, carried away her bowsprit and foretopmast, damaged her skylights, strained her rudder, and cleared her decks of loose hamper.

After many days the weather moderated a little and cleared up, enabling Master Trench to repair damages and shape his course for Norway. But the easterly gales returned with increased violence, undid all the repairs, carried away the compass, and compelled these ancient mariners to run westward under bare poles—little better than a wreck for winds and waves to play with.

In these adverse circumstances the skipper did what too many men are apt to do in their day of sorrow—he sought comfort in the bottle.

Love of strong drink was Master Trench's weakest point. It was one of the few points on which he and his friend Burns disagreed.