

328 My Brave and Gallant Gentleman

I held her fast.

She looked up at me suddenly with a strange quietness, as if she did not understand me and what I did. As she spoke, she forgot her King's English.

"Ain't you goin' to help him? It's Joe. You ain't scared o' the sea. You can do it. Get him to me, George. Oh!—get me Joe. I want him. I want him. He's mine."

I grasped her by the arm and shook her, as I shouted in her ear:

"Do you love Joe,—Rita;—love him enough to marry him if I go out for him?"

"Oh, yes, yes! Get him, George. I love Joe. I always loved him."

In that moment, I made up my mind.

"If we come back, little woman," I cried, "it will be down there at the end of the Island. Run home;—get grand-dad and the others in some boats. It isn't so bad down there. Watch out for us.

"If I don't come back, Rita,—dear, little Rita——"

I took her face in my hands and pressed my lips on hers.

I ran from her, up over the cliffs, away to the far side of the horn, where the eddy made the sea quieter. I threw off my boots and superfluous clothing and sprang into the water. Out, out I plunged, and plunged again, keeping under water most of the time, until at last I got caught in the terrible rush three hundred yards straight out from the point.