

A TALE OF THE SEA.

It was a bright moonlight evening, and so warm that our men lay about the deck and in groups with hardly any covering; I think I never saw so perfectly clear and brilliant a night. Some of the officers were reading, and with ease, by the light of the moon, and the ocean as far as the sight could sketch was a glittering mirror without a single ruffle or wave; we lay like a log on the water, with all sails set, but not a breath of air to move them. The crew were collected in small parties about the fore-castle and main deck listening to the long yarns of some gray-headed seaman, about the "Flying Dutchman" of the "Black River of Gatand," while now and then some favorite sea song was bawled forth from the laughing crowd. The officers were walking about the quarter deck smoking and conversing, and occasionally extending their walk so far as to listen to the stories of the fore-castle. This was my first voyage on the "wide, wide sea," and as I was the youngest of the midshipmen I found particular favor with several of the oldest seamen, with whom by-the-by I liked to associate better than with my brother midshipmen—I always loved to listen to their tales of murder and battles, and would sit for hours on the coils of rope, and hear old "Jack Transom" our second mate, an old man of sixty years relate his adventures and "hairbreadth escapes." We had left Port Royal on the south side of Jamaica the day before on our way to the mouth of the Amazon, and were at the time of this writing passing between the small island of Monts-Errat and Guadaloupe: in the distance you could see the white moon beams playing on the fort and beach, and glistening on the low roofs and white walls of the little capital of Guadaloupe. I was standing on the capstan with a small night glass in my hand, looking at the opposite shore with its long low beach with here and there a small slave hut, or mound of loose stones piled up as a covering over the grave of some drowned sailor whose body had been washed on shore. I dropped my glass and was getting down from my station when Jack Transom stepped up and asked for a squint, I handed the glass to him and after looking through it a moment he handed it back saying, "Ay,