

THE ADVENTURER

"Three points on the starboard bow!"

"Quartermaster!"

"Ay, ay, captain."

"Luff a bit!"

"Luff it is, sir."

"Trim in the sheets a bit, Mr. Goltz!"

"V good, sir."

"That will do. Belay there!"

It was after five o'clock. The setting sun was hidden in banks of cloud. The wide savannas stretched away on every side to an unbroken sky line, gray, monotonous, never so lonely as at that hour of declining day. The bow was black with men watching for the first sign of the settlement. On the bridge a smaller, but no less eager, party was trying to pick up the flagstaff with their binoculars. Felicidad, once so distant, so inconceivably remote, the end of the universe—now stood, by force of contrast, for civilization itself. It was the first gateway on the homeward road, the first outpost, the solitary sentinel of the hosts beyond.

A speck of flag blowing out bravely!

A blur of tent tops!

The tall and rusty smokestack of the *Moltke*!

Then frantic arms waving hats!

The *Fortuna* rolled on majestically, disdaining to shorten sail or slacken her headway by an inch. Kirk aimed her at the center of the settlement, determined to bring her up, all standing, in the great court itself. He would give the Felicidades a spectacle that would live in their memories forever, and bring the expedition to a magnificent and sensational close. In vain Westbrook urged him to be careful—pleaded—almost commanded.