

the officers to the boat. As they did so they knew well that the order was given merely to keep them employed, for that the chance of any one being washed ashore and reaching it alive through the tremendous surf was small indeed. As they cut away the boat's cover they looked round, and a low cry broke from several of them. The ship was close to the broken water.

Every man clung to something and awaited the shock. In a few seconds it came. As she descended a wave there was a tremendous shock, followed instantaneously by a crash as the foremast went over the bow. Another and another, accompanied each time with the sound of rending timbers.

"Cut away the lashings of the boat!" the captain shouted, drawing his knife and setting the example. As he did so he touched Jack and pointed into the bottom of the boat. The lad understood him. He was to put in the plugs, which at ordinary times were left out to allow any rain-water to escape as it fell. Jack in turn touched Arthur, and the two climbed into the boat to replace the plugs.

As they did so a fiercer gust than usual struck the vessel. The lashings of the long-boat had just been cut, and the gale seized it and raised it in