

For the Sake of a Dream.

A TRUE STORY.

(Re-told by Helen Shipton, in 'The Dawn of Day'.)

The trading brig 'The Lively Lass,' bound from Plymouth to Jersey, was staggering close-hauled through a roughish sea, carrying very little sail, but making pretty fair way. The weather was only a little 'dirty,' in a sailor's mode of speech, but a landsman might have been pardoned for thinking it a storm, so grey and lowering was the sky, so keen the wind that whistled among the cordage, so drenching the spray that broke constantly over the deck and kept the oilskin overalls of the man at the

level, and in the intervals clung to the bulwarks and looked out over the swiftly racing waves.

His face was pale, and set in anxious lines, but somehow it did not give the idea that he was afraid of anything near at hand, or likely to happen; his eyes were wistful and dreamy, and each time he turned from a long gaze at the wavering line betwixt sky and ocean, it was with a start, as though he had been trying to make up his mind to some action that went against the grain.

At last he came quickly up to the man at the wheel and began to speak, bending his head so as to be heard through the clash of the water and the shriek of the wind.

'Father! I said, I wouldn't speak of it again, but I must! It was the same last

than had been his since he tumbled out of his hammock in the grey dawn of that stormy morning.

The little cabin, lighted by a swinging lamp, and shut in with closed hatches from the noise of wind and water, seemed quite peaceful by contrast with the wave-swept deck, and father and son could hear each other speak without difficulty. But the skipper seemed in no hurry to listen to what his son had to say, but was more intent on rubbing his hands, which were numbed from holding the kicking wheel, and getting a light in his short blackened pipe.

'Father,' said the lad desperately at last, 'I shall go out of my mind if something isn't done!'

'It's easy talking; but who's to do anything with this sea on?' said his father, surlily, watching him keenly the while under his bent brows. 'And what sort of a fool's errand is it that you want me to go upon?'

'I tell you, I'm as sure they're there as that we're here. And I'm sure of the place, for I know just how it lies, with the castle-shaped rock just under the north star, and the bit of beach running out eastward. They're there, and they'll be dead of hunger and cold soon if someone doesn't go after them.'

Captain Murchison took the pipe out of his mouth and tapped it sharply on the table.

'Look here,' he said, 'a man might dream fifty things, and not a word of truth in any one of them. You must be going out of your wits to expect me to answer to her owners for taking the 'Lively Lass' out of her course because my son had had a dream! I reckon they'd think I was out of mine if I was to come to them with such a tale.'

The young fellow clenched his hands in his fair curls, damp with the salt spray.

'I know,' he cried, 'if any other chap told me such a thing I should laugh at it. But there's dreams and dreams. The night before we left Plymouth I dreamt it, and the night before that, and now again, last night, and always the same—always as clear and plain as I see you now—five shipwrecked men on that bare bit of a rocky island, looking out for someone to come and take them off. Father, if it had come to you like that, you wouldn't doubt but why it had been sent for something.'

'Then why wasn't it sent to me?' said the elder man shrewdly, 'seeing I'm responsible for this here vessel and all in her? I can't be expected to act on what fancies may come into the head of a lad like you. That wouldn't be in reason.'

Chris Murchison had for the moment no answer to say. This seemed unanswerable, and yet the vision that had come to him was as clear before his mind's eye as ever. Once he had spoken of it and had been laughed at; the second time he had spoken and his father had been half scornful and half angry; this third time he had had a hard struggle with himself before he could resolve to brave the anger and scorn by mentioning this strange matter again, and now his father was listening to him with unusual patience and gentleness. But the more reasonable his father was, the wilder seemed the proposal which Chris was trying to make.

'You're sure it's the Gouliot Rock?' said his father, after a pause.

'Quite sure! Three times I've seen it when I was awake, and three times now when I'm asleep, and I couldn't mistake it. But it was by daylight I've seen it when I



A LIGHT, HE CRIED.

wheel streaming with a perpetual shower bath.

The man at the wheel was the captain of the little vessel, a short, thick-set man, with a brown beard, and keen blue-grey eyes thickly set about with wrinkles. His face had the grave, almost stern look, of a man who habitually carries his own life and the lives of others in his hand; for, indeed, in those seas the very best of sailors has need to try every trick he knows; and even so, rock, and wave, and wind, may well be more than a match for him at last.

The only other living thing on deck was a lad of about seventeen, also clad in streaming oilskins, who paced up and down with wonderful steadiness during the odd moments when the wet planks were fairly

night; it's been on my mind all day.'

'Sh!' said the elder man, lifting his eyebrows impatiently, 'I can't heed that sort of thing now! Ellison will be coming to take his trick at the wheel in a quarter of an hour more, and then I am going below. You may come then and say what you've got to say; and let's have a finish and end of this nonsense.'

Chris Murchison drew back with a look almost of relief, and went striding and staggering off along the slippery deck. His father's tone was not encouraging, but he knew that the skipper's bark was worse than his bite, and anyway he himself was to free his mind and clear his conscience. The next quarter of an hour was a long one, but he waited through it with an easier soul