

whistling for a breeze, leant silently down upon the companion in deep and sad meditation. What was I dreaming of in those far foreign lands, in that lonely ship, surrounded by high dark hills? It was of a distant fireside, and of those happy reckless hours, when, with all the sanguine confidence of boyhood, I flung my arms around the neck of my widowed parent, and cried, "Mother, I will be a sailor and make a fortune for you;" and then I remembered the melancholy but truthful foreboding that was ever contained in her reply: "The steed will be gone ere the grass is grown,"—and I laughed in bitterness of heart over all my wild hopes and childish calculations.

I was aroused from my reverie by the approach of Andersen, a Norwegian, the mate of the schooner, and the only white man on board, besides the Spaniards and myself. He had been long in those latitudes, but whether through habits of partiality or indolence, though fully competent in most points of navigation, had never sought to better his condition. He was also high in the confidence of his employers, and I had many reasons to value his integrity and his courage. To see him as he loomed up between me and the dusky sky, his stature appeared gigantic; it was indeed over six feet—a broad bony structure that promised little activity—yet he could ascend the rattlings upon occasion with the speed of a monkey, and beat double time in a fandango with all the nimbleness if not all the grace of a Spaniard. He was a genuine sailor, with all the reckless hardihood and superstition of his kind—a ghost seer in the most ample sense of the word, and a devout believer in Lapland witches—the doom of Vanderdecken—the sea-serpent and the kraken. He had even ventured to hint mysteriously at a *liason* with a mermaid, but it was only with the fresh hands and the darkies that he carried his audacity so far; and he never went to sea without an eelskin round his wrist, and a cawl in his tobacco pouch. His hair, excepting the beard and whiskers, was very scant, and as crisp and bleached-like as Iceland moss, and his face, besides the determined pucker of a tobacco-chewer, was as bronzed and weather-worn as that of Belzoni's mummy, "*et voila mon oncle*." He remained a few moments in an attitude of hesitation, as if he was debating within himself upon a subject which was difficult to introduce; at last he rallied into an effort, and a short dialogue something like the following passed between us:—

"Skipper, d'ye see, I had a d—d ugly dream last night."

"Aye?"

"Aye, and 'twas all about sharks."

"Out with it; I see that's what you want."

"No, I don't, but shiver me if there aint one beating about the bows now. What d'ye think of that?"

And here he smote his brawny thigh as if he had delivered a clincher.

"Nothing; are you afraid 'twill swallow the ship?"

"No, but I believe 'twill swallow some one aboard on her. I tell you, skipper, it's fate to some of us; I never saw it fail. Many a likely lad have I seen take to his hammock, who was as merry and full of fun as one of Mother Carey's chicks before the shark hove up in our dead water; and as often have I seen them turned over into Davy Jones' locker with a twenty pounder at their feet. To be sure, its all one—as well feed sharks as landcrabs—as well lie in a shark's belly as in a doctor's rum-puncheon; but I cannot fancy this crazy hulk being hashed to mince meat by the grinders of those sea-devils; no, I wouldn't like to bring up my log in that fashion. After all my wanderings, I would fain make my last anchorage under some green tree or other, where the sun might sometimes shine upon my grave."

I rose and went forward. The sea was like molten lead, and rippled against the hull of the schooner with a stilly trickling sound. Nothing is so soothing, and withal so imposing, as night on the ocean; all the surrounding objects seem to assume a shadowy and spectral character, which impresses the sailor with a sensation of awe that is seldom otherwise excited. I know not whether it was owing to the superstitious prognostications of the Norseman, or my own previous melancholy reflections, but I felt myself on this evening, dark and breathless as it was, feelingly alive to such an influence. I leant over the taffrail, which was already lined by the crew, and there, as Andersen had stated, was the watchful monster winding lazily to and fro in the inky waters, like a long meteor, sometimes rising till his nose disturbed the surface, and a low gurgling sound, like a deep breath, rose through the breaker, at others resting motionless as the ship itself, as if listening to the murmur of our voices and thirsting for our blood. Andersen, who was the idol of the black people, had readily impressed them with his own notions, and they hung over the bulwarks in attitudes of fear, and perplexity; and with voices chilled to a whisper, At last, Prince, a little lively negro—the cook, steward, and cabin boy of the vessel, and the very *prince* of jackals and providers, thrust his woolly head out of the caboose, and dispelled the