

CHAPTER V.

OLD BLOWHARD.

"THIS way, Mr. Slick, please," said the mate. "Before we go below, I want to prepare you for seein' our captain. It is not easy to find his counterpart. He is singularly eccentric, and stands out in bold relief from the rest of his race. He may be said to be *sui generis*."

"Hullo!" said I to myself, "where the plague did you pick up that expression? It strikes me his mate is *sui generis*, too."

"The only thing that I know to compare him to," he continued, "is a large cocoa-nut. First, he is covered with a rough husk that a hatchet would hardly cut thro', and then inside of that is a hard shell, that would require a saw amost to penetrate; but arter that the core is soft and sweet, and it's filled with the very milk of human kindness. You must understand this, and make allowances for it, or you won't get on well together at all; and when you do come to know him, you will like him. He has been to me more than a friend. If he had been my own father, he couldn't have been kinder to me. The name he goes by among the fishermen, is 'Old Blowhard;' he is a stern but just man, and is the Commodore of the fleet, and applied to in all cases of difficulty. Now follow me, but when you descend half way, remain there till I announce you, that you may hear his strange way of talking."

"Captin," said he, as he opened the door of the little after-cabin, "there is a stranger here wishes to see you."

"What the devil have I got to do with a stranger?" he replied, in a voice as loud as if he was speakin' in a gale of wind. "Ho don't want to see me at all, and if he has got anythin' to say, just hear what it is, Matey, and then send him about his business. No, he don't want me; but I'll tell you what the lazy spongin' vagabond wants, he is fishin' for a supper to eat; for these great hungry, gaunt, gander-bellied, blue-noses take as much bait as a shark. Tell the cook to boil him a five-pound piece of pork and a peck of potatoes, and then to stand over him with the rollin'-pin, and make him eat up every mite and morsel of it clean, for we aint used to other folks' leavin's here. Some fun in that, Matey, aint there?" And he larfed heartily at his own joke. "Matey," said he, "I have almost finished my invention for this patent jigger; start that critter forrard, and then come and look at it, Sonney."

The mate then returned to me, and extendin' to me his hand,