

my dauntless courage, called out in Welsh that he could see me walking in and out of them, like so many haystacks. Upon this I took yet further courage, having a witness so close at hand, and nothing seeming to hurt me. So what did I do but go outside, without any notion of running away, but to face the thing to its utmost; and Watkin, keeping along the wall, took good care to come after me.

Here I discovered in half a second that I had been wise as well as strong in meeting the matter valiantly; for what we had seen was but the glancing—or reflection, as they call it now—of what was being done outside. In a word, the thick and stifling heat of the day (which had gathered to a head the glaring and blazing power of the last two months of hot summer) was just beginning to burst abroad in whirlwind, hail and thunder. All the upper heaven was covered with a spread of burning yellow; all the half-way sky was red as blood with fibres under it, and all the sides and margin looked as black as the new-tarred bends of a ship. But what threw me most astray was, that the whole was whirling, tossing upward jerks of darkness, as a juggler flings his balls, yet at one time spinning round, and at the same time scowling down.

“It is a hurricane,” said I, having seen some in the West Indies which began like this. Watkin knew not much of my meaning, but caught hold of my coat, and stood. And in truth it was enough to make not only a slip of a boy, but a veteran sailor, stand and fear.

Not a flash of lightning yet broke the expectation of it, nor had there been a drop of rain. But to my surprise, and showing how little we know of anything, over the high land broke a sand-storm, such as they have in Africa. It had been brewing some time, most likely, in the Kenfig burrows, toward the westward and the windward, although no wind was astir with us. I thought of a dance of water-spouts, such as we had twice encountered in the royal navy; once, I know, was after clearing the mouth of the Strait of Malaccas; where the other was I truly forget, having had so much to go everywhere. But this time the whirling stuff was neither water, nor smoke, nor cloud;

but sand, as plain as could be. It was just like the parson’s hour-glass—only going up, not coming down, and quickly instead of slowly. And of these funnels, spinning around, and coming near and nearer, there may have been perhaps a dozen, or there may have been threescore. They differed very much in size, according to the breadth of whirlwind, and the stuff it fed upon, and the hole in the air it bored; but all alike had a tawny color, and a manner of bulking upward, and a loose uncertain edge, often lashing off in frays; and between them black clouds galloped; and sometimes two fell into one, and bodily broke downward; then a pile (as big as Newton rock) rose in a moment anyhow. Hill or valley made no odds; sand-hill or sand-bottom; the sand was in the place of the air, and the air itself was sand.

Many people have asked me, over and over again (because such a thing was scarcely known, except at the great storm of sand four hundred years ago, they say)—our people ever so many times, assert their privilege to ask me (now again especially) how many of these pillars there were! I wish to tell the truth exactly, having no interest in the matter—and if I had, no other matter would it be to me; and after going into my memory deeper than I ever could have expected there would be occasion for, all I can say is this—legion was their number; because they were all coming down upon me; and how could I stop to count them?

Watkin lost his mind a little, and asked me (with his head gone under my regulation-coat) if I thought it was the judgment-day.

To this question I “replied distinctly in the negative” (as the man of the paper wrote, when I said “no” about poaching); and then I cheered young Watkin up, and told him that nothing more was wanted than to keep a weather-helm.

Before his wit could answer helm so much as to clear my meaning, the storm was on me, and broke my pipe, and filled my lungs and all my pockets, and spoiled every corner of the hat I had bought for my dear wife’s funeral. I pulled back instantly (almost as quickly as the boy Watkin could), and we heard the sand burst over the house, with a rattle like