



"Keep your coward opinion to yourself till you're asked for it. Jack Longley and David Burn, lay out on the jibboom, and lace together that rent with an end of twine."

"He spoke slowly and loudly, though his face was white with passion. I looked at David. 'Will you go?' I asked.

"'Yes,' said he, quite cheerful like; 'tis my duty, and if I'm washed overboard, 'tis no concern of mine. If my work is done on earth, God knows I'm ready to go to His kingdom in heaven.'

"Those were his very words. I've thought about them too often to forget them; and as he said them he looked straight in my eyes, and smiled.

"'Life or death, Jack; all's one to him as knows that God loves him.'

"'Haven't ye found the needle and twine yet, ye lazy, cowardly brutes?' halloed the captain through the storm. 'Out with you!'

"We tied a rope round our waists, and did his bidding, crawling out as well as we could in the teeth of the sea, which came bursting over us, hissing and roaring like a live thing. I was frightened, I don't deny; but as for David, you'd ha' thought he was in his mammy's parlour to look at him, so easy and happy was he.

"We laced up the sail, badly enough, but as well as it was possible to do it, and turned to fight our way back. How the ship pitched! I've been in many a storm, but I never felt worse motion than that. A great wave came and beat the breath nearly out of

my body, as the boom cut through it, and I clung with all my strength to the slippery wood. When I looked again, dashing the brine from my eyes—David was gone!"

"'Poor fellow!' ejaculated Bill, one of Jack's messmates, to whom he was telling his yarn.

"'Nay, rather, 'Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord,' as is written in David's own little Testament, which I have now. He tried in his lifetime to coax us to sail under Christ's flag; but we heeded him not a whit. His death saved my soul, praised be God! and took him to his Father's kingdom, as he said. So, comrades, was it not well for him to die?"

"'Did you see nothing of him, Jack?'" asked Bill, after a minute's silence. "Could nothing be done for him?"

"'Nothing in a sea such as that. 'Twould ha' been madness to dream of lowering a boat. We flung ropes towards where we saw him battling amongst the waves; but he never could catch them—that round his waist had run through the lashing as he fell, and now it only tangled round him. He swam like a duck towards us for a while, and the crew shouted and rushed about like mad things. It's an awful thing to stand and see a fellow-creature drown two boats' length from your arms; but then I only seemed to remember what he said—'Life or death; 'tis all one to him that knows that God loves him.' It was not death to him, only just steering into port, safe for evermore."

"And the captain—was he sorry?" asked Bill.

"Ah, that captain—God pardon him!—the sail ripped out again, and he ordered two more men to lay out on the sprit and lace it up. I saw the mate step forward, and a moment after the halliards ran through the block, and the jib blew away down the wind, beyond the need of lacing or the risking of men's lives."

"It was well done of him," said Bill, emphatically. "That skipper would have warmed him, I guess, if he had spied him with the tail of his eye."

"Did the mate let it go on purpose, then?" asked Owen, timidly.

"Just that," answered Long Jack. "He cut the halliards as it might be there"—and he pointed to where the ropes crossed the dark sky above their heads; "and 'twas the best thing he could do."

"You've made me all creepy with your melancholy talk, Jack," said Bill, raising himself. "I shall be seeing and hearing ghosts to-night."

"Don't joke, comrade," said Jack. "God only knows the right of the facts about ghosts. I know that David won't come back unless he can do some good to somebody; and I don't expect to see him until I, too, shall reach the port where he rides at anchor. Please God, I'll never forget him, or the Saviour whom he made me know. And I want to say to this youngster here that I'll take him by the hand and try to be to him what David could have been had he been aboard us on this voyage. I take shame to myself for keeping silence so long. 'Tis not much I can do, for I'm not like him; but there's plenty of grace to be had for the asking."