

**ДЖЕК
ЛОНДОН**

THE MUTINY
OF THE
ELSINORE

Джек Лондон
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Jack London

The Mutiny of the Elsinore

CHAPTER I

From the first the voyage was going wrong. Routed out of my hotel on a bitter March morning, I had crossed Baltimore and reached the pier-end precisely on time. At nine o'clock the tug was to have taken me down the bay and put me on board the *Elsinore*, and with growing irritation I sat frozen inside my taxicab and waited. On the seat, outside, the driver and Wada sat hunched in a temperature perhaps half a degree colder than mine. And there was no tug.

Possum, the fox-terrier puppy Galbraith had so inconsiderately foisted upon me, whimpered and shivered on my lap inside my greatcoat and under the fur robe. But he would not settle down. Continually he whimpered and clawed and struggled to get out. And, once out and bitten by the cold, with equal insistence he whimpered and clawed to get back.

His unceasing plaint and movement was anything but sedative to my jangled nerves. In the first place I was uninterested in the brute. He meant nothing to me. I did not know him. Time and again, as I drearily waited, I was on the verge of giving him to the driver. Once, when two little girls – evidently the wharfinger's

daughters – went by, my hand reached out to the door to open it so that I might call to them and present them with the puling little wretch.

A farewell surprise package from Galbraith, he had arrived at the hotel the night before, by express from New York. It was Galbraith's way. Yet he might so easily have been decently like other folk and sent fruit.. or flowers, even. But no; his affectionate inspiration had to take the form of a yelping, yapping two months' old puppy. And with the advent of the terrier the trouble had begun. The hotel clerk judged me a criminal before the act I had not even had time to meditate. And then Wada, on his own initiative and out of his own foolish stupidity, had attempted to smuggle the puppy into his room and been caught by a house detective. Promptly Wada had forgotten all his English and lapsed into hysterical Japanese, and the house detective remembered only his Irish; while the hotel clerk had given me to understand in no uncertain terms that it was only what he had expected of me.

Damn the dog, anyway! And damn Galbraith too! And as I froze on in the cab on that bleak pier-end, I damned myself as well, and the mad freak that had started me voyaging on a sailing-ship around the Horn.

By ten o'clock a nondescript youth arrived on foot, carrying a suit-case, which was turned over to me a few minutes later by the wharfinger. It belonged to the pilot, he said, and gave instructions to the chauffeur how to find some other pier from

which, at some indeterminate time, I should be taken aboard the *Elsinore* by some other tug. This served to increase my irritation. Why should I not have been informed as well as the pilot?

An hour later, still in my cab and stationed at the shore end of the new pier, the pilot arrived. Anything more unlike a pilot I could not have imagined. Here was no blue-jacketed, weather-beaten son of the sea, but a soft-spoken gentleman, for all the world the type of successful business man one meets in all the clubs. He introduced himself immediately, and I invited him to share my freezing cab with Possum and the baggage. That some change had been made in the arrangements by Captain West was all he knew, though he fancied the tug would come along any time.

And it did, at one in the afternoon, after I had been compelled to wait and freeze for four mortal hours. During this time I fully made up my mind that I was not going to like this Captain West. Although I had never met him, his treatment of me from the outset had been, to say the least, cavalier. When the *Elsinore* lay in Erie Basin, just arrived from California with a cargo of barley, I had crossed over from New York to inspect what was to be my home for many months. I had been delighted with the ship and the cabin accommodation. Even the stateroom selected for me was satisfactory and far more spacious than I had expected. But when I peeped into the captain's room I was amazed at its comfort. When I say that it opened directly into a bath-room, and that, among other things, it was furnished with a big brass bed

such as one would never suspect to find at sea, I have said enough.

Naturally, I had resolved that the bath-room and the big brass bed should be mine. When I asked the agents to arrange with the captain they seemed non-committal and uncomfortable. "I don't know in the least what it is worth," I said. "And I don't care. Whether it costs one hundred and fifty dollars or five hundred, I must have those quarters."

Harrison and Gray, the agents, debated silently with each other and scarcely thought Captain West would see his way to the arrangement. "Then he is the first sea captain I ever heard of that wouldn't," I asserted confidently. "Why, the captains of all the Atlantic liners regularly sell their quarters."

"But Captain West is not the captain of an Atlantic liner," Mr. Harrison observed gently.

"Remember, I am to be on that ship many a month," I retorted. "Why, heavens, bid him up to a thousand if necessary."

"We'll try," said Mr. Gray, "but we warn you not to place too much dependence on our efforts. Captain West is in Searsport at the present time, and we will write him to-day."

To my astonishment Mr. Gray called me up several days later to inform me that Captain West had declined my offer. "Did you offer him up to a thousand?" I demanded. "What did he say?"

"He regretted that he was unable to concede what you asked," Mr. Gray replied.

A day later I received a letter from Captain West. The writing and the wording were old-fashioned and formal. He regretted not

having yet met me, and assured me that he would see personally that my quarters were made comfortable. For that matter he had already dispatched orders to Mr. Pike, the first mate of the *Elsinore*, to knock out the partition between my state-room and the spare state-room adjoining. Further – and here is where my dislike for Captain West began – he informed me that if, when once well at sea, I should find myself dissatisfied, he would gladly, in that case, exchange quarters with me.

Of course, after such a rebuff, I knew that no circumstance could ever persuade me to occupy Captain West's brass bed. And it was this Captain Nathaniel West, whom I had not yet met, who had now kept me freezing on pier-ends through four miserable hours. The less I saw of him on the voyage the better, was my decision; and it was with a little tickle of pleasure that I thought of the many boxes of books I had dispatched on board from New York. Thank the Lord, I did not depend on sea captains for entertainment.

I turned Possum over to Wada, who was settling with the cabman, and while the tug's sailors were carrying my luggage on board I was led by the pilot to an introduction with Captain West. At the first glimpse I knew that he was no more a sea captain than the pilot was a pilot. I had seen the best of the breed, the captains of the liners, and he no more resembled them than did he resemble the bluff-faced, gruff-voiced skippers I had read about in books. By his side stood a woman, of whom little was to be seen and who made a warm and gorgeous blob of colour in the

huge muff and boa of red fox in which she was well-nigh buried.

“My God! – his wife!” I darted in a whisper at the pilot. “Going along with him?.. ”

I had expressly stipulated with Mr. Harrison, when engaging passage, that the one thing I could not possibly consider was the skipper of the *Elsinore* taking his wife on the voyage. And Mr. Harrison had smiled and assured me that Captain West would sail unaccompanied by a wife.

“It’s his daughter,” the pilot replied under his breath. “Come to see him off, I fancy. His wife died over a year ago. They say that is what sent him back to sea. He’d retired, you know.”

Captain West advanced to meet me, and before our outstretched hands touched, before his face broke from repose to greeting and the lips moved to speech, I got the first astonishing impact of his personality. Long, lean, in his face a touch of race I as yet could only sense, he was as cool as the day was cold, as poised as a king or emperor, as remote as the farthest fixed star, as neutral as a proposition of Euclid. And then, just ere our hands met, a twinkle of – oh – such distant and controlled geniality quickened the many tiny wrinkles in the corner of the eyes; the clear blue of the eyes was suffused by an almost colourful warmth; the face, too, seemed similarly to suffuse; the thin lips, harsh-set the instant before, were as gracious as Bernhardt’s when she moulds sound into speech.

So curiously was I affected by this first glimpse of Captain West that I was aware of expecting to fall from his lips I knew not

what words of untold beneficence and wisdom. Yet he uttered most commonplace regrets at the delay in a voice provocative of fresh surprise to me. It was low and gentle, almost too low, yet clear as a bell and touched with a faint reminiscent twang of old New England.

“And this is the young woman who is guilty of the delay,” he concluded my introduction to his daughter. “Margaret, this is Mr. Pathurst.”

Her gloved hand promptly emerged from the fox-skins to meet mine, and I found myself looking into a pair of gray eyes bent steadily and gravely upon me. It was discomfiting, that cool, penetrating, searching gaze. It was not that it was challenging, but that it was so insolently business-like. It was much in the very way one would look at a new coachman he was about to engage. I did not know then that she was to go on the voyage, and that her curiosity about the man who was to be a fellow-passenger for half a year was therefore only natural. Immediately she realized what she was doing, and her lips and eyes smiled as she spoke.

As we moved on to enter the tug's cabin I heard Possum's shivering whimper rising to a screech, and went forward to tell Wada to take the creature in out of the cold. I found him hovering about my luggage, wedging my dressing-case securely upright by means of my little automatic rifle. I was startled by the mountain of luggage around which mine was no more than a fringe. Ship's stores, was my first thought, until I noted the number of trunks, boxes, suit-cases, and parcels and bundles of all sorts. The initials

on what looked suspiciously like a woman's hat trunk caught my eye – "M.W." Yet Captain West's first name was Nathaniel. On closer investigation I did find several "N.W's." but everywhere I could see "M.W's." Then I remembered that he had called her Margaret.

I was too angry to return to the cabin, and paced up and down the cold deck biting my lips with vexation. I had so expressly stipulated with the agents that no captain's wife was to come along. The last thing under the sun I desired in the pet quarters of a ship was a woman. But I had never thought about a captain's daughter. For two cents I was ready to throw the voyage over and return on the tug to Baltimore.

By the time the wind caused by our speed had chilled me bitterly, I noticed Miss West coming along the narrow deck, and could not avoid being struck by the spring and vitality of her walk. Her face, despite its firm moulding, had a suggestion of fragility that was belied by the robustness of her body. At least, one would argue that her body must be robust from her fashion of movement of it, though little could one divine the lines of it under the shapelessness of the furs.

I turned away on my heel and fell moodily to contemplating the mountain of luggage. A huge packing-case attracted my attention, and I was staring at it when she spoke at my shoulder.

"That's what really caused the delay," she said.

"What is it?" I asked incuriously.

"Why, the *Elsinore's* piano, all renovated. When I made up

my mind to come, I telegraphed Mr. Pike – he’s the mate, you know. He did his best. It was the fault of the piano house. And while we waited to-day I gave them a piece of my mind they’ll not forget in a hurry.”

She laughed at the recollection, and commenced to peep and peer into the luggage as if in search of some particular piece. Having satisfied herself, she was starting back, when she paused and said:

“Won’t you come into the cabin where it’s warm? We won’t be there for half an hour.”

“When did you decide to make this voyage?” I demanded abruptly.

So quick was the look she gave me that I knew she had in that moment caught all my disgruntlement and disgust.

“Two days ago,” she answered. “Why?”

Her readiness for give and take took me aback, and before I could speak she went on:

“Now you’re not to be at all silly about my coming, Mr. Pathurst. I probably know more about long-voyaging than you do, and we’re all going to be comfortable and happy. You can’t bother me, and I promise you I won’t bother you. I’ve sailed with passengers before, and I’ve learned to put up with more than they ever proved they were able to put up with. So there. Let us start right, and it won’t be any trouble to keep on going right. I know what is the matter with you. You think you’ll be called upon to entertain me. Please know that I do not need entertainment.

I never saw the longest voyage that was too long, and I always arrive at the end with too many things not done for the passage ever to have been tedious, and.. I don't play *Chopsticks*."

CHAPTER II

The *Elsinore*, fresh-loaded with coal, lay very deep in the water when we came alongside. I knew too little about ships to be capable of admiring her lines, and, besides, I was in no mood for admiration. I was still debating with myself whether or not to chuck the whole thing and return on the tug. From all of which it must not be taken that I am a vacillating type of man. On the contrary.

The trouble was that at no time, from the first thought of it, had I been keen for the voyage. Practically the reason I was taking it was because there was nothing else I was keen on. For some time now life had lost its savour. I was not jaded, nor was I exactly bored. But the zest had gone out of things. I had lost taste for my fellow-men and all their foolish, little, serious endeavours. For a far longer period I had been dissatisfied with women. I had endured them, but I had been too analytic of the faults of their primitiveness, of their almost ferocious devotion to the destiny of sex, to be enchanted with them. And I had come to be oppressed by what seemed to me the futility of art – a pompous legerdemain, a consummate charlatanry that deceived not only its devotees but its practitioners.

In short, I was embarking on the *Elsinore* because it was easier to than not; yet everything else was as equally and perilously easy. That was the curse of the condition into which I had fallen. That

was why, as I stepped upon the deck of the *Elsinore*, I was half of a mind to tell them to keep my luggage where it was and bid Captain West and his daughter good-day.

I almost think what decided me was the welcoming, hospitable smile Miss West gave me as she started directly across the deck for the cabin, and the knowledge that it must be quite warm in the cabin.

Mr. Pike, the mate, I had already met, when I visited the ship in Erie Basin. He smiled a stiff, crack-faced smile that I knew must be painful, but did not offer to shake hands, turning immediately to call orders to half-a-dozen frozen-looking youths and aged men who shambled up from somewhere in the waist of the ship. Mr. Pike had been drinking. That was patent. His face was puffed and discoloured, and his large gray eyes were bitter and bloodshot.

I lingered, with a sinking heart watching my belongings come aboard and chiding my weakness of will which prevented me from uttering the few words that would put a stop to it. As for the half-dozen men who were now carrying the luggage aft into the cabin, they were unlike any concept I had ever entertained of sailors. Certainly, on the liners, I had observed nothing that resembled them.

One, a most vivid-faced youth of eighteen, smiled at me from a pair of remarkable Italian eyes. But he was a dwarf. So short was he that he was all sea-boots and sou'wester. And yet he was not entirely Italian. So certain was I that I asked the mate, who

answered morosely:

“Him? Shorty? He’s a dago half-breed. The other half’s Jap or Malay.”

One old man, who I learned was a bosun, was so decrepit that I thought he had been recently injured. His face was stolid and ox-like, and as he shuffled and dragged his brogans over the deck he paused every several steps to place both hands on his abdomen and execute a queer, pressing, lifting movement. Months were to pass, in which I saw him do this thousands of times, ere I learned that there was nothing the matter with him and that his action was purely a habit. His face reminded me of the Man with the Hoe, save that it was unthinkably and abysmally stupider. And his name, as I was to learn, of all names was Sundry Buyers. And he was bosun of the fine American sailing-ship *Elsinore*—rated one of the finest sailing-ships afloat!

Of this group of aged men and boys that moved the luggage along I saw only one, called Henry, a youth of sixteen, who approximated in the slightest what I had conceived all sailors to be like. He had come off a training ship, the mate told me, and this was his first voyage to sea. His face was keen-cut, alert, as were his bodily movements, and he wore sailor-appearing clothes with sailor-seeming grace. In fact, as I was to learn, he was to be the only sailor-seeming creature fore and aft.

The main crew had not yet come aboard, but was expected at any moment, the mate vouchsafed with a snarl of ominous expectancy. Those already on board were the miscellaneous ones

who had shipped themselves in New York without the mediation of boarding-house masters. And what the crew itself would be like God alone could tell – so said the mate. Shorty, the Japanese (or Malay) and Italian half-caste, the mate told me, was an able seaman, though he had come out of steam and this was his first sailing voyage.

“Ordinary seamen!” Mr. Pike snorted, in reply to a question. “We don’t carry Landsmen! – forget it! Every clodhopper an’ cow-walloper these days is an able seaman. That’s the way they rank and are paid. The merchant service is all shot to hell. There ain’t no more sailors. They all died years ago, before you were born even.”

I could smell the raw whiskey on the mate’s breath. Yet he did not stagger nor show any signs of intoxication. Not until afterward was I to know that his willingness to talk was most unwonted and was where the liquor gave him away.

“It’d a-ben a grace had I died years ago,” he said, “rather than to a-lived to see sailors an’ ships pass away from the sea.”

“But I understand the *Elsinore* is considered one of the finest,” I urged.

“So she is.. to-day. But what is she? – a damned cargo-carrier. She ain’t built for sailin’, an’ if she was there ain’t no sailors left to sail her. Lord! Lord! The old clippers! When I think of ’em! —*The Gamecock, Shootin’ Star, Flyin’ Fish, Witch o’ the Wave, Staghound, Harvey Birch, Canvas-back, Fleetwing, Sea Serpent, Northern Light!* An’ when I think of the fleets of the tea-clippers

that used to load at Hong Kong an' race the Eastern Passages. A fine sight! A fine sight!"

I was interested. Here was a man, a live man. I was in no hurry to go into the cabin, where I knew Wada was unpacking my things, so I paced up and down the deck with the huge Mr. Pike. Huge he was in all conscience, broad-shouldered, heavy-boned, and, despite the profound stoop of his shoulders, fully six feet in height.

"You are a splendid figure of a man," I complimented.

"I was, I was," he muttered sadly, and I caught the whiff of whiskey strong on the air.

I stole a look at his gnarled hands. Any finger would have made three of mine. His wrist would have made three of my wrist.

"How much do you weigh?" I asked.

"Two hundred an' ten. But in my day, at my best, I tipped the scales close to two-forty."

"And the *Elsinore* can't sail," I said, returning to the subject which had roused him.

"I'll take you even, anything from a pound of tobacco to a month's wages, she won't make it around in a hundred an' fifty days," he answered. "Yet I've come round in the old *Flyin' Cloud* in eighty-nine days – eighty-nine days, sir, from Sandy Hook to 'Frisco. Sixty men for'ard that *was* men, an' eight boys, an' drive! drive! drive! Three hundred an' seventy-four miles for a day's run under t'gallantsails, an' in the squalls eighteen knots o' line not

enough to time her. Eighty-nine days – never beat, an’ tied once by the old *Andrew Jackson* nine years afterwards. Them was the days!”

“When did the *Andrew Jackson* tie her?” I asked, because of the growing suspicion that he was “having” me.

“In 1860,” was his prompt reply.

“And you sailed in the *Flying Cloud* nine years before that, and this is 1913 – why, that was sixty-two years ago,” I charged.

“And I was seven years old,” he chuckled. “My mother was stewardess on the *Flyin’ Cloud*. I was born at sea. I was boy when I was twelve, on the *Herald o’ the Morn*, when she made around in ninety-nine days – half the crew in irons most o’ the time, five men lost from aloft off the Horn, the points of our sheath-knives broken square off, knuckle-dusters an’ belayin’-pins flyin’, three men shot by the officers in one day, the second mate killed dead an’ no one to know who done it, an’ drive! drive! drive! ninety-nine days from land to land, a run of seventeen thousand miles, an’ east to west around Cape Stiff!”

“But that would make you sixty-nine years old,” I insisted.

“Which I am,” he retorted proudly, “an’ a better man at that than the scrubby younglings of these days. A generation of ’em would die under the things I’ve been through. Did you ever hear of the *Sunny South*? – she that was sold in Havana to run slaves an’ changed her name to *Emanuela*?”

“And you’ve sailed the Middle Passage!” I cried, recollecting the old phrase.

“I was on the *Emanuela* that day in Mozambique Channel when the *Brisk* caught us with nine hundred slaves between-decks. Only she wouldn’t a-caught us except for her having steam.”

I continued to stroll up and down beside this massive relic of the past, and to listen to his hints and muttered reminiscences of old man-killing and man-driving days. He was too real to be true, and yet, as I studied his shoulder-stoop and the age-drag of his huge feet, I was convinced that his years were as he asserted. He spoke of a Captain Sonurs.

“He was a great captain,” he was saying. “An’ in the two years I sailed mate with him there was never a port I didn’t jump the ship goin’ in an’ stay in hiding until I sneaked aboard when she sailed again.”

“But why?”

“The men, on account of the men swearin’ blood an’ vengeance and warrants against me because of my ways of teachin’ them to be sailors. Why, the times I was caught, and the fines the skipper paid for me – and yet it was my work that made the ship make money.”

He held up his huge paws, and as I stared at the battered, malformed knuckles I understood the nature of his work.

“But all that’s stopped now,” he lamented. “A sailor’s a gentleman these days. You can’t raise your voice or your hand to them.”

At this moment he was addressed from the poop-rail above

by the second mate, a medium-sized, heavily built, clean-shaven, blond man.

“The tug’s in sight with the crew, sir,” he announced.

The mate grunted an acknowledgment, then added, “Come on down, Mr. Mellaire, and meet our passenger.”

I could not help noting the air and carriage with which Mr. Mellaire came down the poop-ladder and took his part in the introduction. He was courteous in an old-world way, soft-spoken, suave, and unmistakably from south of Mason and Dixon.

“A Southerner,” I said.

“Georgia, sir.” He bowed and smiled, as only a Southerner can bow and smile.

His features and expression were genial and gentle, and yet his mouth was the cruellest gash I had ever seen in a man’s face. It was a gash. There is no other way of describing that harsh, thin-lipped, shapeless mouth that uttered gracious things so graciously. Involuntarily I glanced at his hands. Like the mate’s, they were thick-boned, broken-knuckled, and malformed. Back into his blue eyes I looked. On the surface of them was a film of light, a gloss of gentle kindness and cordiality, but behind that gloss I knew resided neither sincerity nor mercy. Behind that gloss was something cold and terrible, that lurked and waited and watched – something catlike, something inimical and deadly. Behind that gloss of soft light and of social sparkle was the live, fearful thing that had shaped that mouth into the gash it was. What I sensed behind in those eyes chilled me with its

repulsiveness and strangeness.

As I faced Mr. Mellaire, and talked with him, and smiled, and exchanged amenities, I was aware of the feeling that comes to one in the forest or jungle when he knows unseen wild eyes of hunting animals are spying upon him. Frankly I was afraid of the thing ambushed behind there in the skull of Mr. Mellaire. One so as a matter of course identifies form and feature with the spirit within. But I could not do this with the second mate. His face and form and manner and suave ease were one thing, inside which he, an entirely different thing, lay hid.

I noticed Wada standing in the cabin door, evidently waiting to ask for instructions. I nodded, and prepared to follow him inside. Mr. Pike looked at me quickly and said:

“Just a moment, Mr. Pathurst.”

He gave some orders to the second mate, who turned on his heel and started for'ard. I stood and waited for Mr. Pike's communication, which he did not choose to make until he saw the second mate well out of ear-shot. Then he leaned closely to me and said:

“Don't mention that little matter of my age to anybody. Each year I sign on I sign my age one year younger. I am fifty-four, now, on the articles.”

“And you don't look a day older,” I answered lightly, though I meant it in all sincerity.

“And I don't feel it. I can outwork and outgame the huskiest of the younglings. And don't let my age get to anybody's ears, Mr.

Pathurst. Skippers are not particular for mates getting around the seventy mark. And owners neither. I've had my hopes for this ship, and I'd a-got her, I think, except for the old man decidin' to go to sea again. As if he needed the money! The old skinflint!"

"Is he well off?" I inquired.

"Well off! If I had a tenth of his money I could retire on a chicken ranch in California and live like a fighting cock – yes, if I had a fiftieth of what he's got salted away. Why, he owns more stock in all the Blackwood ships.. and they've always been lucky and always earned money. I'm getting old, and it's about time I got a command. But no; the old cuss has to take it into his head to go to sea again just as the berth's ripe for me to fall into."

Again I started to enter the cabin, but was stopped by the mate.

"Mr. Pathurst? You won't mention about my age?"

"No, certainly not, Mr. Pike," I said.

CHAPTER III

Quite chilled through, I was immediately struck by the warm comfort of the cabin. All the connecting doors were open, making what I might call a large suite of rooms or a whale house. The main-deck entrance, on the port side, was into a wide, well-carpeted hallway. Into this hallway, from the port side, opened five rooms: first, on entering, the mate's; next, the two state-rooms which had been knocked into one for me; then the steward's room; and, adjoining his, completing the row, a state-room which was used for the slop-chest.

Across the hall was a region with which I was not yet acquainted, though I knew it contained the dining-room, the bath-rooms, the cabin proper, which was in truth a spacious living-room, the captain's quarters, and, undoubtedly, Miss West's quarters. I could hear her humming some air as she bustled about with her unpacking. The steward's pantry, separated by crosshalls and by the stairway leading into the chart-room above on the poop, was placed strategically in the centre of all its operations. Thus, on the starboard side of it were the state-rooms of the captain and Miss West, for'ard of it were the dining-room and main cabin; while on the port side of it was the row of rooms I have described, two of which were mine.

I ventured down the hall toward the stern, and found it opened into the stern of the *Elsinore*, forming a single large apartment

at least thirty-five feet from side to side and fifteen to eighteen feet in depth, curved, of course, to the lines of the ship's stern. This seemed a store-room. I noted wash-tubs, bolts of canvas, many lockers, hams and bacon hanging, a step-ladder that led up through a small hatch to the poop, and, in the floor, another hatch.

I spoke to the steward, an old Chinese, smooth-faced and brisk of movement, whose name I never learned, but whose age on the articles was fifty-six.

“What is down there?” I asked, pointing to the hatch in the floor.

“Him lazarette,” he answered.

“And who eats there?” I indicated a table with two stationary sea-chairs.

“Him second table. Second mate and carpenter him eat that table.”

When I had finished giving instructions to Wada for the arranging of my things I looked at my watch. It was early yet, only several minutes after three so I went on deck again to witness the arrival of the crew.

The actual coming on board from the tug I had missed, but for'ard of the amidship house I encountered a few laggards who had not yet gone into the forecastle. These were the worse for liquor, and a more wretched, miserable, disgusting group of men I had never seen in any slum. Their clothes were rags. Their faces were bloated, bloody, and dirty. I won't say they were villainous.

They were merely filthy and vile. They were vile of appearance, of speech, and action.

“Come! Come! Get your dunnage into the fo’c’s’le!”

Mr. Pike uttered these words sharply from the bridge above. A light and graceful bridge of steel rods and planking ran the full length of the *Elsinore*, starting from the poop, crossing the amidship house and the forecastle, and connecting with the forecastle-head at the very bow of the ship.

At the mate’s command the men reeled about and glowered up at him, one or two starting clumsily to obey. The others ceased their drunken yammerings and regarded the mate sullenly. One of them, with a face mashed by some mad god in the making, and who was afterwards to be known by me as Larry, burst into a guffaw, and spat insolently on the deck. Then, with utmost deliberation, he turned to his fellows and demanded loudly and huskily:

“Who in hell’s the old stiff, anyways?”

I saw Mr. Pike’s huge form tense convulsively and involuntarily, and I noted the way his huge hands strained in their clutch on the bridge-railing. Beyond that he controlled himself.

“Go on, you,” he said. “I’ll have nothing out of you. Get into the fo’c’s’le.”

And then, to my surprise, he turned and walked aft along the bridge to where the tug was casting off its lines. So this was all his high and mighty talk of kill and drive, I thought. Not until afterwards did I recollect, as I turned aft down the deck, that I

saw Captain West leaning on the rail at the break of the poop and gazing for'ard.

The tug's lines were being cast off, and I was interested in watching the manoeuvre until she had backed clear of the ship, at which moment, from for'ard, arose a queer babel of howling and yelping, as numbers of drunken voices cried out that a man was overboard. The second mate sprang down the poop-ladder and darted past me along the deck. The mate, still on the slender, white-painted bridge, that seemed no more than a spider thread, surprised me by the activity with which he dashed along the bridge to the 'midship house, leaped upon the canvas-covered long-boat, and swung outboard where he might see. Before the men could clamber upon the rail the second mate was among them, and it was he who flung a coil of line overboard.

What impressed me particularly was the mental and muscular superiority of these two officers. Despite their age – the mate sixty-nine and the second mate at least fifty – their minds and their bodies had acted with the swiftness and accuracy of steel springs. They were potent. They were iron. They were perceivers, willers, and doers. They were as of another species compared with the sailors under them. While the latter, witnesses of the happening and directly on the spot, had been crying out in befuddled helplessness, and with slow wits and slower bodies been climbing upon the rail, the second mate had descended the steep ladder from the poop, covered two hundred feet of deck, sprung upon the rail, grasped the instant need of the situation,

and cast the coil of line into the water.

And of the same nature and quality had been the actions of Mr. Pike. He and Mr. Mellaire were masters over the wretched creatures of sailors by virtue of this remarkable difference of efficiency and will. Truly, they were more widely differentiated from the men under them than were the men under them differentiated from Hottentots – ay, and from monkeys.

I, too, by this time, was standing on the big hawser-bitts in a position to see a man in the water who seemed deliberately swimming away from the ship. He was a dark-skinned Mediterranean of some sort, and his face, in a clear glimpse I caught of it, was distorted by frenzy. His black eyes were maniacal. The line was so accurately flung by the second mate that it fell across the man's shoulders, and for several strokes his arms tangled in it ere he could swim clear. This accomplished, he proceeded to scream some wild harangue and once, as he uptossed his arms for emphasis, I saw in his hand the blade of a long knife.

Bells were jangling on the tug as it started to the rescue. I stole a look up at Captain West. He had walked to the port side of the poop, where, hands in pockets, he was glancing, now for'ard at the struggling man, now aft at the tug. He gave no orders, betrayed no excitement, and appeared, I may well say, the most casual of spectators.

The creature in the water seemed now engaged in taking off his clothes. I saw one bare arm, and then the other, appear.

In his struggles he sometimes sank beneath the surface, but always he emerged, flourishing the knife and screaming his addled harangue. He even tried to escape the tug by diving and swimming underneath.

I strolled for'ard, and arrived in time to see him hoisted in over the rail of the *Elsinore*. He was stark naked, covered with blood, and raving. He had cut and slashed himself in a score of places. From one wound in the wrist the blood spurted with each beat of the pulse. He was a loathsome, non-human thing. I have seen a scared orang in a zoo, and for all the world this bestial-faced, mowing, gibbering thing reminded me of the orang. The sailors surrounded him, laying hands on him, withstraining him, the while they guffawed and cheered. Right and left the two mates shoved them away, and dragged the lunatic down the deck and into a room in the 'midship house. I could not help marking the strength of Mr. Pike and Mr. Mellaire. I had heard of the superhuman strength of madmen, but this particular madman was as a wisp of straw in their hands. Once into the bunk, Mr. Pike held down the struggling fool easily with one hand while he dispatched the second mate for marlin with which to tie the fellow's arms.

"Bughouse," Mr. Pike grinned at me. "I've seen some bughouse crews in my time, but this one's the limit."

"What are you going to do?" I asked. "The man will bleed to death."

"And good riddance," he answered promptly. "We'll have our

hands full of him until we can lose him somehow. When he gets easy I'll sew him up, that's all, if I have to ease him with a clout of the jaw."

I glanced at the mate's huge paw and appreciated its anæsthetic qualities. Out on deck again, I saw Captain West on the poop, hands still in pockets, quite uninterested, gazing at a blue break in the sky to the north-east. More than the mates and the maniac, more than the drunken callousness of the men, did this quiet figure, hands in pockets, impress upon me that I was in a different world from any I had known.

Wada broke in upon my thoughts by telling me he had been sent to say that Miss West was serving tea in the cabin.

CHAPTER IV

The contrast, as I entered the cabin, was startling. All contrasts aboard the *Elsinore* promised to be startling. Instead of the cold, hard deck my feet sank into soft carpet. In place of the mean and narrow room, built of naked iron, where I had left the lunatic, I was in a spacious and beautiful apartment. With the bawling of the men's voices still in my ears, and with the pictures of their drink-puffed and filthy faces still vivid under my eyelids, I found myself greeted by a delicate-faced, prettily-gowned woman who sat beside a lacquered oriental table on which rested an exquisite tea-service of Canton china. All was repose and calm. The steward, noiseless-footed, expressionless, was a shadow, scarcely noticed, that drifted into the room on some service and drifted out again.

Not at once could I relax, and Miss West, serving my tea, laughed and said:

“You look as if you had been seeing things. The steward tells me a man has been overboard. I fancy the cold water must have sobered him.”

I resented her unconcern.

“The man is a lunatic,” I said. “This ship is no place for him. He should be sent ashore to some hospital.”

“I am afraid, if we begin that, we'd have to send two-thirds of our complement ashore – one lump?”

“Yes, please,” I answered. “But the man has terribly wounded himself. He is liable to bleed to death.”

She looked at me for a moment, her gray eyes serious and scrutinizing, as she passed me my cup; then laughter welled up in her eyes, and she shook her head reprovingly.

“Now please don’t begin the voyage by being shocked, Mr. Pathurst. Such things are very ordinary occurrences. You’ll get used to them. You must remember some queer creatures go down to the sea in ships. The man is safe. Trust Mr. Pike to attend to his wounds. I’ve never sailed with Mr. Pike, but I’ve heard enough about him. Mr. Pike is quite a surgeon. Last voyage, they say, he performed a successful amputation, and so elated was he that he turned his attention on the carpenter, who happened to be suffering from some sort of indigestion. Mr. Pike was so convinced of the correctness of his diagnosis that he tried to bribe the carpenter into having his appendix removed.” She broke off to laugh heartily, then added: “They say he offered the poor man just pounds and pounds of tobacco to consent to the operation.”

“But is it safe.. for the.. the working of the ship,” I urged, “to take such a lunatic along?”

She shrugged her shoulders, as if not intending to reply, then said:

“This incident is nothing. There are always several lunatics or idiots in every ship’s company. And they always come aboard filled with whiskey and raving. I remember, once, when we sailed from Seattle, a long time ago, one such madman. He showed no

signs of madness at all; just calmly seized two boarding-house runners and sprang overboard with them. We sailed the same day, before the bodies were recovered.”

Again she shrugged her shoulders.

“What would you? The sea is hard, Mr. Pathurst. And for our sailors we get the worst type of men. I sometimes wonder where they find them. And we do our best with them, and somehow manage to make them help us carry on our work in the world. But they are low.. low.”

As I listened, and studied her face, contrasting her woman’s sensitivity and her soft pretty dress with the brute faces and rags of the men I had noticed, I could not help being convinced intellectually of the rightness of her position. Nevertheless, I was hurt sentimentally, – chiefly, I do believe, because of the very hardness and unconcern with which she enunciated her view. It was because she was a woman, and so different from the sea-creatures, that I resented her having received such harsh education in the school of the sea.

“I could not help remarking your father’s – er, er *sang froid* during the occurrence.” I ventured.

“He never took his hands from his pockets!” she cried.

Her eyes sparkled as I nodded confirmation.

“I knew it! It’s his way. I’ve seen it so often. I remember when I was twelve years old – mother was alone – we were running into San Francisco. It was in the *Dixie*, a ship almost as big as this. There was a strong fair wind blowing, and father did not

take a tug. We sailed right through the Golden Gate and up the San Francisco water-front. There was a swift flood tide, too; and the men, both watches, were taking in sail as fast as they could.

“Now the fault was the steamboat captain’s. He miscalculated our speed and tried to cross our bow. Then came the collision, and the *Dixie’s* bow cut through that steamboat, cabin and hull. There were hundreds of passengers, men, women, and children. Father never took his hands from his pockets. He sent the mate for’ard to superintend rescuing the passengers, who were already climbing on to our bowsprit and forecastle-head, and in a voice no different from what he’d use to ask some one to pass the butter he told the second mate to set all sail. And he told him which sails to begin with.”

“But why set more sails?” I interrupted.

“Because he could see the situation. Don’t you see, the steamboat was cut wide open. All that kept her from sinking instantly was the bow of the *Dixie* jammed into her side. By setting more sail and keeping before the wind, he continued to keep the bow of the *Dixie* jammed.

“I was terribly frightened. People who had sprung or fallen overboard were drowning on each side of us, right in my sight, as we sailed along up the water-front. But when I looked at father, there he was, just as I had always known him, hands in pockets, walking slowly up and down, now giving an order to the wheel – you see, he had to direct the *Dixie’s* course through all the shipping – now watching the passengers swarming over our bow

and along our deck, now looking ahead to see his way through the ships at anchor. Sometimes he did glance at the poor, drowning ones, but he was not concerned with them.

“Of course, there were numbers drowned, but by keeping his hands in his pockets and his head cool he saved hundreds of lives. Not until the last person was off the steamboat – he sent men aboard to make sure – did he take off the press of sail. And the steamboat sank at once.”

She ceased, and looked at me with shining eyes for approbation.

“It was splendid,” I acknowledged. “I admire the quiet man of power, though I confess that such quietness under stress seems to me almost unearthly and beyond human. I can’t conceive of myself acting that way, and I am confident that I was suffering more while that poor devil was in the water than all the rest of the onlookers put together.”

“Father suffers!” she defended loyally. “Only he does not show it.”

I bowed, for I felt she had missed my point.

CHAPTER V

I came out from tea in the cabin to find the tug *Britannia* in sight. She was the craft that was to tow us down Chesapeake Bay to sea. Strolling for'ard I noted the sailors being routed out of the forecastle by Sundry Buyers, for ever tenderly pressing his abdomen with his hands. Another man was helping Sundry Buyers at routing out the sailors. I asked Mr. Pike who the man was.

“Nancy – my bosun; ain’t he a peach?” was the answer I got, and from the mate’s manner of enunciation I was quite aware that “Nancy” had been used derisively.

Nancy could not have been more than thirty, though he looked as if he had lived a very long time. He was toothless and sad and weary of movement. His eyes were slate-coloured and muddy, his shaven face was sickly yellow. Narrow-shouldered, sunken-chested, with cheeks cavernously hollow, he looked like a man in the last stages of consumption. Little life as Sundry Buyers showed, Nancy showed even less life. And these were bosuns! – bosuns of the fine American sailing-ship *Elsinore*! Never had any illusion of mine taken a more distressing cropper.

It was plain to me that the pair of them, spineless and spunkless, were afraid of the men they were supposed to boss. And the men! Doré could never have conjured a more delectable hell’s broth. For the first time I saw them all, and I could not

blame the two bosuns for being afraid of them. They did not walk. They slouched and shambled, some even tottered, as from weakness or drink.

But it was their faces. I could not help remembering what Miss West had just told me – that ships always sailed with several lunatics or idiots in their crews. But these looked as if they were all lunatic or feeble-minded. And I, too, wondered where such a mass of human wreckage could have been obtained. There was something wrong with all of them. Their bodies were twisted, their faces distorted, and almost without exception they were under-sized. The several quite fairly large men I marked were vacant-faced. One man, however, large and unmistakably Irish, was also unmistakably mad. He was talking and muttering to himself as he came out. A little, curved, lop-sided man, with his head on one side and with the shrewdest and wickedest of faces and pale blue eyes, addressed an obscene remark to the mad Irishman, calling him O’Sullivan. But O’Sullivan took no notice and muttered on. On the heels of the little lop-sided man appeared an overgrown dolt of a fat youth, followed by another youth so tall and emaciated of body that it seemed a marvel his flesh could hold his frame together.

Next, after this perambulating skeleton, came the weirdest creature I have ever beheld. He was a twisted oaf of a man. Face and body were twisted as with the pain of a thousand years of torture. His was the face of an ill-treated and feeble-minded faun. His large black eyes were bright, eager, and filled with

pain; and they flashed questioningly from face to face and to everything about. They were so pitifully alert, those eyes, as if for ever astrain to catch the clue to some perplexing and threatening enigma. Not until afterwards did I learn the cause of this. He was stone deaf, having had his ear-drums destroyed in the boiler explosion which had wrecked the rest of him.

I noticed the steward, standing at the galley door and watching the men from a distance. His keen, Asiatic face, quick with intelligence, was a relief to the eye, as was the vivid face of Shorty, who came out of the forecabin with a leap and a gurgle of laughter. But there was something wrong with him, too. He was a dwarf, and, as I was to come to know, his high spirits and low mentality united to make him a clown.

Mr. Pike stopped beside me a moment and while he watched the men I watched him. The expression on his face was that of a cattle-buyer, and it was plain that he was disgusted with the quality of cattle delivered.

“Something the matter with the last mother’s son of them,” he growled.

And still they came: one, pallid, furtive-eyed, that I instantly adjudged a drug fiend; another, a tiny, wizened old man, pinch-faced and wrinkled, with beady, malevolent blue eyes; a third, a small, well-fleshed man, who seemed to my eye the most normal and least unintelligent specimen that had yet appeared. But Mr. Pike’s eye was better trained than mine.

“What’s the matter with *you*?” he snarled at the man.

“Nothing, sir,” the fellow answered, stopping immediately.

“What’s your name?”

Mr. Pike never spoke to a sailor save with a snarl.

“Charles Davis, sir.”

“What are you limping about?”

“I ain’t limp’in’, sir,” the man answered respectfully, and, at a nod of dismissal from the mate, marched off jauntily along the deck with a heodlum swing to the shoulders.

“He’s a sailor all right,” the mate grumbled; “but I’ll bet you a pound of tobacco or a month’s wages there’s something wrong with him.”

The forecastle now seemed empty, but the mate turned on the bosuns with his customary snarl.

“What in hell are you doing? Sleeping? Think this is a rest cure? Get in there an’ rustle ’em out!”

Sundry Buyers pressed his abdomen gingerly and hesitated, while Nancy, his face one dogged, long-suffering bleakness, reluctantly entered the forecastle. Then, from inside, we heard oaths, vile and filthy, urgings and expostulations on the part of Nancy, meekly and pleadingly uttered.

I noted the grim and savage look that came on Mr. Pike’s face, and was prepared for I knew not what awful monstrosities to emerge from the forecastle. Instead, to my surprise, came three fellows who were strikingly superior to the ruck that had preceded them. I looked to see the mate’s face soften to some sort of approval. On the contrary, his blue eyes contracted to narrow

slits, the snarl of his voice was communicated to his lips, so that he seemed like a dog about to bite.

But the three fellows. They were small men, all; and young men, anywhere between twenty-five and thirty. Though roughly dressed, they were well dressed, and under their clothes their bodily movements showed physical well-being. Their faces were keen cut, intelligent. And though I felt there was something queer about them, I could not divine what it was.

Here were no ill-fed, whiskey-poisoned men, such as the rest of the sailors, who, having drunk up their last pay-days, had starved ashore until they had received and drunk up their advance money for the present voyage. These three, on the other hand were supple and vigorous. Their movements were spontaneously quick and accurate. Perhaps it was the way they looked at me, with incurious yet calculating eyes that nothing escaped. They seemed so worldly wise, so indifferent, so sure of themselves. I was confident they were not sailors. Yet, as shore-dwellers, I could not place them. They were a type I had never encountered. Possibly I can give a better idea of them by describing what occurred.

As they passed before us they favoured Mr. Pike with the same indifferent, keen glances they gave me.

“What’s your name – you?” Mr. Pike barked at the first of the trio, evidently a hybrid Irish-Jew. Jewish his nose unmistakably was. Equally unmistakable was the Irish of his eyes, and jaw, and upper lip.

The three had immediately stopped, and, though they did not look directly at one another, they seemed to be holding a silent conference. Another of the trio, in whose veins ran God alone knows what Semitic, Babylonish and Latin strains, gave a warning signal. Oh, nothing so crass as a wink or a nod. I almost doubted that I had intercepted it, and yet I knew he had communicated a warning to his fellows. More a shade of expression that had crossed his eyes, or a glint in them of sudden light – or whatever it was, it carried the message.

“Murphy,” the other answered the mate.

“Sir!” Mr. Pike snarled at him.

Murphy shrugged his shoulders in token that he did not understand. It was the poise of the man, of the three of them, the cool poise that impressed me.

“When you address any officer on this ship you’ll say ‘sir,’” Mr. Pike explained, his voice as harsh as his face was forbidding. “Did you get *that*?”

“Yes.. sir,” Murphy drawled with deliberate slowness. “I gotcha.”

“Sir!” Mr. Pike roared.

“Sir,” Murphy answered, so softly and carelessly that it irritated the mate to further bullyragging.

“Well, Murphy’s too long,” he announced. “Nosey’ll do you aboard this craft. Got *that*?”

“I gotcha.. sir,” came the reply, insolent in its very softness and unconcern. “Nosey Murphy goes.. sir.”

And then he laughed – the three of them laughed, if laughter it might be called that was laughter without sound or facial movement. The eyes alone laughed, mirthlessly and cold-bloodedly.

Certainly Mr. Pike was not enjoying himself with these baffling personalities. He turned upon the leader, the one who had given the warning and who looked the admixture of all that was Mediterranean and Semitic.

“What’s *your* name?”

“Bert Rhine.. sir,” was the reply, in tones as soft and careless and silkily irritating as the other’s.

“And *you*?” – this to the remaining one, the youngest of the trio, a dark-eyed, olive-skinned fellow with a face most striking in its cameo-like beauty. American-born, I placed him, of immigrants from Southern Italy – from Naples, or even Sicily.

“Twist.. sir,” he answered, precisely in the same manner as the others.

“Too long,” the mate sneered. “The Kid’ll do you. Got *that*?”

“I gotcha.. sir. Kid Twist’ll do me.. sir.”

“Kid’ll do!”

“Kid.. sir.”

And the three laughed their silent, mirthless laugh. By this time Mr. Pike was beside himself with a rage that could find no excuse for action.

“Now I’m going to tell you something, the bunch of you, for the good of your health.” The mate’s voice grated with the rage

he was suppressing. "I know your kind. You're dirt. D'ye get *that*? You're dirt. And on this ship you'll be treated as dirt. You'll do your work like men, or I'll know the reason why. The first time one of you bats an eye, or even looks like batting an eye, he gets his. D'ye get that? Now get out. Get along for'ard to the windlass."

Mr. Pike turned on his heel, and I swung alongside of him as he moved aft.

"What do you make of them?" I queried.

"The limit," he grunted. "I know their kidney. They've done time, the three of them. They're just plain sweepings of hell – "

Here his speech was broken off by the spectacle that greeted him on Number Two hatch. Sprawled out on the hatch were five or six men, among them Larry, the tatterdemalion who had called him "old stiff" earlier in the afternoon. That Larry had not obeyed orders was patent, for he was sitting with his back propped against his sea-bag, which ought to have been in the fore-castle. Also, he and the group with him ought to have been for'ard manning the windlass.

The mate stepped upon the hatch and towered over the man.

"Get up," he ordered.

Larry made an effort, groaned, and failed to get up.

"I can't," he said.

"Sir!"

"I can't, sir. I was drunk last night an' slept in Jefferson Market. An' this mornin' I was froze tight, sir. They had to pry me loose."

“Stiff with the cold you were, eh?” the mate grinned.

“It’s well ye might say it, sir,” Larry answered.

“And you feel like an old stiff, eh?”

Larry blinked with the troubled, querulous eyes of a monkey. He was beginning to apprehend he knew not what, and he knew that bending over him was a man-master.

“Well, I’ll just be showin’ you what an old stiff feels like, anyways.” Mr. Pike mimicked the other’s brogue.

And now I shall tell what I saw happen. Please remember what I have said of the huge paws of Mr. Pike, the fingers much longer than mine and twice as thick, the wrists massive-boned, the arm-bones and the shoulder-bones of the same massive order. With one flip of his right hand, with what I might call an open-handed, lifting, upward slap, save that it was the ends of the fingers only that touched Larry’s face, he lifted Larry into the air, sprawling him backward on his back across his sea-bag.

The man alongside of Larry emitted a menacing growl and started to spring belligerently to his feet. But he never reached his feet. Mr. Pike, with the back of same right hand, open, smote the man on the side of the face. The loud smack of the impact was startling. The mate’s strength was amazing. The blow looked so easy, so effortless; it had seemed like the lazy stroke of a good-natured bear, but in it was such a weight of bone and muscle that the man went down sidewise and rolled off the hatch on to the deck.

At this moment, lurching aimlessly along, appeared

O'Sullivan. A sudden access of muttering, on his part, reached Mr. Pike's ear, and Mr. Pike, instantly keen as a wild animal, his paw in the act of striking O'Sullivan, whipped out like a revolver shot, "What's that?" Then he noted the sense-struck face of O'Sullivan and withheld the blow. "Bug-house," Mr. Pike commented.

Involuntarily I had glanced to see if Captain West was on the poop, and found that we were hidden from the poop by the 'midship house.

Mr. Pike, taking no notice of the man who lay groaning on the deck, stood over Larry, who was likewise groaning. The rest of the sprawling men were on their feet, subdued and respectful. I, too, was respectful of this terrific, aged figure of a man. The exhibition had quite convinced me of the verity of his earlier driving and killing days.

"Who's the old stiff now?" he demanded.

"'Tis me, sir," Larry moaned contritely.

"Get up!"

Larry got up without any difficulty at all.

"Now get for'ard to the windlass! The rest of you!"

And they went, sullenly, shamblingly, like the cowed brutes they were.

CHAPTER VI

I climbed the ladder on the side of the for'ard house (which house contained, as I discovered, the fore-castle, the galley, and the donkey-engine room), and went part way along the bridge to a position by the foremast, where I could observe the crew heaving up anchor. The *Britannia* was alongside, and we were getting under way.

A considerable body of men was walking around with the windlass or variously engaged on the fore-castle-head. Of the crew proper were two watches of fifteen men each. In addition were sailmakers, boys, bosuns, and the carpenter. Nearly forty men were they, but such men! They were sad and lifeless. There was no vim, no go, no activity. Every step and movement was an effort, as if they were dead men raised out of coffins or sick men dragged from hospital beds. Sick they were – whiskey-poisoned. Starved they were, and weak from poor nutrition. And worst of all, they were imbecile and lunatic.

I looked aloft at the intricate ropes, at the steel masts rising and carrying huge yards of steel, rising higher and higher, until steel masts and yards gave way to slender spars of wood, while ropes and stays turned into a delicate tracery of spider-thread against the sky. That such a wretched muck of men should be able to work this magnificent ship through all storm and darkness and peril of the sea was beyond all seeming. I remembered the two

mates, the super-efficiency, mental and physical, of Mr. Mellaire and Mr. Pike – could they make this human wreckage do it? They, at least, evinced no doubts of their ability. The sea? If this feat of mastery were possible, then clear it was that I knew nothing of the sea.

I looked back at the misshapen, starved, sick, stumbling hulks of men who trod the dreary round of the windlass. Mr. Pike was right. These were not the brisk, devilish, able-bodied men who manned the ships of the old clipper-ship days; who fought their officers, who had the points of their sheath-knives broken off, who killed and were killed, but who did their work as men. These men, these shambling carcasses at the windlass – I looked, and looked, and vainly I strove to conjure the vision of them swinging aloft in rack and storm, “clearing the raffle,” as Kipling puts it, “with their clasp knives in their teeth.” Why didn’t they sing a chanty as they hove the anchor up? In the old days, as I had read, the anchor always came up to the rollicking sailor songs of sea-chested men.

I tired of watching the spiritless performance, and went aft on an exploring trip along the slender bridge. It was a beautiful structure, strong yet light, traversing the length of the ship in three aerial leaps. It spanned from the forecastle-head to the forecastle-house, next to the ’midship house, and then to the poop. The poop, which was really the roof or deck over all the cabin space below, and which occupied the whole after-part of the ship, was very large. It was broken only by the half-round

and half-covered wheel-house at the very stern and by the chart-house. On either side of the latter two doors opened into a tiny hallway. This, in turn, gave access to the chart-room and to a stairway that led down into the cabin quarters beneath.

I peeped into the chart-room and was greeted with a smile by Captain West. He was lolling back comfortably in a swing chair, his feet cocked on the desk opposite. On a broad, upholstered couch sat the pilot. Both were smoking cigars; and, lingering for a moment to listen to the conversation, I grasped that the pilot was an ex-sea-captain.

As I descended the stairs, from Miss West's room came a sound of humming and bustling, as she settled her belongings. The energy she displayed, to judge by the cheerful noises of it, was almost perturbing.

Passing by the pantry, I put my head inside the door to greet the steward and courteously let him know that I was aware of his existence. Here, in his little realm, it was plain that efficiency reigned. Everything was spotless and in order, and I could have wished and wished vainly for a more noiseless servant than he ashore. His face, as he regarded me, had as little or as much expression as the Sphinx. But his slant, black eyes were bright, with intelligence.

"What do you think of the crew?" I asked, in order to put words to my invasion of his castle.

"Buggy-house," he answered promptly, with a disgusted shake of the head. "Too much buggy-house. All crazy. You see. No

good. Rotten. Down to hell.”

That was all, but it verified my own judgment. While it might be true, as Miss West had said, that every ship's crew contained several lunatics and idiots, it was a foregone conclusion that our crew contained far more than several. In fact, and as it was to turn out, our crew, even in these degenerate sailing days, was an unusual crew in so far as its helplessness and worthlessness were beyond the average.

I found my own room (in reality it was two rooms) delightful. Wada had unpacked and stored away my entire outfit of clothing, and had filled numerous shelves with the library I had brought along. Everything was in order and place, from my shaving outfit in the drawer beside the wash-basin, and my sea-boots and oilskins hung ready to hand, to my writing materials on the desk, before which a swing arm-chair, leather-upholstered and screwed solidly to the floor, invited me. My pyjamas and dressing-gown were out. My slippers, in their accustomed place by the bed, also invited me.

Here, aft, all was fitness, intelligence. On deck it was what I have described – a nightmare spawn of creatures, assumably human, but malformed, mentally and physically, into caricatures of men. Yes, it was an unusual crew; and that Mr. Pike and Mr. Mellaire could whip it into the efficient shape necessary to work this vast and intricate and beautiful fabric of a ship was beyond all seeming of possibility.

Depressed as I was by what I had just witnessed on deck, there

came to me, as I leaned back in my chair and opened the second volume of George Moore's *Hail and Farewell*, a premonition that the voyage was to be disastrous. But then, as I looked about the room, measured its generous space, realized that I was more comfortably situated than I had ever been on any passenger steamer, I dismissed foreboding thoughts and caught a pleasant vision of myself, through weeks and months, catching up with all the necessary reading which I had so long neglected.

Once, I asked Wada if he had seen the crew. No, he hadn't, but the steward had said that in all his years at sea this was the worst crew he had ever seen.

"He say, all crazy, no sailors, rotten," Wada said. "He say all big fools and bime by much trouble. 'You see,' he say all the time. 'You see, You see.' He pretty old man – fifty-five years, he say. Very smart man for Chinaman. Just now, first time for long time, he go to sea. Before, he have big business in San Francisco. Then he get much trouble – police. They say he opium smuggle. Oh, big, big trouble. But he catch good lawyer. He no go to jail. But long time lawyer work, and when trouble all finish lawyer got all his business, all his money, everything. Then he go to sea, like before. He make good money. He get sixty-five dollars a month on this ship. But he don't like. Crew all crazy. When this time finish he leave ship, go back start business in San Francisco."

Later, when I had Wada open one of the ports for ventilation, I could hear the gurgle and swish of water alongside, and I knew the anchor was up and that we were in the grip of the *Britannia*,

towing down the Chesapeake to sea. The idea suggested itself that it was not too late. I could very easily abandon the adventure and return to Baltimore on the *Britannia* when she cast off the *Elsinore*. And then I heard a slight tinkling of china from the pantry as the steward proceeded to set the table, and, also, it was so warm and comfortable, and George Moore was so irritatingly fascinating.

CHAPTER VII

In every way dinner proved up beyond my expectations, and I registered a note that the cook, whoever or whatever he might be, was a capable man at his trade. Miss West served, and, though she and the steward were strangers, they worked together splendidly. I should have thought, from the smoothness of the service, that he was an old house servant who for years had known her every way.

The pilot ate in the chart-house, so that at table were the four of us that would always be at table together. Captain West and his daughter faced each other, while I, on the captain's right, faced Mr. Pike. This put Miss West across the corner on my right.

Mr. Pike, his dark sack coat (put on for the meal) bulging and wrinkling over the lumps of muscles that padded his stooped shoulders, had nothing at all to say. But he had eaten too many years at captains' tables not to have proper table manners. At first I thought he was abashed by Miss West's presence. Later, I decided it was due to the presence of the captain. For Captain West had a way with him that I was beginning to learn. Far removed as Mr. Pike and Mr. Mellaire were from the sailors, individuals as they were of an entirely different and superior breed, yet equally as different and far removed from his officers was Captain West. He was a serene and absolute aristocrat. He neither talked "ship" nor anything else to Mr. Pike.

On the other hand, Captain West's attitude toward me was that of a social equal. But then, I was a passenger. Miss West treated me the same way, but unbent more to Mr. Pike. And Mr. Pike, answering her with "Yes, Miss," and "No, Miss," ate good-manneredly and with his shaggy-browed gray eyes studied me across the table. I, too, studied him. Despite his violent past, killer and driver that he was, I could not help liking the man. He was honest, genuine. Almost more than for that, I liked him for the spontaneous boyish laugh he gave on the occasions when I reached the points of several funny stories. No man could laugh like that and be all bad. I was glad that it was he, and not Mr. Mellaire, who was to sit opposite throughout the voyage. And I was very glad that Mr. Mellaire was not to eat with us at all.

I am afraid that Miss West and I did most of the talking. She was breezy, vivacious, tonic, and I noted again that the delicate, almost fragile oval of her face was given the lie by her body. She was a robust, healthy young woman. That was undeniable. Not fat – heaven forbid! – not even plump; yet her lines had that swelling roundness that accompanies long, live muscles. She was full-bodied, vigorous; and yet not so full-bodied as she seemed. I remember with what surprise, when we arose from table, I noted her slender waist. At that moment I got the impression that she was willowy. And willowy she was, with a normal waist and with, in addition, always that informing bodily vigour that made her appear rounder and robuster than she really was.

It was the health of her that interested me. When I studied

her face more closely I saw that only the lines of the oval of it were delicate. Delicate it was not, nor fragile. The flesh was firm, and the texture of the skin was firm and fine as it moved over the firm muscles of face and neck. The neck was a beautiful and adequate pillar of white. Its flesh was firm, its skin fine, and it was muscular. The hands, too, attracted me – not small, but well-shaped, fine, white and strong, and well cared for. I could only conclude that she was an unusual captain's daughter, just as her father was an unusual captain and man. And their noses were alike, just the hint-touch of the beak of power and race.

While Miss West was telling of the unexpectedness of the voyage, of how suddenly she had decided to come – she accounted for it as a whim – and while she told of all the complications she had encountered in her haste of preparation, I found myself casting up a tally of the efficient ones on board the *Elsinore*. They were Captain West and his daughter, the two mates, myself, of course, Wada and the steward, and, beyond the shadow of a doubt, the cook. The dinner vouched for him. Thus I found our total of efficient to be eight. But the cook, the steward, and Wada were servants, not sailors, while Miss West and myself were supernumeraries. Remained to work, direct, do, but three efficient out of a total ship's company of forty-five. I had no doubt that other efficient there were; it seemed impossible that my first impression of the crew should be correct. There was the carpenter. He might, at his trade, be as good as the cook. Then the two sailmakers, whom I had not yet seen, might prove up.

A little later during the meal I ventured to talk about what had interested me and aroused my admiration, namely, the masterfulness with which Mr. Pike and Mr. Mellaire had gripped hold of that woeful, worthless crew. It was all new to me, I explained, but I appreciated the need of it. As I led up to the occurrence on Number Two hatch, when Mr. Pike had lifted up Larry and toppled him back with a mere slap from the ends of his fingers, I saw in Mr. Pike's eyes a warning, almost threatening, expression. Nevertheless, I completed my description of the episode.

When I had quite finished there was a silence. Miss West was busy serving coffee from a copper percolator. Mr. Pike, profoundly occupied with cracking walnuts, could not quite hide the wicked, little, half-humorous, half-revengeful gleam in his eyes. But Captain West looked straight at me, but from oh! such a distance – millions and millions of miles away. His clear blue eyes were as serene as ever, his tones as low and soft.

“It is the one rule I ask to be observed, Mr. Pathurst – we never discuss the sailors.”

It was a facer to me, and with quite a pronounced fellow-feeling for Larry I hurriedly added:

“It was not merely the discipline that interested me. It was the feat of strength.”

“Sailors are trouble enough without our hearing about them, Mr. Pathurst,” Captain West went on, as evenly and imperturbably as if I had not spoken. “I leave the handling of the

sailors to my officers. That's their business, and they are quite aware that I tolerate no undeserved roughness or severity."

Mr. Pike's harsh face carried the faintest shadow of an amused grin as he stolidly regarded the tablecloth. I glanced to Miss West for sympathy. She laughed frankly, and said:

"You see, father never has any sailors. And it's a good plan, too."

"A very good plan," Mr. Pike muttered.

Then Miss West kindly led the talk away from that subject, and soon had us laughing with a spirited recital of a recent encounter of hers with a Boston cab-driver.

Dinner over, I stepped to my room in quest of cigarettes, and incidentally asked Wada about the cook. Wada was always a great gatherer of information.

"His name Louis," he said. "He Chinaman, too. No; only half Chinaman. Other half Englishman. You know one island Napoleon he stop long time and bime by die that island?"

"St. Helena," I prompted.

"Yes, that place Louis he born. He talk very good English."

At this moment, entering the hall from the deck, Mr. Mellaire, just relieved by the mate, passed me on his way to the big room in the stern where the second table was set. His "Good evening, sir," was as stately and courteous as any southern gentleman of the old days could have uttered it. And yet I could not like the man. His outward seeming was so at variance with the personality that resided within. Even as he spoke and smiled I felt that from inside

his skull he was watching me, studying me. And somehow, in a flash of intuition, I knew not why, I was reminded of the three strange young men, routed last from the forecandle, to whom Mr. Pike had read the law. They, too, had given me a similar impression.

Behind Mr. Mellaire slouched a self-conscious, embarrassed individual, with the face of a stupid boy and the body of a giant. His feet were even larger than Mr. Pike's, but the hands – I shot a quick glance to see – were not so large as Mr. Pike's.

As they passed I looked inquiry to Wada.

“He carpenter. He sat second table. His name Sam Lavroff. He come from New York on ship. Steward say he very young for carpenter, maybe twenty-two, three years old.”

As I approached the open port over my desk I again heard the swish and gurgle of water and again realized that we were under way. So steady and noiseless was our progress, that, say seated at table, it never entered one's head that we were moving or were anywhere save on the solid land. I had been used to steamers all my life, and it was difficult immediately to adjust myself to the absence of the propeller-thrust vibration.

“Well, what do you think?” I asked Wada, who, like myself, had never made a sailing-ship voyage.

He smiled politely.

“Very funny ship. Very funny sailors. I don't know. Mebbe all right. We see.”

“You think trouble?” I asked pointedly.

“I think sailors very funny,” he evaded.

CHAPTER VIII

Having lighted my cigarette, I strolled for'ard along the deck to where work was going on. Above my head dim shapes of canvas showed in the starlight. Sail was being made, and being made slowly, as I might judge, who was only the veriest tyro in such matters. The indistinguishable shapes of men, in long lines, pulled on ropes. They pulled in sick and dogged silence, though Mr. Pike, ubiquitous, snarled out orders and rapped out oaths from every angle upon their miserable heads.

Certainly, from what I had read, no ship of the old days ever proceeded so sadly and blunderingly to sea. Ere long Mr. Mellaire joined Mr. Pike in the struggle of directing the men. It was not yet eight in the evening, and all hands were at work. They did not seem to know the ropes. Time and again, when the half-hearted suggestions of the bosuns had been of no avail, I saw one or the other of the mates leap to the rail and put the right rope in the hands of the men.

These, on the deck, I concluded, were the hopeless ones. Up aloft, from sounds and cries, I knew were other men, undoubtedly those who were at least a little seaman-like, loosing the sails.

But on deck! Twenty or thirty of the poor devils, tailed on a rope that hoisted a yard, would pull without concerted effort and with painfully slow movements. "Walk away with it!" Mr. Pike would yell. And perhaps for two or three yards they would

manage to walk with the rope ere they came to a halt like stalled horses on a hill. And yet, did either of the mates spring in and add his strength, they were able to move right along the deck without stopping. Either of the mates, old men that they were, was muscularly worth half-a-dozen of the wretched creatures.

“This is what sailin’s come to,” Mr. Pike paused to snort in my ear. “This ain’t the place for an officer down here pulling and hauling. But what can you do when the bosuns are worse than the men?”

“I thought sailors sang songs when they pulled,” I said.

“Sure they do. Want to hear ’em?”

I knew there was malice of some sort in his voice, but I answered that I’d like to very much.

“Here, you bosun!” Mr. Pike snarled. “Wake up! Start a song! Topsail halyards!”

In the pause that followed I could have sworn that Sundry Buyers was pressing his hands against his abdomen, while Nancy, infinite bleakness freezing upon his face, was wetting his lips to begin.

Nancy it was who began, for from no other man, I was confident, could have issued so sepulchral a plaint. It was unmusical, unbeautiful, unlively, and indescribably doleful. Yet the words showed that it should have ripped and crackled with high spirits and lawlessness, for the words poor Nancy sang were:

“Away, way, way, yar,

We'll kill Paddy Doyle for bus boots."

"Quit it! Quit it!" Mr. Pike roared. "This ain't a funeral! Ain't there one of you that can sing? Come on, now! It's a topsail-yard _"

He broke off to leap in to the pin-rail and get the wrong ropes out of the men's hands to put into them the right rope.

"Come on, bosun! Break her out!"

Then out of the gloom arose Sundry Buyers' voice, cracked and crazy and even more lugubrious than Nancy's:

"Then up aloft that yard must go,
Whiskey for my Johnny."

The second line was supposed to be the chorus, but not more than two men feebly mumbled it. Sundry Buyers quavered the next line:

"Oh, whiskey killed my sister Sue."

Then Mr. Pike took a hand, seizing the hauling-part next to the pin and lifting his voice with a rare snap and devilishness:

"And whiskey killed the old man, too,
Whiskey for my Johnny."

He sang the devil-may-care lines on and on, lifting the crew

to the work and to the chorused emphasis of "Whiskey for my Johnny."

And to his voice they pulled, they moved, they sang, and were alive, until he interrupted the song to cry "Belay!"

And then all the life and lilt went out of them, and they were again maundering and futile things, getting in one another's way, stumbling and shuffling through the darkness, hesitating to grasp ropes, and, when they did take hold, invariably taking hold of the wrong rope first. Skulkers there were among them, too; and once, from for'ard of the 'midship house, I heard smacks, and curses, and groans, and out of the darkness hurriedly emerged two men, on their heels Mr. Pike, who chanted a recital of the distressing things that would befall them if he caught them at such tricks again.

The whole thing was too depressing for me to care to watch further, so I strolled aft and climbed the poop. In the lee of the chart-house Captain West and the pilot were pacing slowly up and down. Passing on aft, I saw steering at the wheel the weazened little old man I had noted earlier in the day. In the light of the binnacle his small blue eyes looked more malevolent than ever. So weazened and tiny was he, and so large was the brass-studded wheel, that they seemed of a height. His face was withered, scorched, and wrinkled, and in all seeming he was fifty years older than Mr. Pike. He was the most remarkable figure of a burnt-out, aged man one would expect to find able seaman on one of the proudest sailing-ships afloat. Later, through Wada, I

was to learn that his name was Andy Fay and that he claimed no more years than sixty-three.

I leaned against the rail in the lee of the wheel-house, and stared up at the lofty spars and myriad ropes that I could guess were there. No, I decided I was not keen on the voyage. The whole atmosphere of it was wrong. There were the cold hours I had waited on the pier-ends. There was Miss West coming along. There was the crew of broken men and lunatics. I wondered if the wounded Greek in the 'midship house still gibbered, and if Mr. Pike had yet sewed him up; and I was quite sure I would not care to witness such a transaction in surgery.

Even Wada, who had never been in a sailing-ship, had his doubts of the voyage. So had the steward, who had spent most of a life-time in sailing-ships. So far as Captain West was concerned, crews did not exist. And as for Miss West, she was so abominably robust that she could not be anything else than an optimist in such matters. She had always lived; her red blood sang to her only that she would always live and that nothing evil would ever happen to her glorious personality.

Oh, trust me, I knew the way of red blood. Such was my condition that the red-blood health of Miss West was virtually an affront to me – for I knew how unthinking and immoderate such blood could be. And for five months at least – there was Mr. Pike's offered wager of a pound of tobacco or a month's wages to that effect – I was to be pent on the same ship with her. As sure as cosmic sap was cosmic sap, just that sure was I that ere

the voyage was over I should be pestered by her making love to me. Please do not mistake me. My certainty in this matter was due, not to any exalted sense of my own desirableness to women, but to my anything but exalted concept of women as instinctive huntresses of men. In my experience women hunted men with quite the same blind tropism that marks the pursuit of the sun by the sunflower, the pursuit of attachable surfaces by the tendrils of the grapevine.

Call me blasé – I do not mind, if by blasé is meant the world-weariness, intellectual, artistic, sensational, which can come to a young man of thirty. For I was thirty, and I was weary of all these things – weary and in doubt. It was because of this state that I was undertaking the voyage. I wanted to get away by myself, to get away from all these things, and, with proper perspective, mull the matter over.

It sometimes seemed to me that the culmination of this world-sickness had been brought about by the success of my play – my first play, as every one knows. But it had been such a success that it raised the doubt in my own mind, just as the success of my several volumes of verse had raised doubts. Was the public right? Were the critics right? Surely the function of the artist was to voice life, yet what did I know of life?

So you begin to glimpse what I mean by the world-sickness that afflicted me. Really, I had been, and was, very sick. Mad thoughts of isolating myself entirely from the world had hounded me. I had even canvassed the idea of going to Molokai and

devoting the rest of my years to the lepers – I, who was thirty years old, and healthy and strong, who had no particular tragedy, who had a bigger income than I knew how to spend, who by my own achievement had put my name on the lips of men and proved myself a power to be reckoned with – I was that mad that I had considered the lazar house for a destiny.

Perhaps it will be suggested that success had turned my head. Very well. Granted. But the turned head remains a fact, an incontrovertible fact – my sickness, if you will, and a real sickness, and a fact. This I knew: I had reached an intellectual and artistic climacteric, a life-climacteric of some sort. And I had diagnosed my own case and prescribed this voyage. And here was the atrociously healthy and profoundly feminine Miss West along – the very last ingredient I would have considered introducing into my prescription.

A woman! Woman! Heaven knows I had been sufficiently tormented by their persecutions to know them. I leave it to you: thirty years of age, not entirely unhandsome, an intellectual and artistic place in the world, and an income most dazzling – why shouldn't women pursue me? They would have pursued me had I been a hunchback, for the sake of my artistic place alone, for the sake of my income alone.

Yes; and love! Did I not know love – lyric, passionate, mad, romantic love? That, too, was of old time with me. I, too, had throbbed and sung and sobbed and sighed – yes, and known grief, and buried my dead. But it was so long ago. How young I

was – turned twenty-four! And after that I had learned the bitter lesson that even deathless grief may die; and I had laughed again and done my share of philandering with the pretty, ferocious moths that fluttered around the light of my fortune and artistry; and after that, in turn, I had retired disgusted from the lists of woman, and gone on long lance-breaking adventures in the realm of mind. And here I was, on board the *Elsinore*, unhorsed by my encounters with the problems of the ultimate, carried off the field with a broken pate.

As I leaned against the rail, dismissing premonitions of disaster, I could not help thinking of Miss West below, bustling and humming as she made her little nest. And from her my thought drifted on to the everlasting mystery of woman. Yes, I, with all the futuristic contempt for woman, am ever caught up afresh by the mystery of woman.

Oh, no illusions, thank you. Woman, the love-seeker, obsessing and possessing, fragile and fierce, soft and venomous, prouder than Lucifer and as prideless, holds a perpetual, almost morbid, attraction for the thinker. What is this flame of her, blazing through all her contradictions and ignobilities? – this ruthless passion for life, always for life, more life on the planet? At times it seems to me brazen, and awful, and soulless. At times I am made petulant by it. And at other times I am swayed by the sublimity of it. No; there is no escape from woman. Always, as a savage returns to a dark glen where goblins are and gods may be, so do I return to the contemplation of woman.

Mr. Pike's voice interrupted my musings. From for'ard, on the main deck, I heard him snarl:

“On the main-topsail-yard, there! – if you cut that gasket I'll split your damned skull!”

Again he called, with a marked change of voice, and the Henry he called to I concluded was the training-ship boy.

“You, Henry, main-skysail-yard, there!” he cried. “Don't make those gaskets up! Fetch 'em in along the yard and make fast to the tye!”

Thus routed from my reverie, I decided to go below to bed. As my hand went out to the knob of the chart-house door again the mate's voice rang out:

“Come on, you gentlemen's sons in disguise! Wake up! Lively now!”

CHAPTER IX

I did not sleep well. To begin with, I read late. Not till two in the morning did I reach up and turn out the kerosene reading-lamp which Wada had purchased and installed for me. I was asleep immediately – perfect sleep being perhaps my greatest gift; but almost immediately I was awake again. And thereafter, with dozings and cat-naps and restless tossings, I struggled to win to sleep, then gave it up. For of all things, in my state of jangled nerves, to be afflicted with hives! And still again, to be afflicted with hives in cold winter weather!

At four I lighted up and went to reading, forgetting my irritated skin in Vernon Lee's delightful screed against William James, and his "will to believe." I was on the weather side of the ship, and from overhead, through the deck, came the steady footfalls of some officer on watch. I knew that they were not the steps of Mr. Pike, and wondered whether they were Mr. Mellaire's or the pilot's. Somebody above there was awake. The work was going on, the vigilant seeing and overseeing, that, I could plainly conclude, would go on through every hour of all the hours on the voyage.

At half-past four I heard the steward's alarm go off, instantly suppressed, and five minutes later I lifted my hand to motion him in through my open door. What I desired was a cup of coffee, and Wada had been with me through too many years for me to doubt

that he had given the steward precise instructions and turned over to him my coffee and my coffee-making apparatus.

The steward was a jewel. In ten minutes he served me with a perfect cup of coffee. I read on until daylight, and half-past eight found me, breakfast in bed finished, dressed and shaved, and on deck. We were still towing, but all sails were set to a light favouring breeze from the north. In the chart-room Captain West and the pilot were smoking cigars. At the wheel I noted what I decided at once was an efficient. He was not a large man; if anything he was undersized. But his countenance was broad-browed and intelligently formed. Tom, I later learned, was his name – Tom Spink, an Englishman. He was blue-eyed, fair-skinned, well-grizzled, and, to the eye, a hale fifty years of age. His reply of “Good morning, sir” was cheery, and he smiled as he uttered the simple phrase. He did not look sailor-like, as did Henry, the training-ship boy; and yet I felt at once that he was a sailor, and an able one.

It was Mr. Pike’s watch, and on asking him about Tom he grudgingly admitted that the man was the “best of the boiling.”

Miss West emerged from the chart-house, with a rosy morning face and her vital, springy limb-movement, and immediately began establishing her contacts. On asking how I had slept, and when I said wretchedly, she demanded an explanation. I told her of my affliction of hives and showed her the lumps on my wrists.

“Your blood needs thinning and cooling,” she adjudged promptly. “Wait a minute. I’ll see what can be done for you.”

And with that she was away and below and back in a trice, in her hand a part glass of water into which she stirred a teaspoonful of cream of tartar.

“Drink it,” she ordered, as a matter of course.

I drank it. And at eleven in the morning she came up to my deck-chair with a second dose of the stuff. Also she reproached me soundly for permitting Wada to feed meat to Possum. It was from her that Wada and I learned how mortal a sin it was to give meat to a young puppy. Furthermore, she laid down the law and the diet for Possum, not alone to me and Wada, but to the steward, the carpenter, and Mr. Mellaire. Of the latter two, because they ate by themselves in the big after-room and because Possum played there, she was especially suspicious; and she was outspoken in voicing her suspicions to their faces. The carpenter mumbled embarrassed asseverations in broken English of past, present, and future innocence, the while he humbly scraped and shuffled before her on his huge feet. Mr. Mellaire’s protestations were of the same nature, save that they were made with the grace and suavity of a Chesterfield.

In short, Possum’s diet raised quite a tempest in the *Elsinore* teapot, and by the time it was over Miss West had established this particular contact with me and given me a feeling that we were the mutual owners of the puppy. I noticed, later in the day, that it was to Miss West that Wada went for instructions as to the quantity of warm water he must use to dilute Possum’s condensed milk.

Lunch won my continued approbation of the cook. In the afternoon I made a trip for'ard to the galley to make his acquaintance. To all intents he was a Chinese, until he spoke, whereupon, measured by speech alone, he was an Englishman. In fact, so cultured was his speech that I can fairly say it was vested with an Oxford accent. He, too, was old, fully sixty – he acknowledged fifty-nine. Three things about him were markedly conspicuous: his smile, that embraced all of his clean-shaven Asiatic face and Asiatic eyes; his even-rowed, white, and perfect teeth, which I deemed false until Wada ascertained otherwise for me; and his hands and feet. It was his hands, ridiculously small and beautifully modelled, that led my scrutiny to his feet. They, too, were ridiculously small and very neatly, almost dandifiedly, shod.

We had put the pilot off at midday, but the *Britannia* towed us well into the afternoon and did not cast us off until the ocean was wide about us and the land a faint blur on the western horizon. Here, at the moment of leaving the tug, we made our “departure” – that is to say, technically began the voyage, despite the fact that we had already travelled a full twenty-four hours away from Baltimore.

It was about the time of casting off, when I was leaning on the poop-rail gazing for'ard, when Miss West joined me. She had been busy below all day, and had just come up, as she put it, for a breath of air. She surveyed the sky in weather-wise fashion for a full five minutes, then remarked:

“The barometer’s very high – 30 degrees 60. This light north wind won’t last. It will either go into a calm or work around into a north-east gale.”

“Which would you prefer?” I asked.

“The gale, by all means. It will help us off the land, and it will put me through my torment of sea-sickness more quickly. Oh, yes,” she added, “I’m a good sailor, but I do suffer dreadfully at the beginning of every voyage. You probably won’t see me for a couple of days now. That’s why I’ve been so busy getting settled first.”

“Lord Nelson, I have read, never got over his squeamishness at sea,” I said.

“And I’ve seen father sea-sick on occasion,” she answered. “Yes, and some of the strongest, hardest sailors I have ever known.”

Mr. Pike here joined us for a moment, ceasing from his everlasting pacing up and down to lean with us on the poop-rail.

Many of the crew were in evidence, pulling on ropes on the main deck below us. To my inexperienced eye they appeared more unprepossessing than ever.

“A pretty scraggly crew, Mr. Pike,” Miss West remarked.

“The worst ever,” he growled, “and I’ve seen some pretty bad ones. We’re teachin’ them the ropes just now – most of ’em.”

“They look starved,” I commented.

“They are, they almost always are,” Miss West answered, and her eyes roved over them in the same appraising, cattle-buyer’s

fashion I had marked in Mr. Pike. “But they’ll fatten up with regular hours, no whiskey, and solid food – won’t they, Mr. Pike?”

“Oh, sure. They always do. And you’ll see them liven up when we get ’em in hand.. maybe. They’re a measly lot, though.”

I looked aloft at the vast towers of canvas. Our four masts seemed to have flowered into all the sails possible, yet the sailors beneath us, under Mr. Mellaire’s direction, were setting triangular sails, like jibs, between the masts, and there were so many that they overlapped one another. The slowness and clumsiness with which the men handled these small sails led me to ask:

“But what would you do, Mr. Pike, with a green crew like this, if you were caught right now in a storm with all this canvas spread?”

He shrugged his shoulders, as if I had asked what he would do in an earthquake with two rows of New York skyscrapers falling on his head from both sides of a street.

“Do?” Miss West answered for him. “We’d get the sail off. Oh, it can be done, Mr. Pathurst, with any kind of a crew. If it couldn’t, I should have been drowned long ago.”

“Sure,” Mr. Pike upheld her. “So would I.”

“The officers can perform miracles with the most worthless sailors, in a pinch,” Miss West went on.

Again Mr. Pike nodded his head and agreed, and I noted his two big paws, relaxed the moment before and drooping over the

rail, quite unconsciously tensed and folded themselves into fists. Also, I noted fresh abrasions on the knuckles. Miss West laughed heartily, as from some recollection.

“I remember one time when we sailed from San Francisco with a most hopeless crew. It was in the *Lallah Rookh*— you remember her, Mr. Pike?”

“Your father’s fifth command,” he nodded. “Lost on the West Coast afterwards – went ashore in that big earthquake and tidal wave. Parted her anchors, and when she hit under the cliff, the cliff fell on her.”

“That’s the ship. Well, our crew seemed mostly cow-boys, and bricklayers, and tramps, and more tramps than anything else. Where the boarding-house masters got them was beyond imagining. A number of them were shanghaied, that was certain. You should have seen them when they were first sent aloft.” Again she laughed. “It was better than circus clowns. And scarcely had the tug cast us off, outside the Heads, when it began to blow up and we began to shorten down. And then our mates performed miracles. You remember Mr. Harding – Silas Harding?”

“Don’t I though!” Mr. Pike proclaimed enthusiastically. “He was some man, and he must have been an old man even then.”

“He was, and a terrible man,” she concurred, and added, almost reverently: “And a wonderful man.” She turned her face to me. “He was our mate. The men were sea-sick and miserable and green. But Mr. Harding got the sail off the *Lallah Rookh* just

the same. What I wanted to tell you was this:

“I was on the poop, just like I am now, and Mr. Harding had a lot of those miserable sick men putting gaskets on the main-lower-topsail. How far would that be above the deck, Mr. Pike?”

“Let me see.. the *Lallah Rookh*.” Mr. Pike paused to consider. “Oh, say around a hundred feet.”

“I saw it myself. One of the green hands, a tramp – and he must already have got a taste of Mr. Harding – fell off the lower-topsail-yard. I was only a little girl, but it looked like certain death, for he was falling from the weather side of the yard straight down on deck. But he fell into the belly of the mainsail, breaking his fall, turned a somersault, and landed on his feet on deck and unhurt. And he landed right alongside of Mr. Harding, facing him. I don’t know which was the more astonished, but I think Mr. Harding was, for he stood there petrified. He had expected the man to be killed. Not so the man. He took one look at Mr. Harding, then made a wild jump for the rigging and climbed right back up to that topsail-yard.”

Miss West and the mate laughed so heartily that they scarcely heard me say:

“Astonishing! Think of the jar to the man’s nerves, falling to apparent death that way.”

“He’d been jarred harder by Silas Harding, I guess,” was Mr. Pike’s remark, with another burst of laughter, in which Miss West joined.

Which was all very well in a way. Ships were ships, and

judging by what I had seen of our present crew harsh treatment was necessary. But that a young woman of the niceness of Miss West should know of such things and be so saturated in this side of ship life was not nice. It was not nice for me, though it interested me, I confess, – and strengthened my grip on reality. Yet it meant a hardening of one's fibres, and I did not like to think of Miss West being so hardened.

I looked at her and could not help marking again the fineness and firmness of her skin. Her hair was dark, as were her eyebrows, which were almost straight and rather low over her long eyes. Gray her eyes were, a warm gray, and very steady and direct in expression, intelligent and alive. Perhaps, taking her face as a whole, the most noteworthy expression of it was a great calm. She seemed always in repose, at peace with herself and with the external world. The most beautiful feature was her eyes, framed in lashes as dark as her brows and hair. The most admirable feature was her nose, quite straight, very straight, and just the slightest trifle too long. In this it was reminiscent of her father's nose. But the perfect modelling of the bridge and nostrils conveyed an indescribable advertisement of race and blood.

Hers was a slender-lipped, sensitive, sensible, and generous mouth – generous, not so much in size, which was quite average, but generous rather in tolerance, in power, and in laughter. All the health and buoyancy of her was in her mouth, as well as in her eyes. She rarely exposed her teeth in smiling, for which purpose she seemed chiefly to employ her eyes; but when she laughed she

showed strong white teeth, even, not babyish in their smallness, but just the firm, sensible, normal size one would expect in a woman as healthy and normal as she.

I would never have called her beautiful, and yet she possessed many of the factors that go to compose feminine beauty. She had all the beauty of colouring, a white skin that was healthy white and that was emphasized by the darkness of her lashes, brows, and hair. And, in the same way, the darkness of lashes and brows and the whiteness of skin set off the warm gray of her eyes. The forehead was, well, medium-broad and medium high, and quite smooth. No lines nor hints of lines were there, suggestive of nervousness, of blue days of depression and white nights of insomnia. Oh, she bore all the marks of the healthy, human female, who never worried nor was vexed in the spirit of her, and in whose body every process and function was frictionless and automatic.

“Miss West has posed to me as quite a weather prophet,” I said to the mate. “Now what is your forecast of our coming weather?”

“She ought to be,” was Mr. Pike’s reply as he lifted his glance across the smooth swell of sea to the sky. “This ain’t the first time she’s been on the North Atlantic in winter.” He debated a moment, as he studied the sea and sky. “I should say, considering the high barometer, we ought to get a mild gale from the north-east or a calm, with the chances in favour of the calm.”

She favoured me with a triumphant smile, and suddenly clutched the rail as the *Elsinore* lifted on an unusually large swell

and sank into the trough with a roll from windward that flapped all the sails in hollow thunder.

“The calm has it,” Miss West said, with just a hint of grimness. “And if this keeps up I’ll be in my bunk in about five minutes.”

She waved aside all sympathy. “Oh, don’t bother about me, Mr. Pathurst. Sea-sickness is only detestable and horrid, like sleet, and muddy weather, and poison ivy; besides, I’d rather be sea-sick than have the hives.”

Something went wrong with the men below us on the deck, some stupidity or blunder that was made aware to us by Mr. Mellaire’s raised voice. Like Mr. Pike, he had a way of snarling at the sailors that was distinctly unpleasant to the ear.

On the faces of several of the sailors bruises were in evidence. One, in particular, had an eye so swollen that it was closed.

“Looks as if he had run against a stanchion in the dark,” I observed.

Most eloquent, and most unconscious, was the quick flash of Miss West’s eyes to Mr. Pike’s big paws, with freshly abraded knuckles, resting on the rail. It was a stab of hurt to me. *She knew.*

CHAPTER X

That evening the three men of us had dinner alone, with racks on the table, while the *Elsinore* rolled in the calm that had sent Miss West to her room.

“You won’t see her for a couple of days,” Captain West told me. “Her mother was the same way – a born sailor, but always sick at the outset of a voyage.”

“It’s the shaking down.” Mr. Pike astonished me with the longest observation I had yet heard him utter at table. “Everybody has to shake down when they leave the land. We’ve got to forget the good times on shore, and the good things money’ll buy, and start watch and watch, four hours on deck and four below. And it comes hard, and all our tempers are strung until we can make the change. Did it happen that you heard Caruso and Blanche Arrol this winter in New York, Mr. Pathurst?”

I nodded, still marvelling over this spate of speech at table.

“Well, think of hearing them, and Homer, and Witherspoon, and Amato, every night for nights and nights at the Metropolitan; and then to give it the go-by, and get to sea and shake down to watch and watch.”

“You don’t like the sea?” I queried.

He sighed.

“I don’t know. But of course the sea is all I know – ”

“Except music,” I threw in.

“Yes, but the sea and all the long-voyaging has cheated me out of most of the music I oughta have had coming to me.”

“I suppose you’ve heard Schumann Heink?”

“Wonderful, wonderful!” he murmured fervently, then regarded me with an eager wistfulness. “I’ve half-a-dozen of her records, and I’ve got the second dog-watch below. If Captain West don’t mind.. ” (Captain West nodded that he didn’t mind). “And if you’d want to hear them? The machine is a good one.”

And then, to my amazement, when the steward had cleared the table, this hoary old relic of man-killing and man-driving days, battered waif of the sea that he was, carried in from his room a most splendid collection of phonograph records. These, and the machine, he placed on the table. The big doors were opened, making the dining-room and the main cabin into one large room. It was in the cabin that Captain West and I lolled in big leather chairs while Mr. Pike ran the phonograph. His face was in a blaze of light from the swinging lamps, and every shade of expression was visible to me.

In vain I waited for him to start some popular song. His records were only of the best, and the care he took of them was a revelation. He handled each one reverently, as a sacred thing, untying and unwrapping it and brushing it with a fine camel’s hair brush while it revolved and ere he placed the needle on it. For a time all I could see was the huge brute hands of a brute-driver, with skin off the knuckles, that expressed love in their every movement. Each touch on the discs was a caress, and while

the record played he hovered over it and dreamed in some heaven of music all his own.

During this time Captain West lay back and smoked a cigar. His face was expressionless, and he seemed very far away, untouched by the music. I almost doubted that he heard it. He made no remarks between whiles, betrayed no sign of approbation or displeasure. He seemed preternaturally serene, preternaturally remote. And while I watched him I wondered what his duties were. I had not seen him perform any. Mr. Pike had attended to the loading of the ship. Not until she was ready for sea had Captain West come on board. I had not seen him give an order. It looked to me that Mr. Pike and Mr. Mellaire did the work. All Captain West did was to smoke cigars and keep blissfully oblivious of the *Elsinore's* crew.

When Mr. Pike had played the "Hallelujah Chorus" from the *Messiah*, and "He Shall Feed His Flock," he mentioned to me, almost apologetically, that he liked sacred music, and for the reason, perhaps, that for a short period, a child ashore in San Francisco, he had been a choir boy.

"And then I hit the dominie over the head with a baseball bat and sneaked off to sea again," he concluded with a harsh laugh.

And thereat he fell to dreaming while he played Meyerbeer's "King of Heaven," and Mendelssohn's "O Rest in the Lord."

When one bell struck, at quarter to eight, he carried his music, all carefully wrapped, back into his room. I lingered with him while he rolled a cigarette ere eight bells struck.

“I’ve got a lot more good things,” he said confidentially: “Coenen’s ‘Come Unto Me,’ and Faure’s ‘Crucifix’; and there’s ‘O Salutaris,’ and ‘Lead, Kindly Light’ by the Trinity Choir; and ‘Jesu, Lover of My Soul’ would just melt your heart. I’ll play ’em for you some night.”

“Do you believe in them?” I was led to ask by his rapt expression and by the picture of his brute-driving hands which I could not shake from my consciousness.

He hesitated perceptibly, then replied:

“I do.. when I’m listening to them.”

* * * * *

My sleep that night was wretched. Short of sleep from the previous night, I closed my book and turned my light off early. But scarcely had I dropped into slumber when I was aroused by the recrudescence of my hives. All day they had not bothered me; yet the instant I put out the light and slept, the damnable persistent itching set up. Wada had not yet gone to bed, and from him I got more cream of tartar. It was useless, however, and at midnight, when I heard the watch changing, I partially dressed, slipped into my dressing-gown, and went up on to the poop.

I saw Mr. Mellaire beginning his four hours’ watch, pacing up and down the port side of the poop; and I slipped away aft, past the man at the wheel, whom I did not recognize, and took refuge in the lee of the wheel-house.

Once again I studied the dim loom and tracery of intricate rigging and lofty, sail-carrying spars, thought of the mad, imbecile crew, and experienced premonitions of disaster. How could such a voyage be possible, with such a crew, on the huge *Elsinore*, a cargo-carrier that was only a steel shell half an inch thick burdened with five thousand tons of coal? It was appalling to contemplate. The voyage had gone wrong from the first. In the wretched unbalance that loss of sleep brings to any good sleeper, I could decide only that the voyage was doomed. Yet how doomed it was, in truth, neither I nor a madman could have dreamed.

I thought of the red-blooded Miss West, who had always lived and had no doubts but what she would always live. I thought of the killing and driving and music-loving Mr. Pike. Many a haler remnant than he had gone down on a last voyage. As for Captain West, he did not count. He was too neutral a being, too far away, a sort of favoured passenger who had nothing to do but serenely and passively exist in some Nirvana of his own creating.

Next I remembered the self-wounded Greek, sewed up by Mr. Pike and lying gibbering between the steel walls of the 'midship-house. This picture almost decided me, for in my fevered imagination he typified the whole mad, helpless, idiotic crew. Certainly I could go back to Baltimore. Thank God I had the money to humour my whims. Had not Mr. Pike told me, in reply to a question, that he estimated the running expenses of the *Elsinore* at two hundred dollars a day? I could afford to pay two

hundred a day, or two thousand, for the several days that might be necessary to get me back to the land, to a pilot tug, or any inbound craft to Baltimore.

I was quite wholly of a mind to go down and rout out Captain West to tell him my decision, when another presented itself: *Then are you, the thinker and philosopher, the world-sick one, afraid to go down, to cease in the darkness?* Bah! My own pride in my life-pridelessness saved Captain West's sleep from interruption. Of course I would go on with the adventure, if adventure it might be called, to go sailing around Cape Horn with a shipload of fools and lunatics – and worse; for I remembered the three Babylonish and Semitic ones who had aroused Mr. Pike's ire and who had laughed so terribly and silently.

Night thoughts! Sleepless thoughts! I dismissed them all and started below, chilled through by the cold. But at the chart-room door I encountered Mr. Mellaire.

“A pleasant evening, sir,” he greeted me. “A pity there's not a little wind to help us off the land.”

“What do you think of the crew?” I asked, after a moment or so.

Mr. Mellaire shrugged his shoulders.

“I've seen many queer crews in my time, Mr. Pathurst. But I never saw one as queer as this – boys, old men, cripples and – you saw Tony the Greek go overboard yesterday? Well, that's only the beginning. He's a sample. I've got a big Irishman in my watch who's going bad. Did you notice a little, dried-up Scotchman?”

“Who looks mean and angry all the time, and who was steering the evening before last?”

“The very one – Andy Fay. Well, Andy Fay’s just been complaining to me about O’Sullivan. Says O’Sullivan’s threatened his life. When Andy Fay went off watch at eight he found O’Sullivan stropping a razor. I’ll give you the conversation as Andy gave it to me:

“Says O’Sullivan to me, “Mr. Fay, I’ll have a word wid yeh?” “Certainly,” says I; “what can I do for you?” “Sell me your sea-boots, Mr. Fay,” says O’Sullivan, polite as can be. “But what will you be wantin’ of them?” says I. “Twill be a great favour,” says O’Sullivan. “But it’s my only pair,” says I; “and you have a pair of your own,” says I. “Mr. Fay, I’ll be needin’ me own in bad weather,” says O’Sullivan. “Besides,” says I, “you have no money.” “I’ll pay for them when we pay off in Seattle,” says O’Sullivan. “I’ll not do it,” says I; “besides, you’re not tellin’ me what you’ll be doin’ with them.” “But I will tell yeh,” says O’Sullivan; “I’m wantin’ to throw ’em over the side.” And with that I turns to walk away, but O’Sullivan says, very polite and seducin’-like, still a-stroppin’ the razor, “Mr. Fay,” says he, “will you kindly step this way an’ have your throat cut?” And with that I knew my life was in danger, and I have come to make report to you, sir, that the man is a violent lunatic.’

“Or soon will be,” I remarked. “I noticed him yesterday, a big man muttering continually to himself?”

“That’s the man,” Mr. Mellaire said.

“Do you have many such at sea?” I asked.

“More than my share, I do believe, sir.”

He was lighting a cigarette at the moment, and with a quick movement he pulled off his cap, bent his head forward, and held up the blazing match that I might see.

I saw a grizzled head, the full crown of which was not entirely bald, but partially covered with a few sparse long hairs. And full across this crown, disappearing in the thicker fringe above the ears, ran the most prodigious scar I had ever seen. Because the vision of it was so fleeting, ere the match blew out, and because of the scar’s very prodigiousness, I may possibly exaggerate, but I could have sworn that I could lay two fingers deep into the horrid cleft and that it was fully two fingers broad. There seemed no bone at all, just a great fissure, a deep valley covered with skin; and I was confident that the brain pulsed immediately under that skin.

He pulled his cap on and laughed in an amused, reassuring way.

“A crazy sea cook did that, Mr. Pathurst, with a meat-axe. We were thousands of miles from anywhere, in the South Indian Ocean at the time, running our Easting down, but the cook got the idea into his addled head that we were lying in Boston Harbour, and that I wouldn’t let him go ashore. I had my back to him at the time, and I never knew what struck me.”

“But how could you recover from so fearful an injury?” I questioned. “There must have been a splendid surgeon on board,

and you must have had wonderful vitality.”

He shook his head.

“It must have been the vitality.. and the molasses.”

“Molasses!”

“Yes; the captain had old-fashioned prejudices against antiseptics. He always used molasses for fresh wound-dressings. I lay in my bunk many weary weeks – we had a long passage – and by the time we reached Hong Kong the thing was healed, there was no need for a shore surgeon, and I was standing my third mate’s watch – we carried third mates in those days.”

Not for many a long day was I to realize the dire part that scar in Mr. Mellaire’s head was to play in his destiny and in the destiny of the *Elsinore*. Had I known at the time, Captain West would have received the most unusual awakening from sleep that he ever experienced; for he would have been routed out by a very determined, partially-dressed passenger with a proposition capable of going to the extent of buying the *Elsinore* outright with all her cargo, so that she might be sailed straight back to Baltimore.

As it was, I merely thought it a very marvellous thing that Mr. Mellaire should have lived so many years with such a hole in his head.

We talked on, and he gave me many details of that particular happening, and of other happenings at sea on the part of the lunatics that seem to infest the sea.

And yet I could not like the man. In nothing he said, nor in the

manner of saying things, could I find fault. He seemed generous, broad-minded, and, for a sailor, very much of a man of the world. It was easy for me to overlook his excessive suavity of speech and super-courtesy of social mannerism. It was not that. But all the time I was distressingly, and, I suppose, intuitively aware, though in the darkness I couldn't even see his eyes, that there, behind those eyes, inside that skull, was ambuscaded an alien personality that spied upon me, measured me, studied me, and that said one thing while it thought another thing.

When I said good night and went below it was with the feeling that I had been talking with the one half of some sort of a dual creature. The other half had not spoken. Yet I sensed it there, fluttering and quick, behind the mask of words and flesh.

CHAPTER XI

But I could not sleep. I took more cream of tartar. It must be the heat of the bed-clothes, I decided, that excited my hives. And yet, whenever I ceased struggling for sleep, and lighted the lamp and read, my skin irritation decreased. But as soon as I turned out the lamp and closed my eyes I was troubled again. So hour after hour passed, through which, between vain attempts to sleep, I managed to wade through many pages of Rosny's *Le Termite*— a not very cheerful proceeding, I must say, concerned as it is with the microscopic and over-elaborate recital of Noël Servaise's tortured nerves, bodily pains, and intellectual phantasma. At last I tossed the novel aside, damned all analytical Frenchmen, and found some measure of relief in the more genial and cynical Stendhal.

Over my head I could hear Mr. Mellaire steadily pace up and down. At four the watches changed, and I recognized the age-lag in Mr. Pike's promenade. Half an hour later, just as the steward's alarm went off, instantly checked by that light-sleeping Asiatic, the *Elsinore* began to heel over on my side. I could hear Mr. Pike barking and snarling orders, and at times a trample and shuffle of many feet passed over my head as the weird crew pulled and hauled. The *Elsinore* continued to heel over until I could see the water against my port, and then she gathered way and dashed ahead at such a rate that I could hear the stinging and singing of

the foam through the circle of thick glass beside me.

The steward brought me coffee, and I read till daylight and after, when Wada served me breakfast and helped me dress. He, too, complained of inability to sleep. He had been bunked with Nancy in one of the rooms in the 'midship-house. Wada described the situation. The tiny room, made of steel, was airtight when the steel door was closed. And Nancy insisted on keeping the door closed. As a result Wada, in the upper bunk, had stifled. He told me that the air had got so bad that the flame of the lamp, no matter how high it was turned, guttered down and all but refused to burn. Nancy snored beautifully through it all, while he had been unable to close his eyes.

"He is not clean," quoth Wada. "He is a pig. No more will I sleep in that place."

On the poop I found the *Elsinore*, with many of her sails furled, slashing along through a troubled sea under an overcast sky. Also I found Mr. Mellaire marching up and down, just as I had left him hours before, and it took quite a distinct effort for me to realize that he had had the watch off between four and eight. Even then, he told me, he had slept from four until half-past seven.

"That is one thing, Mr. Pathurst, I always sleep like a baby.. which means a good conscience, sir, yes, a good conscience."

And while he enunciated the platitude I was uncomfortably aware that that alien thing inside his skull was watching me, studying me.

In the cabin Captain West smoked a cigar and read the Bible. Miss West did not appear, and I was grateful that to my sleeplessness the curse of sea-sickness had not been added.

Without asking permission of anybody, Wada arranged a sleeping place for himself in a far corner of the big after-room, screening the corner with a solidly lashed wall of my trunks and empty book boxes.

It was a dreary enough day, no sun, with occasional splatters of rain and a persistent crash of seas over the weather rail and swash of water across the deck. With my eyes glued to the cabin ports, which gave for'ard along the main deck, I could see the wretched sailors, whenever they were given some task of pull and haul, wet through and through by the boarding seas. Several times I saw some of them taken off their feet and rolled about in the creaming foam. And yet, erect, unstaggering, with certitude of weight and strength, among these rolled men, these clutching, cowering ones, moved either Mr. Pike or Mr. Mellaire. They were never taken off their feet. They never shrank away from a splash of spray or heavier bulk of down-falling water. They had fed on different food, were informed with a different spirit, were of iron in contrast with the poor miserables they drove to their bidding.

In the afternoon I dozed for half-an-hour in one of the big chairs in the cabin. Had it not been for the violent motion of the ship I could have slept there for hours, for the hives did not trouble. Captain West, stretched out on the cabin sofa, his feet

in carpet slippers, slept enviably. By some instinct, I might say, in the deep of sleep, he kept his place and was not rolled off upon the floor. Also, he lightly held a half-smoked cigar in one hand. I watched him for an hour, and knew him to be asleep, and marvelled that he maintained his easy posture and did not drop the cigar.

After dinner there was no phonograph. The second dog-watch was Mr. Pike's on deck. Besides, as he explained, the rolling was too severe. It would make the needle jump and scratch his beloved records.

And no sleep! Another weary night of torment, and another dreary, overcast day and leaden, troubled sea. And no Miss West. Wada, too, is sea-sick, although heroically he kept his feet and tried to tend on me with glassy, unseeing eyes. I sent him to his bunk, and read through the endless hours until my eyes were tired, and my brain, between lack of sleep and over-use, was fuzzy.

Captain West is no conversationalist. The more I see of him the more I am baffled. I have not yet found a reason for that first impression I received of him. He has all the poise and air of a remote and superior being, and yet I wonder if it be not poise and air and nothing else. Just as I had expected, that first meeting, ere he spoke a word, to hear fall from his lips words of untold beneficence and wisdom, and then heard him utter mere social commonplaces, so I now find myself almost forced to conclude that his touch of race, and beak of power, and all the

tall, aristocratic slenderness of him have nothing behind them.

And yet, on the other hand, I can find no reason for rejecting that first impression. He has not shown any strength, but by the same token he has not shown any weakness. Sometimes I wonder what resides behind those clear blue eyes. Certainly I have failed to find any intellectual backing. I tried him out with William James' *Varieties of Religious Experience*. He glanced at a few pages, then returned it to me with the frank statement that it did not interest him. He has no books of his own. Evidently he is not a reader. Then what is he? I dared to feel him out on politics. He listened courteously, said sometimes yes and sometimes no, and, when I ceased from very discouragement, said nothing.

Aloof as the two officers are from the men, Captain West is still more aloof from his officers. I have not seen him address a further word to Mr. Mellaire than "Good morning" on the poop. As for Mr. Pike, who eats three times a day with him, scarcely any more conversation obtains between them. And I am surprised by what seems the very conspicuous awe with which Mr. Pike seems to regard his commander.

Another thing. What are Captain West's duties? So far he has done nothing, save eat three times a day, smoke many cigars, and each day stroll a total of one mile around the poop. The mates do all the work, and hard work it is, four hours on deck and four below, day and night with never a variation. I watch Captain West and am amazed. He will loll back in the cabin and stare straight before him for hours at a time, until I am almost frantic

to demand of him what are his thoughts. Sometimes I doubt that he is thinking at all. I give him up. I cannot fathom him.

Altogether a depressing day of rain-splatter and wash of water across the deck. I can see, now, that the problem of sailing a ship with five thousand tons of coal around the Horn is more serious than I had thought. So deep is the *Elsinore* in the water that she is like a log awash. Her tall, six-foot bulwarks of steel cannot keep the seas from boarding her. She has not the buoyancy one is accustomed to ascribe to ships. On the contrary, she is weighted down until she is dead, so that, for this one day alone, I am appalled at the thought of how many thousands of tons of the North Atlantic have boarded her and poured out through her spouting scuppers and clanging ports.

Yes, a depressing day. The two mates have alternated on deck and in their bunks. Captain West has dozed on the cabin sofa or read the Bible. Miss West is still sea-sick. I have tired myself out with reading, and the fuzziness of my unsleeping brain makes for melancholy. Even Wada is anything but a cheering spectacle, crawling out of his bunk, as he does at stated intervals, and with sick, glassy eyes trying to discern what my needs may be. I almost wish I could get sea-sick myself. I had never dreamed that a sea voyage could be so unenlivening as this one is proving.

CHAPTER XII

Another morning of overcast sky and leaden sea, and of the *Elsinore*, under half her canvas, clanging her deck ports, spouting water from her scuppers, and dashing eastward into the heart of the Atlantic. And I have failed to sleep half-an-hour all told. At this rate, in a very short time I shall have consumed all the cream of tartar on the ship. I never have had hives like these before. I can't understand it. So long as I keep my lamp burning and read I am untroubled. The instant I put out the lamp and drowse off the irritation starts and the lumps on my skin begin to form.

Miss West may be sea-sick, but she cannot be comatose, because at frequent intervals she sends the steward to me with more cream of tartar.

I have had a revelation to-day. I have discovered Captain West. He is a Samurai. – You remember the Samurai that H. G. Wells describes in his *Modern Utopia*– the superior breed of men who know things and are masters of life and of their fellow-men in a super-benevolent, super-wise way? Well, that is what Captain West is. Let me tell it to you.

We had a shift of wind to-day. In the height of a south-west gale the wind shifted, in the instant, eight points, which is equivalent to a quarter of the circle. Imagine it! Imagine a gale howling from out of the south-west. And then imagine the wind, in a heavier and more violent gale, abruptly smiting you from

the north-west. We had been sailing through a circular storm, Captain West vouchsafed to me, before the event, and the wind could be expected to box the compass.

Clad in sea-boots, oilskins and sou'wester, I had for some time been hanging upon the rail at the break of the poop, staring down fascinated at the poor devils of sailors, repeatedly up to their necks in water, or submerged, or dashed like straws about the deck, while they pulled and hauled, stupidly, blindly, and in evident fear, under the orders of Mr. Pike.

Mr. Pike was with them, working them and working with them. He took every chance they took, yet somehow he escaped being washed off his feet, though several times I saw him entirely buried from view. There was more than luck in the matter; for I saw him, twice, at the head of a line of the men, himself next to the pin. And twice, in this position, I saw the North Atlantic curl over the rail and fall upon them. And each time he alone remained, holding the turn of the rope on the pin, while the rest of them were rolled and sprawled helplessly away.

Almost it seemed to me good fun, as at a circus, watching their antics. But I did not apprehend the seriousness of the situation until, the wind screaming higher than ever and the sea a-smoke and white with wrath, two men did not get up from the deck. One was carried away for'ard with a broken leg – it was Iare Jacobson, a dull-witted Scandinavian; and the other, Kid Twist, was carried away, unconscious, with a bleeding scalp.

In the height of the gusts, in my high position, where the seas

did not break, I found myself compelled to cling tightly to the rail to escape being blown away. My face was stung to severe pain by the high-driving spindrift, and I had a feeling that the wind was blowing the cobwebs out of my sleep-starved brain.

And all the time, slender, aristocratic, graceful in streaming oilskins, in apparent unconcern, giving no orders, effortlessly accommodating his body to the violent rolling of the *Elsinore*, Captain West strolled up and down.

It was at this stage in the gale that he unbent sufficiently to tell me that we were going through a circular storm and that the wind was boxing the compass. I did notice that he kept his gaze pretty steadily fixed on the overcast, cloud-driven sky. At last, when it seemed the wind could not possibly blow more fiercely, he found in the sky what he sought. It was then that I first heard his voice – a sea-voice, clear as a bell, distinct as silver, and of an ineffable sweetness and volume, as it might be the trump of Gabriel. That voice! – effortless, dominating! The mighty threat of the storm, made articulate by the resistance of the *Elsinore*, shouted in all the stays, bellowed in the shrouds, thrummed the taut ropes against the steel masts, and from the myriad tiny ropes far aloft evoked a devil's chorus of shrill pipings and screechings. And yet, through this bedlam of noise, came Captain West's voice, as of a spirit visitant, distinct, unrelated, mellow as all music and mighty as an archangel's call to judgment. And it carried understanding and command to the man at the wheel, and to Mr. Pike, waist-deep in the wash of sea below us. And

the man at the wheel obeyed, and Mr. Pike obeyed, barking and snarling orders to the poor wallowing devils who wallowed on and obeyed him in turn. And as the voice was the face. This face I had never seen before. It was the face of the spirit visitant, chaste with wisdom, lighted by a splendour of power and calm. Perhaps it was the calm that smote me most of all. It was as the calm of one who had crossed chaos to bless poor sea-worn men with the word that all was well. It was not the face of the fighter. To my thrilled imagination it was the face of one who dwelt beyond all strivings of the elements and broody dissensions of the blood.

The Samurai had arrived, in thunders and lightnings, riding the wings of the storm, directing the gigantic, labouring *Elsinore* in all her intricate massiveness, commanding the wisps of humans to his will, which was the will of wisdom.

And then, that wonderful Gabriel voice of his, silent (while his creatures laboured his will), unconcerned, detached and casual, more slenderly tall and aristocratic than ever in his streaming oilskins, Captain West touched my shoulder and pointed astern over our weather quarter. I looked, and all that I could see was a vague smoke of sea and air and a cloud-bank of sky that tore at the ocean's breast. And at the same moment the gale from the south-west ceased. There was no gale, no moving zephyrs, nothing but a vast quietude of air.

"What is it?" I gasped, out of equilibrium from the abrupt cessation of wind.

"The shift," he said. "There she comes."

And it came, from the north-west, a blast of wind, a blow, an atmospheric impact that bewildered and stunned and again made the *Elsinore* harp protest. It forced me down on the rail. I was like a windle-straw. As I faced this new abruptness of gale it drove the air back into my lungs, so that I suffocated and turned my head aside to breathe in the lee of the draught. The man at the wheel again listened to the Gabriel voice; and Mr. Pike, on the deck below, listened and repeated the will of the voice; and Captain West, in slender and stately balance, leaned into the face of the wind and slowly paced the deck.

It was magnificent. Now, and for the first time, I knew the sea, and the men who overlord the sea. Captain West had vindicated himself, expositied himself. At the height and crisis of storm he had taken charge of the *Elsinore*, and Mr. Pike had become, what in truth was all he was, the foreman of a gang of men, the slave-driver of slaves, serving the one from beyond – the Samurai.

A minute or so longer Captain West strolled up and down, leaning easily into the face of this new and abominable gale or resting his back against it, and then he went below, pausing for a moment, his hand on the knob of the chart-room door, to cast a last measuring look at the storm-white sea and wrath-sombre sky he had mastered.

Ten minutes later, below, passing the open cabin door, I glanced in and saw him. Sea-boots and storm-trappings were gone; his feet, in carpet slippers, rested on a hassock; while he lay back in the big leather chair smoking dreamily, his eyes

wide open, absorbed, non-seeing – or, if they saw, seeing things beyond the reeling cabin walls and beyond my ken. I have developed an immense respect for Captain West, though now I know him less than the little I thought I knew him before.

CHAPTER XIII

Small wonder that Miss West remains sea-sick on an ocean like this, which has become a factory where the veering gales manufacture the selectest and most mountainous brands of cross-seas. The way the poor *Elsinore* pitches, plunges, rolls, and shivers, with all her lofty spars and masts and all her five thousand tons of dead-weight cargo, is astonishing. To me she is the most erratic thing imaginable; yet Mr. Pike, with whom I now pace the poop on occasion, tells me that coal is a good cargo, and that the *Elsinore* is well-loaded because he saw to it himself.

He will pause abruptly, in the midst of his interminable pacing, in order to watch her in her maddest antics. The sight is very pleasant to him, for his eyes glisten and a faint glow seems to irradiate his face and impart to it a hint of ecstasy. The *Elsinore* has a snug place in his heart, I am confident. He calls her behaviour admirable, and at such times will repeat to me that it was he who saw to her loading.

It is very curious, the habituation of this man, through a long life on the sea, to the motion of the sea. There *is* a rhythm to this chaos of crossing, buffeting waves. I sense this rhythm, although I cannot solve it. But Mr. Pike *knows* it. Again and again, as we paced up and down this afternoon, when to me nothing unusually antic seemed impending, he would seize my arm as I lost balance, and as the *Elsinore* smashed down on her side and heeled over and

over with a colossal roll that seemed never to end, and that always ended with an abrupt, snap-of-the-whip effect as she began the corresponding roll to windward. In vain I strove to learn how Mr. Pike forecasts these antics, and I am driven to believe that he does not consciously forecast them at all. He *feels* them; he knows them. They, and the sea, are ingrained in him.

Toward the end of our little promenade I was guilty of impatiently shaking off a sudden seizure of my arm in his big paw. If ever, in an hour, the *Elsinore* had been less gymnastic than at that moment, I had not noticed it. So I shook off the sustaining clutch, and the next moment the *Elsinore* had smashed down and buried a couple of hundred feet of her starboard rail beneath the sea, while I had shot down the deck and smashed myself breathless against the wall of the chart-house. My ribs and one shoulder are sore from it yet. Now how did he know?

And he never staggers nor seems in danger of being rolled away. On the contrary, such a surplus of surety of balance has he that time and again he lent his surplus to me. I begin to have more respect, not for the sea, but for the men of the sea, and not for the sweepings of seamen that are as slaves on our decks, but for the real seamen who are their masters – for Captain West, for Mr. Pike, yes, and for Mr. Mellaire, dislike him as I do.

As early as three in the afternoon the wind, still a gale, went back to the south-west. Mr. Mellaire had the deck, and he went below and reported the change to Captain West.

“We’ll wear ship at four, Mr. Pathurst,” the second mate

told me when he came back. "You'll find it an interesting manoeuvre."

"But why wait till four?" I asked.

"The Captain's orders, sir. The watches will be changing, and we'll have the use of both of them, without working a hardship on the watch below by calling it out now."

And when both watches were on deck Captain West, again in oilskins, came out of the chart-house. Mr. Pike, out on the bridge, took charge of the many men who, on deck and on the poop, were to manage the mizzen-braces, while Mr. Mellaire went for'ard with his watch to handle the fore-and main-braces. It was a pretty manoeuvre, a play of leverages, by which they cased the force of the wind on the after part of the *Elsinore* and used the force of the wind on the for'ard part.

Captain West gave no orders whatever, and, to all intents, was quite oblivious of what was being done. He was again the favoured passenger, taking a stroll for his health's sake. And yet I knew that both his officers were uncomfortably aware of his presence and were keyed to their finest seamanship. I know, now, Captain West's position on board. He is the brains of the *Elsinore*. He is the master strategist. There is more in directing a ship on the ocean than in standing watches and ordering men to pull and haul. They are pawns, and the two officers are pieces, with which Captain West plays the game against sea, and wind, and season, and ocean current. He is the knower. They are his tongue, by which he makes his knowledge articulate.

* * * * *

A bad night – equally bad for the *Elsinore* and for me. She is receiving a sharp buffeting at the hands of the wintry North Atlantic. I fell asleep early, exhausted from lack of sleep, and awoke in an hour, frantic with my lumped and burning skin. More cream of tartar, more reading, more vain attempts to sleep, until shortly before five, when the steward brought me my coffee, I wrapped myself in my dressing-gown, and like a being distracted prowled into the cabin. I dozed in a leather chair and was thrown out by a violent roll of the ship. I tried the sofa, sinking to sleep immediately, and immediately thereafter finding myself precipitated to the floor. I am convinced that when Captain West naps on the sofa he is only half asleep. How else can he maintain so precarious a position? – unless, in him, too, the sea and its motion be ingrained.

I wandered into the dining-room, wedged myself into a screwed chair, and fell asleep, my head on my arms, my arms on the table. And at quarter past seven the steward roused me by shaking my shoulders. It was time to set table.

Heavy with the brief heaviness of sleep I had had, I dressed and stumbled up on to the poop in the hope that the wind would clear my brain. Mr. Pike had the watch, and with sure, age-lagging step he paced the deck. The man is a marvel – sixty-nine years old, a life of hardship, and as sturdy as a lion. Yet of the

past night alone his hours had been: four to six in the afternoon on deck; eight to twelve on deck; and four to eight in the morning on deck. In a few minutes he would be relieved, but at midday he would again be on deck.

I leaned on the poop-rail and stared for'ard along the dreary waste of deck. Every port and scupper was working to ease the weight of North Atlantic that perpetually fell on board. Between the rush of the cascades, streaks of rust showed everywhere. Some sort of a wooden pin-rail had carried away on the starboard-rail at the foot of the mizzen-shrouds, and an amazing raffle of ropes and tackles washed about. Here Nancy and half-a-dozen men worked sporadically, and in fear of their lives, to clear the tangle.

The long-suffering bleakness was very pronounced on Nancy's face, and when the walls of water, in impending downfall, reared above the *Elsinore's* rail, he was always the first to leap for the life-line which had been stretched fore and aft across the wide space of deck.

The rest of the men were scarcely less backward in dropping their work and springing to safety – if safety it might be called, to grip a rope in both hands and have legs sweep out from under, and be wrenched full-length upon the boiling surface of an ice-cold flood. Small wonder they look wretched. Bad as their condition was when they came aboard at Baltimore, they look far worse now, what of the last several days of wet and freezing hardship.

From time to time, completing his for'ard pace along the

poop, Mr. Pike would pause, ere he retraced his steps, and snort sardonic glee at what happened to the poor devils below. The man's heart is callous. A thing of iron, he has endured; and he has no patience nor sympathy with these creatures who lack his own excessive iron.

I noticed the stone-deaf man, the twisted oaf whose face I have described as being that of an ill-treated and feeble-minded faun. His bright, liquid, pain-filled eyes were more filled with pain than ever, his face still more lean and drawn with suffering. And yet his face showed an excess of nervousness, sensitiveness, and a pathetic eagerness to please and do. I could not help observing that, despite his dreadful sense-handicap and his wrecked, frail body, he did the most work, was always the last of the group to spring to the life-line and always the first to loose the life-line and slosh knee-deep or waist-deep through the churning water to attack the immense and depressing tangle of rope and tackle.

I remarked to Mr. Pike that the men seemed thinner and weaker than when they came on board, and he delayed replying for a moment while he stared down at them with that cattle-buyer's eye of his.

"Sure they are," he said disgustedly. "A weak breed, that's what they are – nothing to build on, no stamina. The least thing drags them down. Why, in my day we grew fat on work like that – only we didn't; we worked so hard there wasn't any chance for fat. We kept in fighting trim, that was all. But as for this scum

and slum – say, you remember, Mr. Pathurst, that man I spoke to the first day, who said his name was Charles Davis?”

“The one you thought there was something the matter with?”

“Yes, and there was, too. He’s in that ’midship room with the Greek now. He’ll never do a tap of work the whole Voyage. He’s a hospital case, if there ever was one. Talk about shot to pieces! He’s got holes in him I could shove my fist through. I don’t know whether they’re perforating ulcers, or cancers, or cannon-shot wounds, or what not. And he had the nerve to tell me they showed up after he came on board!”

“And he had them all the time?” I asked.

“All the time! Take my word, Mr. Pathurst, they’re years old. But he’s a wonder. I watched him those first days, sent him aloft, had him down in the fore-hold trimming a few tons of coal, did everything to him, and he never showed a wince. Being up to the neck in the salt water finally fetched him, and now he’s reported off duty – for the voyage. And he’ll draw his wages for the whole time, have all night in, and never do a tap. Oh, he’s a hot one to have passed over on us, and the *Elsinore’s* another man short.”

“Another!” I exclaimed. “Is the Greek going to die?”

“No fear. I’ll have him steering in a few days. I refer to the misfits. If we rolled a dozen of them together they wouldn’t make one real man. I’m not saying it to alarm you, for there’s nothing alarming about it; but we’re going to have proper hell this voyage.” He broke off to stare reflectively at his broken knuckles, as if estimating how much drive was left in them, then sighed and

concluded, "Well, I can see I've got my work cut out for me."

Sympathizing with Mr. Pike is futile; the only effect is to make his mood blacker. I tried it, and he retaliated with:

"You oughta see the bloke with curvature of the spine in Mr. Mellaire's watch. He's a proper hobo, too, and a land lubber, and don't weigh more'n a hundred pounds, and must be fifty years old, and he's got curvature of the spine, and he's able seaman, if you please, on the *Elsinore*. And worse than all that, he puts it over on you; he's nasty, he's mean, he's a viper, a wasp. He ain't afraid of anything because he knows you dassent hit him for fear of croaking him. Oh, he's a pearl of purest ray serene, if anybody should slide down a backstay and ask you. If you fail to identify him any other way, his name is Mulligan Jacobs."

* * * * *

After breakfast, again on deck, in Mr. Mellaire's watch, I discovered another efficient. He was at the wheel, a small, well-knit, muscular man of say forty-five, with black hair graying on the temples, a big eagle-face, swarthy, with keen, intelligent black eyes.

Mr. Mellaire vindicated my judgment by telling me the man was the best sailor in his watch, a proper seaman. When he referred to the man as the Maltese Cockney, and I asked why, he replied:

"First, because he is Maltese, Mr. Pathurst; and next, because

he talks Cockney like a native. And depend upon it, he heard Bow Bells before he lisped his first word.”

“And has O’Sullivan bought Andy Fay’s sea-boots yet?” I queried.

It was at this moment that Miss West emerged upon the poop. She was as rosy and vital as ever, and certainly, if she had been sea-sick, she flew no signals of it. As she came toward me, greeting me, I could not help remarking again the lithe and springy limb-movement with which she walked, and her fine, firm skin. Her neck, free in a sailor collar, with white sweater open at the throat, seemed almost redoubtably strong to my sleepless, jaundiced eyes. Her hair, under a white knitted cap, was smooth and well-groomed. In fact, the totality of impression she conveyed was of a well-groomedness one would not expect of a sea-captain’s daughter, much less of a woman who had been sea-sick. Life! – that is the key of her, the essential note of her – life and health. I’ll wager she has never entertained a morbid thought in that practical, balanced, sensible head of hers.

“And how have you been?” she asked, then rattled on with sheer exuberance ere I could answer. “Had a lovely night’s sleep. I was really over my sickness yesterday, but I just devoted myself to resting up. I slept ten solid hours – what do you think of that?”

“I wish I could say the same,” I replied with appropriate dejection, as I swung in beside her, for she had evinced her intention of promenading.

“Oh, then you’ve been sick?”

“On the contrary,” I answered dryly. “And I wish I had been. I haven’t had five hours’ sleep all told since I came on board. These pestiferous hives.. ”

I held up a lumpy wrist to show. She took one glance at it, halted abruptly, and, neatly balancing herself to the roll, took my wrist in both her hands and gave it close scrutiny.

“Mercy!” she cried; and then began to laugh.

I was of two minds. Her laughter was delightful to the ear, there was such a mellowness, and healthiness, and frankness about it. On the other hand, that it should be directed at my misfortune was exasperating. I suppose my perplexity showed in my face, for when she had eased her laughter and looked at me with a sobering countenance, she immediately went off into more peals.

“You poor child,” she gurgled at last. “And when I think of all the cream of tartar I made you consume!”

It was rather presumptuous of her to poor-child me, and I resolved to take advantage of the data I already possessed in order to ascertain just how many years she was my junior. She had told me she was twelve years old the time the *Dixie* collided with the river steamer in San Francisco Bay. Very well, all I had to do was to ascertain the date of that disaster and I had her. But in the meantime she laughed at me and my hives.

“I suppose it is – er – humorous, in some sort of way,” I said a bit stiffly, only to find that there was no use in being stiff with Miss West, for it only set her off into more laughter.

“What you needed,” she announced, with fresh gurglings, “was an exterior treatment.”

“Don’t tell me I’ve got the chicken-pox or the measles,” I protested.

“No.” She shook her head emphatically while she enjoyed another paroxysm. “What you are suffering from is a severe attack..”

She paused deliberately, and looked me straight the eyes.

“Of bedbugs,” she concluded. And then, all seriousness and practicality, she went on: “But we’ll have that righted in a jiffy. I’ll turn the *Elsinore’s* after-quarters upside down, though I know there are none in father’s room or mine. And though this is my first voyage with Mr. Pike I know he’s too hard-bitten” (here I laughed at her involuntary pun) “an old sailor not to know that his room is clean. Yours” (I was perturbed for fear she was going to say that I had brought them on board) “have most probably drifted in from for’ard. They always have them for’ard.

“And now, Mr. Pathurst, I am going down to attend to your case. You’d better get your Wada to make up a camping kit for you. The next couple of nights you’ll spend in the cabin or chart-room. And be sure Wada removes all silver and metallic tarnishable stuff from your rooms. There’s going to be all sorts of fumigating, and tearing out of woodwork, and rebuilding. Trust me. I know the vermin.”

CHAPTER XIV

Such a cleaning up and turning over! For two nights, one in the chart-room and one on the cabin sofa, I have soaked myself in sleep, and I am now almost stupid with excess of sleep. The land seems very far away. By some strange quirk, I have an impression that weeks, or months, have passed since I left Baltimore on that bitter March morning. And yet it was March 28, and this is only the first week in April.

I was entirely right in my first estimation of Miss West. She is the most capable, practically masterful woman I have ever encountered. What passed between her and Mr. Pike I do not know; but whatever it was, she was convinced that he was not the erring one. In some strange way, my two rooms are the only ones which have been invaded by this plague of vermin. Under Miss West's instructions bunks, drawers, shelves, and all superficial woodwork have been ripped out. She worked the carpenter from daylight till dark, and then, after a night of fumigation, two of the sailors, with turpentine and white lead, put the finishing touches on the cleansing operations. The carpenter is now busy rebuilding my rooms. Then will come the painting, and in two or three more days I expect to be settled back in my quarters.

Of the men who did the turpentinng and white-leading there have been four. Two of them were quickly rejected by Miss West as not being up to the work. The first one, Steve Roberts, which

he told me was his name, is an interesting fellow. I talked with him quite a bit ere Miss West sent him packing and told Mr. Pike that she wanted a real sailor.

This is the first time Steve Roberts has ever seen the sea. How he happened to drift from the western cattle-ranges to New York he did not explain, any more than did he explain how he came to ship on the *Elsinore*

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