Henty George Alfred

Maori and Settler: A Story of The New Zealand War

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Henty G.

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Содержание

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CHAPTER I
A HOME BROKEN UP

WELL, mother, one thing is certain – something has got to be done. It is no use crying over spilt milk, that I can see. It is a horribly bad business, but grieving over it won't make it any better. What one has got to do is to decide on some plan or other, and then set to work to carry it out."

The speaker, Wilfrid Renshaw, was a boy between fifteen and sixteen years old. He was standing with his back to an empty fireplace, his feet well apart, his hands deep in his pockets. He was rather short for his age, but very squarely built. His hair was dark, cut rather short, and so ruffled over his head that there were no signs of a parting; his eyebrows were heavy, his eyes bright but rather deeply set; his chin was square and his jaw heavy; his nose was a little upturned, and this together with his eyes gave a merry expression to a face that would otherwise have been heavy and stern.

At school Wilfrid Renshaw had been regarded as rather a queer fellow. He was full of quiet fun, and saw a humorous side in everything. He did not take a very leading part in the various school sports, though there was a general idea that if Renshaw only chose to exert himself he could excel in any of them. In point of actual strength, although there were several boys in the school older than himself, it was generally admitted that he was by far the strongest there. But he always went his own way and always knew his own mind, and when he had once given his decision every one knew that it was of no use attempting to alter it; indeed, his reputation for obstinacy was so great that when he had once said "I won't" or "I will," no one ever attempted to argue with him.

He was given to long walks and to collecting insects or flowers. He could never be persuaded to make one of the cricket eleven; but in winter, when there was little scope for his favourite pursuit, he threw himself into football; and although he absolutely refused to accept the captaincy when unanimously elected to that honour, he was considered by far the most valuable member of the team. He was scarcely popular among the boys of his own age; for although his fun and general good temper were appreciated by them, his determination to go his own way, and his entire disregard for the opinion of others, caused him to be considered an unsociable sort of fellow, an impression increased by the fact that he had no particular chums.

Among the smaller boys he was greatly liked. He would never allow any bullying when he was present; and although his interference was often resented by some of the elders, his reputation for strength and obstinacy was so great that he had never been called upon to take active measures to support his decisively expressed opinions. His father lived in a pretty house a quarter of a mile outside Reading; and as Wilfrid attended the grammar-school there, he was much more free to indulge his own tastes and go his own way than if he had been in a boarding-school. His chief companion in his rambles was his only sister Marion, who was a year his senior, although strangers would not have taken her to be so, either from her appearance or manner. She had an active lithe figure, and was able to keep up with him even during his longest excursions. They were in fact great chums and allies, and Marion would have indignantly scouted the idea had anyone suggested to her that her brother was either obstinate or unsociable.

Mr. Renshaw had been intended for the bar, and had indeed been called to that profession; but shortly afterwards he came into a fortune at the death of his father, and at once abandoned all idea of practising. After travelling for a few years on the Continent and in the East, he married and

settled down near Reading. His time was for the most part devoted to archæology. He had a rare collection of ancient British, Saxon, and Norman arms, ornaments, and remains of all sorts; had written several books on the antiquities of Berkshire and Oxfordshire; was an authority upon tumuli and stone weapons; and was regarded by his acquaintances as a man of much learning.

The management of the house and children, and indeed of all affairs unconnected with his favourite hobby, he left to his wife, who was, fortunately for him, a clear-headed and sensible woman. Mr. Renshaw was, in fact, an eminently impractical man, weak and easy in disposition, averse to exertion of any kind, and without a shadow of the decision of character that distinguished his son. Except when away upon antiquarian excursions he passed his time entirely in his own study, engaged upon a work which, he anticipated, would gain for him a very high position among the antiquarians of the country, the subject being the exact spot at which Julius Cæsar landed in Britain.

He made his appearance only at meal-times, and then paid but little attention to what was going on around him, although he was kind to his children in a gentle indifferent sort of way. For many years he had been engaged in making up his mind as to the school to which Wilfrid should be sent; and the boy had at first only been sent to the grammar-school at the suggestion of his mother as a temporary measure until the important decision should be arrived at. This had been six years before, and Mr. Renshaw had postponed his decision until it was too late for Wilfrid to enter at any of the great public schools.

Knowing from long experience what would be the result were he consulted as to Marion's education, Mrs. Renshaw had, when the girl was nine years old, engaged a governess for her without any previous consultation with her husband, simply telling him of the arrangement after it was concluded, saying: "I know, Alfred, that you have not yet decided whether an education at home or at school is best for a girl, and I have consequently arranged with a young lady to come as governess until you can come to a conclusion upon the point."

Wilfrid Renshaw was extremely fond of his mother. His father he regarded with a somewhat contemptuous kind of affection. He did not doubt that he was a very learned man, but he had small patience with his inability to make up his mind, his total want of energy, and his habit of leaving everything for his wife to decide upon and carry out.

"It would do father an immense deal of good if something were to happen that would wake him up a bit and get him to take an interest in things," he had said over and over again to Marion. "I cannot understand a man having no opinion of his own about anything."

"I do not think you ought to speak in that sort of way, Wil, about father."

"Oh, that is all nonsense, Marion. One cannot be blind about a person even if he is one's own father. Of course he is very kind and very indulgent, but it would be very much pleasanter if he were so because he wished to give us pleasure, instead of because it is the easiest thing to do. I should be downright pleased if sometimes when I ask him for anything he would say positively I could not have it."

Now the something that Wilfrid had hoped might occur to rouse his father had taken place, and had come in a form very unpleasantly violent and unexpected. The papers a week before had brought the news of the failure of the bank in which the greater portion of Mr. Renshaw's property was invested, and a letter had the following morning been received from a brother of Mrs. Renshaw, who was also a shareholder in the bank, saying that the liabilities were very large, and that the shareholders would undoubtedly be called upon to pay even their last penny to make up the deficiency. This news had been confirmed, and there could be no doubt absolute ruin had fallen upon them.

Mr. Renshaw had been completely overwhelmed by the tidings, and had taken to his bed. Wilfrid's holidays had begun a few days before, and his mother at once acquainted him with the misfortune that had befallen them, and she now told him that the calls that would be made upon the shares would more than swallow up the rest of their fortune.

"There will be absolutely nothing remaining, Wilfrid, except a thousand pounds that I had at my marriage, and which were fortunately settled upon me. This cannot be touched. Everything else will have to go."

"Well, it's a bad business, mother. I will go for a walk and think it over. Marion, put on your hat and come out with me."

They had been for their walk – a long one, and he was now expressing the result at which they had arrived.

"One thing is certain – something has got to be done."

"Yes," Mrs. Renshaw replied with a faint smile. "The question is, What is it?"

"Well, mother, it is quite certain that we four cannot live on the interest of a thousand pounds unless we go into a hovel and live on bread and water."

"I quite see that, Wilfrid; but I am sure I do not see how we are to earn money. It is far too late for your father to go back to the bar now, and it might be years before he got a brief. At any rate, we could not afford to live in London till he does so. I have been thinking I might open a little school somewhere."

"No, mother, you are not going to take us all on to your shoulders. You have got to look after father; that will be a full share of the work, I am sure. Marion and I have been talking it over, and the only possible thing we can see is for us to emigrate."

"To emigrate!" Mrs. Renshaw repeated in astonishment. "Why, my dear boy, what should we be fit for in the colonies more than here?"

"A good deal, mother. A thousand pounds is nothing here, and it would be a good deal out there. It would be horrible to come down to live in a little cottage like working people here, after living like this; but it would be nothing out there. We could buy land for next to nothing in New Zealand, and could employ a couple of men to work with me to clear it and cultivate it; and get a few cows and sheep to start with, and still have a little money in hand. You and Marion could look after things indoors; I should look after things out of doors."

"You don't seem to count your father at all," Mrs. Renshaw said a little reproachfully.

"No, mother, I don't," Wilfrid said bluntly. "You know as well as I do that father would be of no use to speak of in a life like that. Still, I think he could make himself happy out there as well as here. He could take all his books with him, and could inquire into the manners and customs of the natives, who are every bit as good as the ancient Britons; better, I should say. But whatever we do, mother, whether it is here or anywhere else, we must settle upon it and do it. Of course we must consult him; but we must quite make up our minds before we do so. If you wait a few weeks for father to make up his mind what we had better do, we shall wait till this thousand pounds is spent and there is nothing to do but to go into the workhouse.

"I am sure that my plan is the best for us. I am as strong as a great many men; and anyhow, out there, there ought to be no fear about our keeping ourselves. I have no doubt that when we get out there father will be able to help in many ways, though I do not know at present what they are. Anyhow, we shall have a house to live in, even if it is only a log hut, and I have no doubt have plenty to eat and drink; and that is more than we shall do if we stay here. I could not earn anything to speak of here: the most I could expect to get would be ten shillings a week as an office-boy. And as to your idea of a school, you might be years before you got pupils; and, besides, when there are two men in a family it would be shameful to depend upon a woman to keep them."

"Why do you think of New Zealand more than Canada, Wil?"

"Because, in the first place, the climate is a great deal pleasanter, and, in the second place, I believe that as the passage-money is higher the emigrants are of a better class, and we are likely to have more pleasant neighbours – people that you and father can associate with – than we should have if we went to a backwood clearing in Canada. Tom Fairfax has an uncle in New Zealand, and I have heard him say there are lots of officers in the army and people of that sort who have settled there. Of

course I know it is going to be hard work, and that it will be very rough for you and father when we land at first, but I expect it will be better after a time; and anyhow, mother, I do not think we can starve there, and I feel sure that it will come to that if we stop here. At any rate, you had better think it over.

"Of course if you hit on anything better I shall be ready to agree at once; but whatever it is we must quite make up our minds together and then tell father. But when we do tell him we shall have to say that we are quite convinced that the plan we have fixed on is the only one that offers a hope of success. Of course I do not expect that he will see it as we do, but if we put it that if he can suggest anything better to be done we will set about it at once, I think he's pretty certain to let things go on as we arrange. I do not mean to speak disrespectfully of father," he went on seeing that his mother's face was a little clouded "but you know, mother, that people who are learned, scientific, and all that sort of thing are very often bad hands at everyday matters. Sir Isaac Newton, and lots of other fellows I have read about, were like that; and though father is a splendid hand at anything to do with the Britons or Danes, and can tell you the story of every old ruin in the kingdom, he is no good about practical matters. So that we take all the trouble off his hands, I think he will be quite ready to agree to do whatever you think is the best. At any rate, mother, I think my plan is well worth thinking over, and the sooner we make up our minds the better; after all it is a great thing having something to look forward to and plan about."

Three or four days later Mrs. Renshaw told Wilfrid that think as she would she could see no better plan for utilizing her little capital than for them to emigrate.

"It is putting great responsibility on your shoulders, my boy," she said; "for I do not disguise from myself that it is upon you that we must principally depend. Still you will be sixteen by the time we can arrive there, and I think we should be able to manage. Besides, as you say, we can hire a man or two to help, and shall have some money to fall back upon until things begin to pay. There are plenty of women who manage even without the assistance of a son, and I do not know why I should not be able to get on with you and Marion to help me, especially as farming is a comparatively simple business, in a new country. At any rate, as you say, with two or three cows and plenty of ducks and hens, and what we can grow on the ground, there will be no fear of our starving."

The next day Mr. Renshaw came downstairs for the first time since he had heard of the misfortune. He had received a letter that morning saying that a call was at once to be made on each shareholder for the amount still standing on each share, and this sum was in itself more than he could meet even after the sale of his house and its contents. He was in a state of profound depression. He had, while upstairs, been endeavouring to think of some means of supporting his family, but had been wholly unable to think of any plan whatever. He knew that at his age he should find it next to impossible to obtain employment, even as a clerk at the lowest salary; his knowledge of archæology would be absolutely useless to him, for the books he had already published had not even paid the expenses of printing.

Few words were spoken at breakfast, but when the meal was finished Mrs. Renshaw began: "My dear Alfred, Wilfrid and I have been talking over what we had better do under the circumstances. I have told him that the failure of the bank involves the loss of all our property, that the house will have to be sold, and that, in fact, there remains nothing but the thousand pounds of my settlement. We have talked it over in every light, and have quite arrived at the conclusion as to what we think the best thing to be done if you see matters in the same light and will consent to our plan. I had at first thought of starting a little school."

"I would never agree to that," Mr. Renshaw said; "never. I must do something, my dear, though I have not made up my mind in what direction. But whatever it is, it is for me to work, and not for you."

"Well, we have already given up the idea," Mrs. Renshaw went on. "Wilfrid was sure that you would not like it, and, as he pointed out, the money might be spent before I could obtain sufficient pupils to pay. Besides, he is anxious to be of use; but the difficulty struck us of obtaining any kind of remunerative work here."

"That is what I have been thinking," Mr. Renshaw said. "I shall be willing to work at anything in my power, but I don't see what possible work I can get."

"Quite so, my dear. In this country it is of course terribly difficult for anyone to get employment unless he has been trained in some particular line, therefore Wil and I are agreed that the very best plan, indeed the only plan we can think of, is for us to go out to a new country. My little money will take us to New Zealand, buy a good-sized piece of land there, and suffice to enable us to clear it and stock it to some extent. The life will no doubt be rough for us all for a time; but none of us will care for that, and at any rate we are sure to be able to keep the wolf from the door."

"To New Zealand!" Mr. Renshaw repeated aghast. "That is a terrible undertaking. Besides, I know nothing whatever about farming, and I fear that I am quite unfit for hard work."

"I do not think it will be at all necessary for you to work yourself, Alfred. Of course we can hire men there just as we can in England. I believe the natives are willing to work at very low rates of pay, so we need have no difficulty on that score. Wilfrid is growing up now, and will soon be able to relieve you of all responsibility, and then you will be able to devote yourself to your favourite studies; and I should think that a book from your hand upon native manners and customs would be sure to be a great success. Accustomed as you are to tracing things up from small remains, and with your knowledge of primitive peoples, your work would be very different from those written by men without any previous acquaintance with such matters."

"The idea certainly pleases me," Mr. Renshaw said; "but, of course, I shall want time to think over your startling proposal, Helen."

"Of course, my dear. In the meantime we will go on packing up and preparing to move at once from here, as you say that there must be a sale of everything; then you can think the matter over, and if you decide upon any better scheme than ours we can carry that out. If not, we shall be ready to put ours into execution."

The next month was a busy one. There was great sympathy evinced by all the Renshaw's neighbours and acquaintances when it was heard that their whole fortune was swept away by the failure of the bank. There were farewell visits to be paid, not only to these, but to their poorer neighbours. In answer to inquiries as to their plans, Mr. Renshaw always replied that at present nothing whatever was settled. Mrs. Renshaw hinted that, although their plans were not definitely fixed, she thought it probable that they would go abroad; while Wilfrid and Marion both informed their friends confidently that they were going to New Zealand.

The work of packing went on. A few articles of furniture that were special favourites with them all were packed up and sent to be warehoused in London, in order that they might some day be forwarded to them when they had made themselves a home; but nothing else was taken beyond their clothes, a good selection of books for their general reading, a large box of those which Mr. Renshaw declared absolutely indispensable to himself, and a few nick-nacks specially prized. Everything else was handed over for sale for the benefit of the creditors of the bank. During these weeks Mr. Renshaw continued to speak as if he regarded the New Zealand project as wholly impracticable, and on each occasion when he did so his wife replied cheerfully: "Well, my dear, we are in no way wedded to it, and are quite ready to give it up and adopt any plan you may decide upon. The matter is entirely in your hands."

But Mr. Renshaw could hit upon no other scheme; and, indeed, his wife's suggestion as to a book on the natives of New Zealand had much taken his fancy. Certainly he, a trained antiquarian, should be able to produce a book upon such a subject that would be of vastly greater value than those written by settlers and others having no training whatever that would qualify them for such work. It was probable that he should be able to throw some entirely new light upon the origin and history of the Maoris or natives of New Zealand, and that his book would greatly add to his reputation, and would sell well. Really the idea was not such a very bad one, and, for himself, he should certainly

prefer a life in a new country to shabby lodgings in some out-of-the-way place, after having for so many years been a personage of importance in his own neighbourhood.

"I see one great objection to your scheme, Helen, and that is that there is a war going on with the Maoris."

"I know there is," Mrs. Renshaw, who had talked the matter over with Wilfrid, replied; "but it is confined to two or three of the tribes, and the settlers in other parts have been in no way disturbed. The troops have taken most of their strongholds, and the troubles are considered to be approaching an end; therefore I do not think there is any occasion to be uneasy on that score. Besides, in some respects the trouble will be advantageous, as we should probably be able to buy land cheaper than we otherwise should have done, and the land will rapidly rise in value again when the disturbances are over. But, of course, we should not go to the disturbed districts. These are round Auckland and New Plymouth, and the troubles are confined to the tribes there. Everything is perfectly peaceable along the other parts of the coast."

It was not until two or three days before the move was to be made from the house that Mrs. Renshaw recurred to the subject.

"You have not said yet, Alfred, what plans you have decided upon. As we shall leave here in three days it is quite time that we made up our minds about it, as, of course, our movements must depend on your decision. If you have fixed upon any place for us to settle down in, it would be cheaper for us to move there at once instead of wasting money by going up to London first. Another reason I have for asking is, that Robert and William Grimstone, the gardener's sons, who have got an idea from something Wilfrid said to them that we might be going abroad, have asked him to ask you if you would take them with you. They have been working in the garden under their father for the last two or three years, and are strong active young fellows of nineteen and twenty. As their father has worked here ever since we came, and we have known the young fellows since they were children, such an arrangement would have been a very pleasant one had you liked my plan of emigrating, as it would have been much more agreeable having two young fellows we knew with us instead of strangers. Of course I told Wilfrid to tell them that nothing whatever was settled, and that our plans were not in any way formed, and that they had better, therefore, look out for situations about here, and that I was sure you would give them good letters of recommendation."

Mr. Renshaw was silent. "I really do not see that there is any occasion to come to a decision in a hurry," he said irritably.

"Not in a hurry, Alfred," his wife said quietly. "You see, we have had a month to think it over, and I do not see that we shall be more likely to settle upon an advantageous scheme at the end of six months than we are now. From the day we leave here and hand over everything to the receiver of the bank we shall be drawing on our little capital, and every pound is of importance. I think, therefore, Alfred, that you and I should make up our minds before we leave here as to what course we are going to adopt. As I have said, I myself see no scheme by which we are likely to be able to maintain ourselves in England, even in a very humble way. A life in the colonies would, to me, be very much more pleasant than the struggle to make ends meet here.

"It would afford an opening for Wilfrid, and be vastly more advantageous for him than anything we should hope to get for him here; and I think it will be far better for Marion too. Of course, if we decided to emigrate, we could, should you prefer it, go to Canada, Australia, or the United States in preference to New Zealand. I only incline to New Zealand because I have heard that there is a larger proportion of officers and gentlemen there than in other colonies, and because I believe that the climate is a particularly pleasant one. But, of course, this is merely a suggestion at present, and it is for you to decide."

"If we are to emigrate at all," Mr. Renshaw replied, "I should certainly prefer New Zealand myself. The Maoris are a most interesting people. Their origin is a matter of doubt, their customs and religion are peculiar, and I have no doubt that I should, after studying them, be able to throw

much new and valuable light upon the subject. Personally, I am sure that I am in no way fitted for the life of a settler. I know nothing of farming, and could neither drive a plough nor wield an axe; but if I could make the native subject my own, I might probably be able to do my share towards our expenses by my books, while Wilfrid could look after the men. The offer of these two young fellows to go with us has removed several of my objections to the plan, and I agree with you that it would be more advantageous for Wilfrid and Marion than to be living in wretched lodgings. Therefore, my dear, I have decided to fall in with your plan, and only hope that it will turn out as well as you seem to expect. It will be a great change and a great trial; but since you seem to have set your heart upon it, I am willing to adopt your plans instead of my own, and we will therefore consider it settled that we will go to New Zealand."

Mrs. Renshaw was too wise a woman to point out that her husband had not, so far as she was aware, any plans whatever of his own, and she contented herself by saying quietly: "I am glad you have decided so, my dear. I do think it is the best thing for us all, and I am quite sure it is the best for Wilfrid and Marion. If it had not been for them I should have said let us take a tiny cottage near some town where I might add to our income by giving lessons in music or other things, and you might have the companionship of people of your own tastes; but, being as it is, I think it far better to give them a start in a new country, although I know that such a life as we shall lead there must entail, at any rate at first, some hardships, and the loss of much to which we have been accustomed."

Wilfrid and Marion were delighted when they heard from their mother that the matter was settled. Both had had great hopes that Wilfrid's scheme would be finally accepted, as there did not seem any other plan that was possible. Still Wilfrid knew the difficulty that his father would have in making up his mind, and feared there might be a long delay before he could bring himself to accept the plan proposed to him. Mrs. Renshaw, who was a good business woman, lost no time in arranging with Robert and William Grimstone as to their accompanying them. Their passage-money was to be paid, and they were to bind themselves to remain for three years in Mr. Renshaw's service on wages similar to those they would have obtained at home; after that, they were to be paid whatever might be the colonial rate of wages.

The excitement that the prospect of emigration caused to the young people lessened their pain at leaving the house where they had been born and brought up, with all its pleasant associations and material comforts. It was, however, very trying to them when they bade good-bye for the last time to their surroundings and shook hands with their old servants.

"If ever we get rich in New Zealand, father," Wilfrid said, "we will come back and buy the house again."

Mr. Renshaw shook his head. Just at present he was disposed to regard himself as a martyr, and considered that he had made an unprecedented sacrifice of his own wishes and comforts for the sake of his children, and that no good could be expected to arise from the plan to which he had consented. A good many friends had gathered at the station to say good-bye, and it was some time after the train had started on its way to London before any of the party felt themselves inclined to speak.

On arriving in town they went at once to lodgings they had engaged in Eastbourne Terrace, facing the station. Once settled there, no time was lost in making preparations for their voyage. The files of the advertisements had already been searched and the names of the vessels sailing for New Zealand and the addresses of their owners noted, and after paying a visit to several shipping offices the choice of vessels remained at last between the *Flying Scud* and the *Mayflower*. They were vessels of about the same size, both bore a good reputation as sailers, and they heard excellent accounts of the captains who commanded them.

The *Mayflower* was to sail direct to Wellington round the Cape. The *Flying Scud* was taking in cargo for Rio and Buenos-Ayres, and would proceed thence via Cape Horn. Her rates of passage were somewhat lower than those of the *Mayflower*, as the route via the Cape of Good Hope was that more generally used, and the number of passengers who had secured berths by her were very

much smaller than those who intended to travel by the *Mayflower*. It was this that principally decided them in choosing the western route; Mr. Renshaw was in a depressed and nervous state, and his wife considered that he would be far more comfortable with a comparatively small number of fellow-passengers than in a crowded ship.

Marion quite agreed with her mother; and Wilfrid was also in favour of the *Flying Scud*, as he thought it would be pleasant to break the passage by putting into the great South American ports and getting a glimpse of their inhabitants. Mr. Renshaw himself was quite satisfied to accept his wife's decision, whatever it might be. The *Flying Scud* was therefore selected, and passages for the party secured in her.

CHAPTER II
THE EMBARKATION

The *Flying Scud* was to sail in ten days; and this was ample time for their preparations, for Mrs. Renshaw wisely decided that it was better to buy all that was requisite for starting their new life, in New Zealand.

"We have none of us the least idea what will be required," she said. "It will be far better to pay somewhat higher prices for what we really do want out there than to cumber ourselves with all sorts of things that may be useless to us. We have already a considerable amount of baggage. There are our clothes, linen, and books, your father's two double-barrelled guns, which, by the way, I do not think he has ever used since we have been married. The only thing we had better get, as far as I see, will be four rifles, which no doubt we can buy cheap second-hand, and four revolvers.

"I do not for a moment suppose we shall ever want to use them, but as we may be often left in the house alone I think it would be pleasant to know that we are not altogether defenceless. We had better lay in a good stock of ammunition for all these weapons. Besides the clothes we have we had better get serge dresses and suits for the voyage, and a few strong servicable gowns and suits for rough work out there. Beyond this I do not think that we need spend a penny. We can certainly get everything we shall want for our new life at Wellington, which is a large place."

On the morning of the day on which they were to embark the Grimstones came up from Reading. All the heavy luggage had been sent on board ship on the previous day, and at twelve o'clock two cabs drove up to the side of the *Flying Scud* in St. Catherine's Docks. The one contained Mr. and Mrs. Renshaw, Marion, and a vast quantity of small packets inside. Wilfrid was on the box with the driver, and the roof was piled high with luggage. The other cab contained the two Grimstones and the rest of the luggage. The Renshaws were already acquainted with the ship in which they were to sail, having paid her a visit four days previously to see their cabins. The parents had a comfortable cabin to themselves. Marion was berthed in a cabin with two other ladies, who, she learned, were sisters, the elder about her own age, and Wilfrid found he would have but one fellow-passenger. The Grimstones were in the steerage forward.

The vessel was in a state of bustle, and what to the travellers seemed confusion. Numbers of other passengers were arriving, and the deck was littered with, their luggage until it could be sorted and sent down to their cabins; late cargo was being swung on board and lowered into the hold. On the deck aft were gathered the cabin passengers, with relatives and friends who had come to see them off. An hour later the bell rang as a signal for all visitors to go ashore. There were sad partings both fore and aft as the bell clanged out its impatient signal.

"I am very glad, mother, that we have no friends to say good-bye to us here, and that we got that all over at Reading."

"So am I, Wil. I think it much better myself that these partings should be got through before people leave home. It is natural of course that relatives and friends should like to see the last of each other, but I think it is a cruel kindness, and am glad, as you say, that we had no dear friends in London. Those at home have already shown their thoughtfulness and friendship." For indeed during the last few days hampers of presents of all kinds had arrived in a steady flow at Eastbourne Terrace. There had been great feeling of commiseration among all their acquaintances at the misfortune that had befallen the Renshaws; and the manner in which they had at once surrendered everything for the benefit of the shareholders of the bank, and the calmness with which they had borne their reverses, had excited admiration, and scarce a friend or acquaintance but sent substantial tokens of their good-will or sympathy.

As soon as it was publicly known that the Renshaws were about to sail for New Zealand, the boys and masters of the grammar-school between them subscribed and sent a handsome double-barrelled gun, a fishing-rod, and all appurtenances, to Wilfrid. Mr. Renshaw received two guns, several fishing-rods, two crates of crockery, and several cases of portable furniture of various kinds, besides many small articles. Mrs. Renshaw was presented with a stove of the best construction and a crate full of utensils of every kind, while Marion had work-boxes and desks sufficient to stock a school, two sets of garden tools, and innumerable nick-nacks likely to be more or less useful to her in her new life. Besides these there were several boxes of books of standard literature.

"Every one is very kind," Mrs. Renshaw said as the crates and hampers arrived; "but if it goes on like this we shall have to charter a ship to ourselves, and how we are to move about there when we get out with all these things I have not the least idea."

At last the good-byes were all finished, the visitors had left the ship, the hawsers were thrown off, and the vessel began to move slowly towards the dock gates. As soon as she had issued through these she was seized by a tug, and proceeded in tow down the crowded river. There was a last waving of handkerchiefs and hats to the group of people standing at the entrance to the docks, and then the passengers began to look round and examine each other and the ship. Sailors were hard at work – the last bales and boxes were being lowered into the hold, ropes were being coiled up, and tidiness restored to the deck. Parties of seamen were aloft loosening some of the sails, for the wind was favourable, and the captain had ordered some of the canvas to be set to assist the tug.

"Now, Marion," Mrs. Renshaw said, "we had better go below and tidy up things a bit. Wil, you may as well come down and help me get the trunks stowed away under the berths, and put some hooks in for the brush-bags and other things we have brought; the hooks and gimlet are in my hand-bag."

Wilfrid assisted to set his mother's cabin in order, and then went to his own. It was a good-sized cabin, and when the ship was full accommodated four passengers; but the two upper bunks had now been taken down, and there was, Wilfrid thought, ample room for two. On his own bunk were piled his two portmanteaus, a gun-case, a bundle of fishing-rods, and other odds and ends, and a somewhat similar collection of luggage was on that opposite. Wilfred read the name on the labels. "Atherton," he said; "I wonder what he is like. I do hope he will be a nice fellow."

Scarcely had the thought passed through his mind when a figure appeared at the cabin door. It was that of a tall stout man, with immensely broad shoulders. His age Wilfrid guessed to be about thirty-five. He had a pleasant face, and there was a humorous twinkle in his eye as the lad looked round in astonishment at the figure completely blocking up the doorway.

"So you are Renshaw?" the big man said. "I congratulate myself and you that your dimensions are not of the largest. My name is Atherton, as I daresay you have seen on my luggage. Suppose we shake hands, Renshaw? It is just as well to make friends at once, as we have got to put up with each other for the next five or six months. Of course you are a little appalled at my size," he went on, as he shook hands with the lad. "Most people are at first, but nobody is so much appalled as I am myself. Still it has its amusing side, you know. I don't often get into an omnibus, because I do not think it is fair; but if I am driven to do so, and there happen to be five people on each side, the expression of alarm on those ten faces when I appear at the door is a picture, because it is manifestly impossible that they can make room for me on either side."

"What do you do, sir?" Wilfrid asked laughing.

"I ask one of them to change sides. That leaves two places vacant, and as I make a point of paying for two, we get on comfortably enough. It is fortunate there are only two of us in this cabin. If I have the bad luck to travel in a full ship I always wait until the others are in bed before I turn in, and get up in the morning before they are astir; but I think you and I can manage pretty comfortably."

"Then you have travelled a good deal, sir?" Wilfrid said.

"I am always travelling," the other replied. "I am like the fidgetty Phil of the story-book, who could never keep still. Most men of my size are content to take life quietly, but that is not so with

me. For the last twelve or thirteen years I have been always on the move, and I ought to be worn down to a thread paper; but unfortunately, as you see, that is not the effect of travel in my case. I suppose you are going out to settle?"

"Yes, sir. I have my father, mother, and sister on board."

"Lucky fellow!" Mr. Atherton said; "I have no relations worth speaking of."

"Are you going to settle at last, sir?" Wilfrid asked.

"No, I am going out to botanize. I have a mania for botany, and New Zealand, you know, is in that respect one of the most remarkable regions in the world, and it has not yet been explored with anything approaching accuracy. It is a grand field for discovery, and there are special points of interest connected with it, as it forms a sort of connecting link between the floras of Australia, Asia, and South America, and has a flora of its own entirely distinct from any of these. Now let me advise you as to the stowing away of your traps. There is a good deal of knack in these things. Have you got your portmanteaus packed so that one contains all the things you are likely to require for say the first month of your voyage, and the other as a reserve to be drawn on occasionally? because, if not, I should advise you to take all the things out and to arrange them in that way. It will take you a little time, perhaps, but will save an immense amount of trouble throughout the voyage."

Wilfrid had packed his trunks with things as they came to hand, but he saw the advantage of following his fellow-passenger's advice, and accordingly opened his portmanteaus and piled the whole of their contents upon his berth. He then repacked them, Mr. Atherton sitting down on his berth and giving his advice as to the trunk in which each article should be placed.

The work of rearrangement occupied half-an-hour, and Wilfrid often congratulated himself during the voyage upon the time so spent. When all was complete and the cabin arranged tidily, Wilfrid looked in at the next cabin. This was occupied by two young men of the name of Allen. They were friends of an acquaintance of Mr. Renshaw, who, hearing that they were journeying by the same ship to New Zealand, had brought them down to Eastbourne Terrace and introduced them to Mr. Renshaw and his family. The two were occupied in arranging their things in the cabin.

"Well, Renshaw," James, the elder of them, said when he entered, "I am afraid I cannot congratulate you on your fellow-passenger. We saw him go into your cabin. He is a tremendous man. He would be magnificent if he were not so stout. Why, you will scarce find room to move!"

"He is a capital fellow," Wilfrid said. "I think we shall get on splendidly together. He is full of fun, and makes all sorts of jokes about his own size. He has travelled a tremendous lot, and is up to everything. He is nothing like so old as you would think, if you have not seen his face. I do not think he is above thirty-five or so. Well, as I see you have just finished, I will go up and see how we are getting on."

When Wilfrid reached the deck he found the vessel was off Erith, and was greeted by his sister.

"You silly boy, you have been missing the sight of all the shipping, and of Greenwich Hospital. The idea of stopping below all this time. I should have come to call you up if I had known which was your room."

"Cabin, you goose!" Wilfrid said; "the idea of talking of rooms on board a ship. I would have come up if I had thought of it; but I was so busy putting things to right and making the acquaintance of the gentleman in the cabin with me that I forgot altogether we were moving down the river."

"Which is he, Wilfrid?"

Wilfrid laughed and nodded in the direction of Mr. Atherton, who was standing with his back towards them a short distance away.

Marion's eyes opened wide.

"Oh, Wil, what a big man! He must quite fill up the cabin."

"He seems an awfully good fellow, Marion."

"I daresay he may be, Wil; but he will certainly take up more than his share of the cabin."

"It is awkward, isn't it, young lady?" Mr. Atherton said, suddenly turning round on his heel, to Marion's horror, while Wilfrid flushed scarlet, for he had not the least idea that his words could be heard. "I have capital hearing, you see," Mr. Atherton went on with a laugh, "and a very useful sense it is sometimes, and has stood me in good service upon many occasions, though I own that it effectually prevents my cherishing any illusion as to my personal appearance. This is your sister, of course, Renshaw; in fact, anyone could see that at a glance. There is nothing like making acquaintances early on the voyage; the first day is in that respect the most important of all."

"Why is that?" Marion asked.

"Because as a rule the order in which people sit down to table on the first day of the voyage is that in which they sit the whole time. Now, if one happens to sit one's self down by people who turn out disagreeable it is a very great nuisance, and therefore it is very important to find out a little about one's fellow-passengers the first day, so as to take a seat next to someone whom you are not likely to quarrel with before you have been a week at sea."

"Then they do not arrange places for you, Mr. Atherton?"

"Oh no; the captain perhaps settles as to who are to sit up by him. If there is anyone of special importance, a governor or vice-governor or any other big-wig, he and his wife, if he has got one, will probably sit next to the captain on one side, if not, he will choose someone who has been specially introduced to him or who has sailed with him before, and the steward, before the party sit down, puts their names on their plates; everyone else shifts for themselves. Renshaw, I shall be glad if you will introduce me to your father and mother, and if we get on well I will go down below and arrange that we get places together. I have been chatting with the first officer, who is a very pleasant fellow; I have sailed with him before. The rule is he sits at the end of the table facing the captain, and my experience is that when the first officer happens to be a good fellow, which is not always the case, his end of the table is the most pleasant place. There is generally more fun and laughing at that end than there is at the other; for all the people who fancy that they are of importance make a point of getting seats as near as they can to the captain, and important people are not, as a rule, anything like as pleasant as the rest of us."

Wilfrid walked across the deck with Mr. Atherton to the point where his father and mother were sitting. "Mother, this is Mr. Atherton, who is in my cabin." Mr. Atherton shook hands with Mr. and Mrs. Renshaw.

"I asked your son to introduce me at once, Mrs. Renshaw, because, as I have been telling him, a good deal of the comfort of the voyage depends upon making a snug little party to sit together at meals. There is nothing I dread more than being put down between two acidulated women, who make a point of showing by their manner every time one sits down that they consider one is taking up a great deal more than one's share of the seat."

Mrs. Renshaw smiled. "I should think people were not often as rude as that."

"I can assure you that it is the rule rather than the exception, Mrs. Renshaw. I am not a particularly sensitive man, I think; but I make a point of avoiding crowded railway-carriages, being unable to withstand the expression of blank dismay that comes over the faces of people when I present myself at the door. I have thought sometimes of hiring a little boy of about four years old to go about with me, as the two of us would then only take up a fair share of space. I have been looking to the cabin arrangements, and find that each seat holds three. Your son and daughter are neither of them bulky, so if they won't mind sitting a little close they will be conferring a genuine kindness upon me."

"We shall not mind at all," Wilfrid and Marion exclaimed together, for there was something so pleasant about Mr. Atherton's manner they felt that he would be a delightful companion.

"Very well, then; we will regard that as settled. Then we five will occupy the seats on one side of the chief officer."

"We will get the two Allens opposite," Wilfrid put in."

"I will look about for three others to make up what I may call our party. Who do you fancy, Mrs. Renshaw? Now look round and fix on somebody, and I will undertake the duty of engineering the business."

"There are two girls, sisters, in my cabin," Marion said. "I think they seem nice. They are going out alone to join their father and mother in New Zealand."

"In that case, Mrs. Renshaw, I had better leave the matter in your hands."

"That will be very simple, Mr. Atherton, as I have already spoken to them," and she at once got up and moved across to two girls of about thirteen and seventeen respectively, who were standing together watching the passing ships, and entered into conversation with them. When she proposed that, as they were in the same cabin with Marion, they should sit near each other at table, they gladly agreed, saying, however, that they had been placed under the special care of the captain, and as he had said that he would keep them under his eye, they were afraid he might want them to sit near him.

"I will speak to the captain myself," Mrs. Renshaw said. "I daresay he will be rather glad to have the responsibility taken off his hands, especially if I propose, which I will if you like, to take you under my general charge."

"Oh, we should like that very much," the elder of the two girls said. "It seems so very strange to us being here among so many people without any lady with us. We should be so much obliged to you if you would take us under your wing."

"I can quite understand your feelings, my dears, and will speak to the captain directly. I see that he is disengaged. If we were under sail there would not be much chance of getting a word with him; but as the tug has us in charge, I see that he has time to chat to the passengers."

A few minutes later the captain left the gentleman with whom he was speaking and came along the deck. The Renshaws had made his acquaintance when they first came down to see their cabins.

"How are you, Mrs. Renshaw?" he said as he came up to her. "We have fine weather for our start, have we not? It is a great thing starting fair, as it enables people to settle down and make themselves at home."

"I have been chatting with the Miss Mitfords, captain; they are in the cabin with my daughter. They tell me that they are under your special charge."

"Yes, they are among the number of my responsibilities," the captain said smiling.

"They naturally feel rather lonely on board from having no lady with them, and have expressed their willingness to put themselves under my charge if you will sanction it. It will be pleasant both for them and my daughter, and they can sit down with us at meals, and make a party together to work or read on deck."

"I shall be extremely glad, Mrs. Renshaw, if you will accept the responsibility. A captain's hands are full enough without having to look after women. There are four or five single ladies on board, on all of whom I have promised to keep a watchful eye, and I shall be delighted to be relieved of the responsibility of two of them."

So the matter was arranged, and going down into the cabin a few minutes before the bell rang for dinner, the party succeeded in getting the places they desired. Mr. Atherton was next to the chief officer. Wilfrid sat next to him, Marion between her brother and Mrs. Renshaw, and Mr. Renshaw next. The two Allens faced Mr. Atherton and Wilfrid; the Miss Mitfords came next, facing Marion and her mother. A Captain Pearson and his wife were next to the Mitfords, while a civil engineer, Mr. Halbrook, occupied the vacant seat next to Mr. Renshaw. Once seated, the Renshaws speedily congratulated themselves on the arrangements that they had made as they saw the hesitating way in which the rest of the passengers took their places, and the looks of inquiry and doubt they cast at those who seated themselves next to them. For a time the meal was a silent one, friends talking together in low voices, but nothing like a general conversation being attempted. At the first officers' end of the table, however, the sound of conversation and laughter began at once.

"Have you room, Miss Renshaw? or do you already begin to regret your bargain?"

"I have plenty of room, thank you," Marion replied. "I hope that you have enough?"

"Plenty," Mr. Atherton answered. "I have just been telling your brother that if he finds I am squeezing him he must run his elbow into my ribs. Let me see, Mr. Ryan; it must be three years since we sat together."

"Just about that," the mate replied with a strong Irish accent. "You went with us from Japan to Singapore, did you not?"

"That was it, and a rough bout we had of it in that cyclone in the China Seas. You remember that I saved the ship then?"

"How was that, Mr. Atherton?" Wilfrid asked.

The first officer laughed. "Mr. Atherton always took a deal more credit to himself than we gave him. When the cyclone struck the ship and knocked her right down on her beam-ends, he happened to be sitting up to windward, and he always declared that if it hadn't been for his weight the ship would never have righted itself."

There was a general laugh at the mate's explanation.

"I always plant myself to windward in a gale," Mr. Atherton said gravely. "Shifting ballast is a most useful thing, although they have abolished it in yacht-racing. I was once in a canoe, down by Borneo, when a heavy squall struck us. I was sitting in the bottom of the boat when we saw it coming, and had just time to get up and sit on the weather gunwale when it struck us. If it had not been for me nothing could have saved the boat from capsizing. As it was it stood up as stiff as a rock, though, I own, I nearly drowned them all when the blow was over, for it stopped as suddenly as it began, and the boat as nearly as possible capsized with my weight. Indeed it would have done so altogether if it hadn't heeled over so sharply that I was chucked backwards into the sea. Fortunately the helmsman made a grab at me as I went past, and I managed to scramble on board again. Not that I should have sunk for I can float like a cork; but there are a good many sharks cruising about in those waters, and it is safer inside a boat than it is out. You see, Miss Renshaw, there are advantages in being stout. I should not wonder if your brother got just my size one day. My figure was very much like his once."

"Oh, I hope not!" Marion exclaimed. "That would be dreadful! No; I don't mean that," she went on hurriedly as Mr. Atherton's face assumed an expression of shocked surprise. "I mean that, although of course there may be many advantages in being stout, there are advantages in being thin too."

"I admit that," Mr. Atherton agreed; "but look at the disadvantages. A stout man escapes being sent trotted about on messages. Nobody would think of asking him to climb a ladder. He is not expected to dance. The thin man is squeezed into any odd corner; and is not treated with half the consideration that is given to a fat man. He worries about trifles, and has none of the quiet contentment that characterizes stout people. A stout man's food always agrees with him, or else he would not be stout; while the thin man suffers indigestion, dyspepsia, and perhaps jaundice. You see, my dear young lady, that almost all the advantages are on our side. Of course you will say I could not climb a ladder, but then I do not want to climb a ladder. I could not make the ascent of Matterhorn; but it is much more pleasant to sit at the bottom and see fools do it. I could not very well ride a horse unless it were a dray-horse; but then I have no partiality for horse exercise. Altogether I think I have every reason to be content. I can travel wherever I like, see whatever I want to see, and enjoy most of the good things of life."

"And hould your own in a scrimmage," Mr. Ryan put in laughing. "I can answer for that."

"If I am pushed to it," Mr. Atherton said modestly, "of course I try to do my best."

"Have you seen Mr. Atherton in a scrimmage?" Tom Allen asked the mate.

"I have; and a sharp one it was while it lasted."

"There is no occasion to say anything about it, Ryan," Mr. Atherton said hastily.

"But no reason in life why I should not," the mate replied. "What do you say, ladies and gentleman?"

There was a chorus of "Go on please, do let us hear about it," and he continued:

"I don't give Mr. Atherton the credit of saving our ship in the squall, but it would have gone badly with us if he hadn't taken part in the row we had. You see, we had a mixed crew on board, for the most part Chinamen and a few Lascars; for we were three years in the China Seas, and English sailors cannot well stand the heat out there, and besides don't like remaining in ships stopping there trading. So when, after we arrived at Shanghai, we got orders to stop and trade out there, most of them took their discharge, and we filled up with natives. Coming down from Japan that voyage there was a row. I forget what their pretext was now, but I have no doubt it was an arranged thing, and that they intended to take the ship and run her ashore on some of the islands, take what they fancied out of her, and make off in boats, or perhaps take her into one of those nests of pirates that abound among the islands.

"They felt so certain of overpowering us, for there were only the three officers, the boatswain, and two cabin passengers, that instead of rising by night, when they would no doubt have succeeded, they broke into mutiny at dinner-time – came aft in a body, clamouring that their food was unfit to eat. Then suddenly drawing weapons from beneath their clothes they rushed up the gangways on to the poop; and as none of us were armed, and had no idea of what was going to take place, they would have cut us down almost without resistance had it not been for our friend here. He was standing just at the top of the poop ladder when they came up, headed by their seraing. Mr. Atherton knocked the scoundrel down with a blow of his fist, and then, catching him by the ankles, whirled him round his head like a club and knocked the fellows down like ninepins as they swarmed up the gangway, armed with knives and creases.

"The captain, who was down below, had slammed and fastened the door opening on to the waist on seeing the fellows coming aft, and handed up to us through the skylight some loaded muskets, and managed, by standing on the table and taking our hands, to get up himself. Then we opened fire upon them, and in a very few minutes drove them down. We shot six of them. The seraing of course was killed, four of the others had their skulls fairly broken in by the blows that they had received, and five were knocked senseless. We chucked them down the hatchway to the others, had up four or five of the men to work the ship, and kept the rest fastened below until we got to Singapore and handed them over to the authorities. They all got long terms of penal servitude. Anyhow, Mr. Atherton saved our lives and the ship, so I think you will agree with me that he can hold his own in a scrimmage."

"It was very hot work," Mr. Atherton said with a laugh, "and I did not get cool again for two or three days afterwards. The idea of using a man as a club was not my own. Belzoni put down a riot among his Arab labourers, when he was excavating ruins somewhere out in Syria, I think it was, by knocking the ringleader down and using him as a club. I had been reading the book not long before, and it flashed across my mind as the seraing went down that he might be utilized. Fists are all very well, but when you have got fellows to deal with armed with knives and other cutting instruments it is better to keep them at a distance if you can."

"That was splendid!" Wilfrid exclaimed. "How I should like to have seen it!"

"It was good for the eyes," the mate said; "and bate Donnybrook entirely. Such a yelling and shouting as the yellow reptiles made you never heard."

By this time the meal was finished, and the passengers repaired on deck to find that the ship was just passing Sheerness.

"Who would have thought," Wilfrid said to his sister as he looked at Mr. Atherton, who had taken his seat in a great Indian reclining chair he had brought for his own use, and was placidly smoking a cigar, "that that easy, placid, pleasant-looking man could be capable of such a thing as that! Shouldn't I like to have been there!"

"So should I," Marion agreed; "though it must have been terrible to look at. He doesn't look as if anything would put him out. I expect Samson was something like him, only not so stout. He seems to have been very good-tempered except when people wanted to capture him; and was always ready

to forgive that horrid woman who tried to betray him to his enemies. Well, everything is very nice – much nicer than I expected – and I feel sure that we shall enjoy the voyage very much."

CHAPTER III
THE VOYAGE

In addition to those already named, the *Flying Scud* carried some twenty other cabin passengers. She took no emigrants forward, as she was full of cargo, and was not, moreover, going direct to New Zealand. There were therefore only three or four young men in addition to the Grimstones forward. The fine weather that had favoured the start accompanied them down the channel and across the bay. Life went on quietly on board. It was early in May when they started; and the evenings were still too chilly to permit of any sojourn on deck after sunset. Each day, however, the weather grew warmer, and by the time the vessel was off the coast of Portugal the evenings were warm and balmy.

"This is not at all what I expected," Marion Renshaw said, as she sat in a deck-chair, to Mr. Atherton, who was leaning against the bulwark smoking a cigar. "I thought we were going to have storms, and that every one was going to be sea-sick. That is what it is like in all the books I have read; and I am sure that I have not felt the least bit ill from the time we started."

"You have had everything in your favour. There has been just enough breeze to take us along at a fair rate with all our light canvas set, and yet not enough to cause more than a ripple on the sea. The ship has been as steady as if in port; but you must not flatter yourself this is going to last all the time. I think we shall have a change before long. The glass has fallen a little, and the wind has shifted its quarter two or three times during the day. The sky, too, does not look so settled as it has done. I think we shall have a blow before long."

"What! A storm, Mr. Atherton?"

"No, I don't say that; but wind enough to get up a bit of sea, and to make landsmen feel very uncomfortable."

"But I suppose we should not be ill now even if it were rough, after being a week at sea?"

"I do not think you would be likely to be ill so long as you might have been had you encountered a gale directly we got out of the river, but I think that if it comes on rough all those addicted to sea-sickness are likely to suffer more or less. Some people are ill every time rough weather comes along, however long the voyage. I suppose you don't know yet whether you are a good sailor or not?"

Marion shook her head. "We have been at the seaside almost every year, but we have never gone out in boats much there. Papa was always too busy to go, and I don't think he likes it. Mother gets a bad headache, even if she isn't ill. So I very seldom went out, and never when it was the least rough."

Mr. Atherton's predictions turned out well founded. The wind got up during the night and was blowing freshly in the morning, and only two or three of the lady passengers made their appearance at breakfast; and several of the gentlemen were also absent. Wilfrid, to his great satisfaction, felt so far no symptoms whatever of impending illness. The two Allens were obliged to keep on deck during the meal, being unable to stand the motion below; but they were well enough to enjoy the cup of tea and plate of cold meat Wilfrid carried up to them. An hour or two later they went below. The wind was rising and the sea hourly getting up. Marion came up after breakfast, and for some time afterwards walked up and down on the deck with Wilfrid enjoying the brisk air, and considering it great fun to try to walk straight up and down the swaying deck. Presently, however, her laugh became subdued and her cheeks lost their colour.

"I am afraid I am going to be ill, Wilfrid; but I shall stay on deck if I can. Both the Mitfords are ill, I am sure, for neither of them got up, though they declared that they felt nothing the matter with them. I have made up my mind to stay on deck as long as I possibly can."

"That is the best way," Mr. Atherton said as he joined them in their walk, and caught the last sentence. "There is nothing like keeping up as long as possible; because if you do so it will sometimes pass off after a short time, whereas if you give up and take to your berth it is sure to run its course,

which is longer or shorter according to circumstances – sometimes two days and sometimes five; but I should say that people who are what you may call fair sailors generally get over it in two days, unless the weather is very bad. So fight against it as long as you can, and when you cannot bear it any longer I will wrap you up in rugs, and you shall have my great chair to curl up in close by the lee bulwark. But determination goes a long way, and you may get over it yet. You take my arm, you won't throw me off my balance; while if the vessel gives a sharper roll than usual, you and your brother may both lose your feet together."

As soon as they started on their walk Mr. Atherton began an amusing story of some adventure of his in the Western States of America, and Marion was so interested that she forgot all about her uncomfortable sensation, and was astonished when on hearing the lunch-bell ring she discovered she was getting perfectly well.

"Where is Wilfrid?" she asked.

"There he is, leaning over the lee bulwark; the fiend of sea-sickness has him in its grip."

"Only think of Wilfrid being unwell and me being all right! You have quite driven it away, Mr. Atherton, for I was feeling very poorly when I began to walk with you."

"I will go down and get you some luncheon and bring it up here to you. Curl yourself up in my chair until I return, and do not think more about the motion than you can help. You had better not go near your brother – people who are ill hate being pitied."

An hour later Wilfrid went below. In the evening, however, the wind dropped considerably, and the next morning the sea was sparkling in the sunlight, and the *Flying Scud* was making her way along with a scarcely perceptible motion. Thenceforth the weather was delightful throughout the voyage to Rio. The passengers found upon closer acquaintance that they all got on well together, and the days passed away pleasantly. In the evenings the piano was brought up from the cabin on to the deck, and for two or three hours there was singing, varied by an occasional dance among the young people.

From the day of their leaving England Mr. Atherton had been the leading spirit on board the ship. If a misunderstanding arose he acted as mediator. He was ever ready to propose pastimes and amusements to lighten the monotony of the voyage, took the leading part in the concerts held on deck when the evenings were calm and clear, and was full of resource and invention. With the four or five children on board he was prime favourite, and Mr. Renshaw often wondered at the patience and good temper with which he submitted to all their whims, and was ready to give up whatever he was doing to submit himself to their orders. He had, before they had been ten days at sea, talked over with Mr. Renshaw the latter's plans, and advised him upon no account to be in a hurry to snap up the first land offered to him.

"Half the people who come out to the colonies," he said, "get heavily bit at first by listening to the land-agents, and allowing themselves to be persuaded into buying property which, when they come to take possession of it, is in a majority of the cases almost worthless. I should advise you when you get there to hire a house in Wellington, where you can leave your wife and daughter while you examine the various districts and see which offer the greatest advantages. If you do not feel equal to it yourself, let your son go in your place. He is, I think, a sharp young fellow, and not likely to be easily taken in. At any rate, when he has made his report as to the places that seem most suitable, you can go and see their relative advantages before purchasing.

"'There is no greater mistake than buying land in a locality of which you know nothing. You may find that the roads are impracticable and that you have no means of getting your produce to market, and after a while you will be glad to sell your place for a mere song and shift to another which you might at first have obtained at a price much lower than you gave for your worthless farm. I have knocked about in the States a good deal, and have known scores of men ruined by being too hasty in making a choice. You want to be in a colony six months at least before investing your money in land, so as to know something of the capabilities and advantages of each district. To a young man I should say – travel about in the colony, working your way, and making a stay of a month here and

a month there. Of course in your case this is out of the question; but a personal examination of the places offered to you, which in nine cases out of ten men are ready to sell for less than they have cost them, will ensure you against absolute swindling."

"What are you going to do yourself, Mr. Atherton?"

"I have come out simply to study the botany of the island. I may stay in the colony for a month or for a year. At any rate, if you depute Wilfrid to travel about to examine the various districts where land can be bought, I shall be glad to accompany him, as I myself shall also be on the look-out."

"You are not thinking of farming, Mr. Atherton?"

"No. My own idea is to take a bit of land on one of the rivers, to get up a hut to serve as my head-quarters, and to spend much of my time in travelling about. I am very fortunately placed. I have ample funds to enable me to live in comfort, and I am free to indulge my fancy for wandering as I please. I consider that I have been spoiled by being my own master too young. I think it is bad for a young man to start in life with a competence; but when it comes to one in middle age, when one has learned to spend it rationally, it is undoubtedly a very great comfort and advantage. I suppose, however, that the time will come when I shall settle down. I am thirty-five, and I ought to 'range myself,' as the French say."

Mr. Atherton had not been long upon the voyage when he discovered that the chances of success of the Renshaw party as settlers would be small indeed if they depended upon the exertions of the head of the family. He had not been more than a day or two on board before Mr. Renshaw began to discuss his favourite hobby with him, and confided to him that he intended thoroughly to investigate the history, customs, and religion of the Maoris, and to produce an exhaustive work on the subject. "An excellent idea, very," the stout man said encouragingly, "but one demanding great time and investigation; and perhaps," he added doubtfully, "one more suited to a single man, who can go and live among the natives and speak their language, than for a married man with a family to look after."

Mr. Renshaw waved the remark aside lightly. "I shall, of course, set to work immediately I arrive to acquire a thorough knowledge of the language, and indeed have already begun with a small dictionary and a New Testament in the Maori language, brought out by the Missionary Society. As to my family, my exertions in the farming way will be of no use whatever to them. My wife and daughter will look after the house, and Wilfrid will undertake the management of the men out of doors. The whole scheme is theirs, and I should be of no assistance to them whatever. My bent lies entirely in the direction of archæology, and there can be little doubt that my thorough acquaintance with all relating to the habits, and, so far as is known, of the language of the ancient Britons, Saxons, Danes, and the natives of the northern part of the island, will be of inestimable advantage in enabling me to carry out the subject I have resolved to take up. There are analogies and similarities between the habits of all primitive peoples, and one accustomed to the study of the early races of Europe can form a general opinion of the habits and mode of living of a tribe merely from the inspection of an ancient weapon or two, a bracelet, and a potsherd."

Mr. Atherton looked down upon his companion with half-closed eyes, and seemed to be summing him up mentally; after a short conversation he turned away, and as he filled his pipe muttered to himself: "It is well for the family that the mother seems a capable and sensible woman, and that the lad, unless I am mistaken, has a dogged resolution about him as well as spirit and courage. The girl, too, is a bright sensible lass, and they may get on in spite of this idiot of a father. However, the man shows that he possesses a certain amount of sense by the confidence with which he throws the burden of the whole business of providing a living for the family on their shoulders.

"Of course they would be much better without him, for I can foresee he will give them an awful lot of trouble. He will go mooning away among the natives, and will be getting lost and not heard of for a tremendous time. Still, I don't know that he will come to much harm. The Maoris have fine traits of character, and though they have been fighting about what they call the king question, they have seldom been guilty of any acts of hostility to isolated settlers, and a single white man going among

them has always been received hospitably; besides, they will probably think him mad, and savages have always a sort of respect for madmen. Still, he will be a terrible worry to his family. I have taken a fancy to the others, and if I can do them a good turn out there in any way I will."

As the voyage went on Mr. Atherton's liking for Mrs. Renshaw, her son and daughter, increased greatly, while his contempt for Mr. Renshaw became modified as he came to know him better. He found that he was really a capable man in his own particular hobby, and that although weak and indecisive he was very kind and affectionate with his wife and children, and reposed an almost childlike confidence in his wife's good sense.

Madeira had been sighted lying like a great cloud on the horizon, and indeed the young Renshaws had difficulty when they came up on deck in the morning in believing that it was really land they saw. No stay was made here, nor did they catch a glimpse of the Canary Islands, being too far to the west to see even the lofty peak of Teneriffe. The first time the ship dropped anchor was at St. Jago, one of the Cape de Verde Islands; here they took in a supply of fresh water, meat, and vegetables. The passengers all landed, but were much disappointed with the sandy and uninteresting island, and it was no consolation for them to learn from the captain that parts of the island were much more fertile, although the vegetables and fruit came for the most part from the other islands. "Now," he said, "if all goes well you will see no land again till you get to Rio. We shall keep to the east of St. Paul, and unless we get blown out of our course we shall not go near Ascension."

As the wind continued favourable the ship kept her course, and at twelve o'clock one day the captain, after taking his observations, told them that he expected to be in Rio on the following evening. The next morning when they came up on deck land was in sight, and in the evening they dropped anchor in the harbour of Rio, one of the finest ports in the world.

"Yes, it is a splendid harbour," Mr. Atherton agreed as he listened to the exclamations of delight of the Renshaws. "I do not know that it is the finest, but it is certainly equal to any I have ever seen. As a harbour New York is better, because even more landlocked. San Francisco is, both in that respect and in point of scenery, superb. Bombay is a grand harbour, but exposed to certain winds. Taken altogether, I think I should give the palm to San Francisco."

A few minutes after the anchor had dropped a number of shore-boats came alongside filled with luscious fruit, and rowed for the most part by negroes, who chatted and shouted and gesticulated, making such a din that it was impossible to distinguish a single word amid the uproar. Wilfrid, the Allens, and others quickly ran down the ladders, and without troubling themselves to bargain returned with quantities of fruit. Several negresses soon followed them on to the deck, and going up to the ladies produced cards and letters testifying that they were good washerwomen and their terms reasonable. The captain had the evening before told them it would take him three or four days to discharge his cargo for Rio, and that they had better take advantage of the opportunity if they wanted any washing done. They had, therefore, got everything in readiness, and in a few minutes numerous canvas bags filled with linen were deposited in the boats.

In addition to the fruit several great bouquets of gorgeous flowers had been purchased, and the cabin that evening presented quite a festive appearance. After it became dark and the lights of Rio sparkled out, all agreed that the scene was even more beautiful than by daylight. The air was deliciously balmy and soft, the sea as smooth as glass. The moon was nearly full, and the whole line of the shore could be distinctly seen. Boats flitted about between the vessels and the strand; fishing-boats, with their sails hanging motionless, slowly made their way in by the aid of oars. The sounds of distant music in the city came across the water.

There was no singing or dancing on board the *Flying Scud* that evening. All were content to sit quiet and enjoy the scene, and such conversation as there was was carried on in low tones, as if they were under a spell which they feared to break. The next morning all went ashore soon after breakfast; but upon their assembling at dinner it was found that the general impression was one of disappointment. It was a fine city, but not so fine as it looked from the water. Except the main

thoroughfares the streets were narrow, and, as the ladies declared, dirty. The young people, however, were not so critical; they had been delighted with the stir and movement, the bright costumes, the variety of race and colour, and the novelty of everything they saw.

"The negroes amuse me most," Marion said. "They seem to be always laughing. I never saw such merry people."

"They are like children," her father said. "The slightest thing causes them amusement. It is one of the signs of a low type of intellect when people are given to laugh at trifles."

"Then the natives ought to be very intelligent," Marion said, "for as a whole they appeared to me to be a serious race. Of course I saw many of them laughing and chattering, but most of them are very quiet in manner. The old people seem to be wrinkled in a wonderful way. I never saw English people so wrinkled."

"All southern races show age in that way," Mr. Atherton said. "You see marvellous old men and women in Spain and Italy. People who, as far as looks go, might be a hundred and fifty – little dried-up specimens of humanity, with faces more like those of monkeys than men."

"Are the negroes slaves, Mr. Atherton? They still have slavery in Brazil, do they not? They certainly are not at all according to my idea of slaves."

"The estates are mostly worked by negro slaves," Mr. Atherton said, "and no doubt many of those you saw to-day are also slaves. Household slavery is seldom severe, and I believe the Brazilians are generally kind masters. But probably the greater portion of the negroes you saw are free. They may have purchased their freedom with their savings, or may have been freed by kind masters. It is no very unusual thing for a Brazilian at his death to leave a will giving freedom to all his slaves. Government is doing its best to bring about the entire extinction of slavery. I believe that all children born after a certain date have been declared free, and have no doubt that in time slavery will be abolished. Great changes like this take some time to carry out, and even for the sake of the slaves themselves it is better to proceed quietly and gradually. I suppose nobody inclines to go on shore again to-night?"

There was a general negative. The day had been very warm, and having been walking about for hours no one felt any inclination to make a fresh start. The following morning the vessel began to unload her cargo. Some of the older passengers declared that they had had enough of shore, and should not land – at any rate until the afternoon. The rest went ashore; but the greater part of them returned at lunch-time, and the heat in the afternoon was so great that none cared to land again.

In the evening the two Allens and Wilfrid agreed to go ashore to visit a theatre. Mr. Atherton said that as he had no inclination to melt away all at once he would not join them, but would land with them and stroll about for a time, and see the town in its evening aspect. Several other parties were made up among the male passengers, and one or two of the ladies accompanied their husbands.

Wilfrid and the Allens did not stay out the performance. The heat was very great, and as they did not understand a word of the dialogue they soon agreed that it would be more pleasant to stroll about, or to sit down in the open air before a café and sip iced drinks.

Accordingly after walking about for a while they sat down before a café in the Grand Square, and as they sipped iced lemonade looked on with much amusement at the throng walking up and down.

"It is later than I thought," James Allen said, looking at his watch. "It is nearly twelve o'clock, and high time for us to be on board."

They started to make what they thought would prove a short cut down to the landing-place; but as usual the short cut proved delusive, and they soon found themselves wandering in unknown streets. They asked several persons they met the way down to the water, but none of them understood English, and it was a considerable time before they emerged from the streets on to the line of quays.

"We are ever so much too far to the right," James Allen said as they looked round. "I fancy that is the ship's light not far from the shore half a mile away on the left. I hope we shall find some

boatmen to take us off; it would be rather awkward finding ourselves here for the night in a place where no one understands the language."

"I think we should manage all right," Wilfrid said. "We know the way from the place where we landed up into the part where the hotels are, and are sure to find people there who understand English. Still I hope it will not come to that. They would be in a great fidget on board if we were not to turn up to-night."

"I do not think they would be alarmed," James Allen replied. "Every one is in bed and asleep long ago, and we should be on board in the morning before the steward went to our cabin and found that we were missing. I consider we are quite safe in that respect, but Atherton might be doing something if he found we did not come back."

"He might do something, perhaps," Wilfrid said; "but I am quite sure he would not alarm my father and mother about it. He is the last sort of fellow to do that."

CHAPTER IV
A ROW ON SHORE

While Wilfrid and the Allens were talking they were walking briskly in the direction of their landing-place. They had arrived within a hundred yards of it, when a party of four men who were lying among a pile of timber got up and came across towards them. They were rough-looking fellows, and James Allen said, "I do not like the look of these chaps. I think they mean mischief. Look out!" As he spoke the men rushed at them. James Allen gave a loud shout for help and then struck a blow at a man who rushed at him. The fellow staggered backwards, and with a fierce exclamation in Portuguese drew a knife. A moment later Allen received a sharp stab on the shoulder, and was knocked to the ground. The other two after a short struggle had also been overpowered and borne down, but in their case the robbers had not used their knives.

They were feeling in their pockets when the step of a man approaching at full speed was heard. One of the robbers was about to run off, when another exclaimed: "You coward! It is but one man, which means more booty. Out with your knives and give him a taste of them as he comes up!" A moment later the man ran up. The leader stepped forward to meet him, knife in hand; but as he struck his wrist was grasped, and a tremendous blow was delivered in his face, hurling him stunned and bleeding to the ground. With a bound the new-comer threw himself upon two of the other men. Grasping them by their throats he shook them as if they had been children, and then dashed their heads together with such tremendous force that when he loosened his grasp both fell insensible on the ground. The other robber took to his heels at the top of his speed. All this had passed so quickly that the struggle was over before Wilfrid and the Allens could get to their feet.

"Not hurt, I hope?" their rescuer asked anxiously.

"Why, Mr. Atherton, is it you?" Wilfrid exclaimed. "You arrived at a lucky moment indeed. No, I am not hurt that I know of, beyond a shake."

"Nor I," Bob Allen said.

"I have got a stab in my shoulder," James Allen answered. "I don't know that it is very deep, but I think it is bleeding a good deal, for I feel very shaky. That fellow has got my watch," and he pointed to the man who had been first knocked down.

"Look in his hand, Wilfrid. He won't have had time to put it in his pocket. If you have lost anything else look in the other fellows' hands or on the ground close to them."

He lifted James Allen, who was now scarcely able to stand, carried him to the wood pile, and seated him on a log with his back against another. Then he took off his coat and waistcoat, and tore open his shirt. "It is nothing serious," he said. "It is a nasty gash and is bleeding freely, but I daresay we can stop that; I have bandaged up plenty of worse wounds in my time." He drew the edge of the wound together, and tied his handkerchief and that of Wilfrid tightly round it. "That will do for the present," he said. "Now I will carry you down to the boat," and lifting the young fellow up as though he were a feather he started with him.

"Shall we do anything with these fellows, Mr. Atherton?" Wilfrid asked.

"No, leave them as they are; what they deserve is to be thrown into the sea. I daresay their friend will come back to look after them presently."

In a couple of minutes they arrived at the landing-place, where two men were sitting in a boat.

"But how did you come to be here, Mr. Atherton?" Wilfrid asked when they had taken their seats.

"I came to look after you boys, Wilfrid. I got on board about eleven, and on going down to the cabin found you had not returned, so I thought I would smoke another cigar and wait up for you. At twelve o'clock the last party returned, and as I thought you might have some difficulty in getting on

board after that, I got into the boat and rowed ashore, and engaged the men to wait as long as I wanted them. I thought perhaps you had missed your way, and did not feel uneasy about you, for there being three of you together it was scarcely likely you had got into any bad scrape. I was beginning at last to think you had perhaps gone to an hotel for the night, and that it was no use waiting any longer, when I heard your voices coming along the quays. The night is so quiet that I heard your laugh some distance away, and recognized it. I then strolled along to meet you, when I saw those four fellows come out into the moonlight from a shadow in the wood. I guessed that they were up to mischief, and started to run at once, and was within fifty yards of you when I saw the scuffle and caught the glint of the moon on the blade of a knife. Another five or six seconds I was up, and then there was an end of it. Now we are close to the ship. Go up as quietly as you can, and do not make a noise as you go into your cabins. It is no use alarming people. I will carry Jim down."

"I can walk now, I think, Mr. Atherton."

"You might do, but you won't, my lad; for if you did you would probably start your wound bleeding afresh. You two had best take your shoes off directly you get on deck."

James Allen was carried down and laid on his berth. Mr. Atherton went and roused the ship's doctor, and then lighted the lamp in the cabin.

"What is all this about?" the surgeon asked as he came in.

"There has been a bit of a scrimmage on shore," Mr. Atherton replied; "and, as you see, Allen has got a deepish slash from the shoulder down to the elbow. It has been bleeding very freely, and he is faint from loss of blood; but I do not think it is serious at all."

"No, it is a deep flesh wound," the doctor said, examining him; "but there is nothing to be in the slightest degree uneasy about. I will get a bandage from my cabin, and some lint, and set it all right in five minutes."

When the arm was bandaged, Mr. Atherton said: "Now I must get you to do a little plastering for me doctor."

"What! are you wounded, Mr. Atherton?" the others exclaimed in surprise.

"Nothing to speak of, lads; but both those fellows made a slash at me as I closed with them. I had but just finished their leader and could do no more than strike wildly as I turned upon them." As he spoke he was taking off his waistcoat and shirt.

"By Jove, you have had a narrow escape!" the doctor said; "and how you take it so coolly I cannot make out. Except as to the bleeding, they are both far more serious than Allen's."

One of the wounds was in the left side, about three inches below the arm. The man had evidently struck at the heart, but the quickness with which Mr. Atherton had closed with him had disconcerted his aim; the knife had struck rather far back, and glancing behind the ribs had cut a deep gash under the shoulder-blade. The other wound had been given by a downright blow at the right side, and had laid open the flesh from below the breast down to the hip.

"It is only a case for plaster," Mr. Atherton said. "It is useful to have a casing of fat sometimes. It is the same thing with a whale – you have got to drive a harpoon in very deep to get at the vitals. You see this wound in front has bled very little."

"You have lost a good deal of blood from the other cut," the surgeon said. "I will draw the edges of the wounds together with a needle and thread, and will then put some bandages on. You will have to keep quiet for some days. Your wounds are much too serious to think of putting plaster on at present."

"I have had a good deal more serious wounds than these," Mr. Atherton said cheerfully, "and have had to ride seventy or eighty miles on the following day. However I will promise you not to go ashore to-morrow; and as the captain says he expects to be off the next morning, I shall be able to submit myself to your orders without any great privation."

"Why did you not say that you were wounded, Mr. Atherton?" Wilfrid said reproachfully as they went to their own cabin and prepared to turn in.

"To tell you the truth, Wilfrid, I hardly thought the wounds were as deep as they are. My blood was up, you see, and when that is the case you are scarcely conscious of pain. I felt a sharp shooting sensation on both sides as I grasped those fellows by the throat, and afterwards I knew I was bleeding a bit at the back, for I felt the warmth of the blood down in my shoe; but there was nothing to prevent my carrying young Allen, and one person can carry a wounded man with much more ease to him than two can do, unless of course they have got a stretcher."

The next morning there was quite a stir in the ship when it was known that two of the passengers were wounded, and Mr. and Mrs. Renshaw were greatly alarmed when they heard of the risk Wilfrid had run. Neither of the wounded men appeared at breakfast, as the surgeon insisted that both should lie quiet for at least one day. Mr. Renshaw had paid a visit to Mr. Atherton directly he had heard from Wilfrid his story of the fray, and thanked him most warmly for his intervention on behalf of his son. "Wilfrid said he has very little doubt that they all three would have been stabbed if you had not come up."

"I do not say they might not," Mr. Atherton said, "because their resistance had raised the men's anger; and in this country when a man is angry he generally uses his knife. Besides, dead men raise no alarm. Still they might have contented themselves with robbing them. However, I own that it was lucky I was on the spot."

"But it was not a question of luck at all," Mr. Renshaw insisted. "You were there because you had specially gone ashore to look after these foolish young fellows, and your being there was the result of your own thoughtfulness for them, and not in any way of chance."

"There is quite a crowd on the quay, Mr. Renshaw," the captain said when that gentleman went on deck, "I suppose they have found stains of blood in the road and conclude that a crime has been committed. Oh, here is our boat putting out from the landing-place. The steward has been on shore to get fresh fruit for breakfast; he will tell us what is going on."

The steward had gone ashore before the news of the encounter had been spread by the surgeon.

"What is the excitement about on shore?" the captain asked him as he stepped on deck.

"Well, sir, as far as I could learn from a chap who spoke a little English, there have been bad doings on shore in the night. Two men were found this morning lying dead there. There is nothing uncommon about that; but they say there are no wounds on them, except that their skulls are stove in, as if they had both been struck by a beam of wood at the back of the head. But besides that there were two or three pools of blood in the road. It seems one man walked back into the town, for there are marks of his feet as if he stepped in the blood before starting in that direction. Then there is a line of blood spots down to the landing-place and down the steps, as if somebody had got into a boat. Nobody seems to make head nor tail of the business."

"Well, we must keep this quiet if we can," the captain said, turning to Mr. Renshaw. "If it were known that any of our people were concerned in this affair they might keep us here for three weeks or a month while it is being investigated, or insist upon Mr. Atherton and your son and the Allens remaining behind as witnesses. Mr. Ryan," he called to the first-mate, "just come here a moment. This matter is more serious than we thought. It seems that Mr. Atherton, who, as we have heard, dashed the heads of two of these fellows together, killed them on the spot."

"Sure and I thought as much when young Allen was telling me about it," the mate said. "I have seen Mr. Atherton at work before this, and I thought to myself that unless those fellows' skulls were made of iron, and thick at that, they must have gone in when he brought them together."

"The worst of it is," the captain went on, "they have traced marks of blood down to the landing-stage, and of course have suspicion that someone concerned in the affair took a boat, and either came off to one of the ships or went away in one of the fishing craft. You know what these fellows are; if they find out that anyone on board is mixed up in the matter, they will keep the ship here for a month."

"That is true enough, sir. It is mighty lucky we would be if we got away in a month."

"The first thing is to see about the boatmen," the captain said. "Of course if they tell the authorities they brought a wounded man on board here late last night there is an end of it; but if they hold their tongues, and we all keep our own council, the thing may not leak out to-day, and we will have our anchor up and get out this evening if we can. You had better tell all the crew that not a word is to be said about the matter, and I will impress the same on the passengers. When they know that a careless word may lead to a month's detention, you may be sure there will be no talking. But before you speak to them I will go down and see Mr. Atherton, and hear what he says about the boatmen." He returned in two or three minutes. "I hope it will be all right," he said. "Atherton gave them a pound apiece, and told them to hold their tongues. He thinks it is probable they will do so, for they would know well enough that they would, as likely as not, be clapped into prison and kept there while the investigation was going on. So there is a strong hope that it may not leak out through them. You must stop all leave ashore, Mr. Ryan. Tell the men whose turn it is to go, they shall have their spree at Buenos Ayres. If they were to get drunk it would be as likely as not to slip out."

"I will see to it, sir."

Directly breakfast was over the captain took a boat and went ashore. He had duly impressed upon all the passengers the absolute necessity for silence, and several of these went ashore with him. He returned half an hour later, having been up to the British Consulate.

"The affair is making quite a stir in the town. Not on account of two men being found dead, there is nothing uncommon in that, especially as they have been recognized as two notorious ruffians; but the whole circumstances of the affair puzzle them.

"The doctors who have examined the bodies have arrived pretty well at the truth, and say that both men have been gripped by the throat, for the marks of the fingers are plainly visible, and their heads dashed together. But although this is, as we know, perfectly true, no one believes it; for the doctors themselves admit that it does not appear to them possible that any man would have had the strength requisite to completely batter in the skulls of two others, as has been done in this case. The police are searching the town for the man whose footsteps led in that direction, and as they know all the haunts of these ruffians and their associates it is likely enough that they will find him, especially as his face is sure to bear marks of Atherton's handiwork. Still, if they do find him, and he tells all he knows of the business, they will not be much nearer to tracing the actors in it to this ship. It is not probable that he recovered his senses until long after they were on board the boat, and can only say that while engaged in attempting to rob some passers-by he was suddenly knocked down. But even this they are not likely to get out of him first, for he will know that he used a knife, and is not likely to put himself in the way of punishment if he can help it. I came off at once, because I heard at the Consulate that the police are going to search every ship in the harbour to see if they can find some wounded man, or get some clue to the mystery, so I must ask the doctor if his two patients are fit to be dressed and go up on deck."

The doctor on being consulted said that he should certainly have preferred that they should have remained quiet all day, but he did not know that it would do them any harm to get on deck for a bit. And accordingly in half an hour Mr. Atherton and James Allen came up. The doctor, who had assisted them to dress, accompanied them.

"Now, Mr. Atherton, you had better seat yourself in that great deck-chair of yours with the leg-rest. If you sit there quietly reading when they come on board they are not likely to suspect you of being a desperate character, or to appreciate your inches and width of shoulder. Allen had better sit quiet till they get alongside, and then slip that sling into his pocket and walk up and down talking to one of the ladies, with his thumb in his waistcoat so as to support his arm. He looks pale and shaky; but they are not accustomed to much colour here, and he will pass well enough."

As soon as Mr. Atherton had taken his seat Mrs. Renshaw and Marion came up to him. "How can we thank you enough, Mr. Atherton, for the risks you have run to succour Wilfrid, and for your kind consideration in going on shore to wait for him?"

"It was nothing, Mrs. Renshaw. I own to enjoying a scrimmage when I can go into one with the feeling of being in the right. You know that I am a very lazy man, but it is just your lazy men who do enjoy exerting themselves occasionally."

"It was grand!" Marion broke in; "and you ought not to talk as if it was nothing, Mr. Atherton. Wilfrid said that he thought it was all over with him till he saw a big man flying down the road."

"A perfect colossus of Rhodes!" Mr. Atherton laughed.

"It is not a thing to joke about," Marion went on earnestly. "It may seem very little to you, Mr. Atherton, but it is everything to us."

"Don't you know that one always jokes when one is serious, Miss Renshaw? You know that in church any little thing that you would scarcely notice at any other time makes you inclined to laugh. Some day in the far distance, when you become a woman, you will know the truth of the saying, that smiles and tears are very close to each other."

"I am getting to be a woman now," Marion said with some dignity; for Mr. Atherton always persisted in treating her as if she were a child, which, as she was nearly seventeen, was a standing grievance to her.

"Age does not make a woman, Miss Renshaw. I saw you skipping three days ago with little Kate Mitford and your brother and young Allen, and you enjoyed it as much as any of them."

"We were trying which could keep up the longest," Marion said; "Wilfrid and I against the other two. You were looking on, and I believe you would have liked to have skipped too."

"I think I should," Mr. Atherton agreed. "You young people do not skip half as well as we used to when I was a boy; and I should have given you a lesson if I had not been afraid of shaking the ship's timbers to pieces."

"How absurd you are, Mr. Atherton!" Marion said pettishly. "Of course you are not thin, but you always talk of yourself as if you were something monstrous."

Mr. Atherton laughed. His diversion had had the desired effect, and had led them away from the subject of the fight on shore.

"There is a galley putting off from shore with a lot of officials on board," the captain said, coming up at this moment. "They are rowing to the next ship, and I suppose they will visit us next."

A quarter of an hour later the galley came alongside, and three officials mounted the gangway. The captain went forward to meet them. "Is there anything I can do for you, gentlemen?"

"There has been a crime committed on shore," the leader of the party said, "and it is suspected that some of those concerned in the matter are on board one of the ships in the harbour. I have authority to make a strict search on board each."

"You are perfectly welcome to do so, sir," the captain said. "One of our officers will show you over the ship."

"I must trouble you to show me your list of passengers and crew, and to muster the men on deck. But first I must ask you, Did any of your boats return on board late?"

"No," the captain replied. "Our last boat was hauled up to the davits at half-past nine. There was a heavy day's work before the men to-day, and I therefore refused leave on shore."

The men were ordered to be mustered, and while they were collecting the second-mate went round the ship with the officials, and they saw that no one was below in his berth. The men's names were called over from the list, and the officials satisfied that all were present and in good health.

"Now for the passengers," he said

"I cannot ask them to muster," the captain observed, "but I will walk round with you and point out those on the list. There are some eight or ten on shore. They will doubtless be off to lunch; and if you leave an officer on board he will see that they are by no means the sort of people to take part in such an affair as that which has happened on shore."

The officials went round the deck, but saw nothing whatever to excite their suspicion. Marion Renshaw was laughing and talking with Mr. Atherton, Miss Mitford walking up and down the poop

in conversation with James Allen. After they had finished their investigations, the officials left one of their party to inspect the remaining passengers as they came on board, and to check them off the list. They then again took their seats in the galley and were rowed to the next ship.

By dint of great exertions the cargo was got out by sunset, the sails were at once loosened and the anchor weighed, and before the short twilight had faded away the *Flying Scud* was making her way with a gentle breeze towards the mouth of the harbour.

"We are well out of that," Mr. Atherton said as he looked back at the lights of the city.

"I think you are very well out of it indeed, in more senses than one," said the surgeon, who was standing next to him; "but you have had a wonderfully close shave of it, Mr. Atherton. Another inch and either of those blows might have been fatal. Besides, had you been detained for a month or six weeks, it is as likely as not that, what with the heat and what with the annoyance, your wound would have taken a bad turn. Now, you must let me exercise my authority and order you to your berth immediately. You ought not to have been out of it. Of the two evils, getting up and detention, I chose the least; but I should be glad now if you would go off at once. If you do not, I can assure you I may have you on my hands all the rest of the voyage."

"I will obey orders, doctor. The more willingly because for the last hour or two my back has been smarting unmercifully. I do not feel the other wound much."

"That is because you have been sitting still. You will find it hurt you when you come to walk. Please go down carefully; a sudden movement might start your wounds again."

It was two or three days before Mr. Atherton again appeared on deck. His left arm was bandaged tightly to his body so as to prevent any movement of the shoulder-blade, and he walked stiffly to the deck-chair, which had been piled with cushions in readiness.

"I am glad to be out again, Mrs. Renshaw," Mr. Atherton said as she arranged the cushions to suit him. "Your husband, with Wilfrid and the two Allens, have kept me company, one or other of them, all the time, so I cannot say I have been dull. But it was much hotter below than it is here. However, I know the doctor was right in keeping me below, for the slightest movement gave me a great deal of pain. However, the wounds are going on nicely, and I hope by the time we get to Buenos Ayres I shall be fit for a trip on shore again."

"I hardly think so, Mr. Atherton; for if the weather continues as it is now – it is a nice steady breeze, and we have been running ever since we left Rio – I think we shall be there long before you are fit to go ashore."

"I do not particularly care about it," Mr. Atherton said. "Buenos Ayres is not like Rio, but is for the most part quite a modern town, and even in situation has little to recommend it. Besides, we shall be so far off that there will be no running backwards and forwards between the ship and the shore as there was at Rio. Of course it depends a good deal on the amount of the water coming down the river, but vessels sometimes have to anchor twelve miles above the town."

"I am sure I have no desire to go ashore," Mrs. Renshaw said, "and after the narrow escape Wilfrid had at Rio I should be glad if he did not set foot there again until we arrive at the end of the voyage."

"He is not likely to get into a scrape again," Mr. Atherton said. "Of course it would have been wiser not to have stopped so late as they did in a town of whose ways they knew nothing; but you may be sure he will be careful another time. Besides, I fancy from what I have heard things are better managed there, and the population are more peaceable and orderly than at Rio. But, indeed, such an adventure as that which befell them might very well have happened to any stranger wandering late at night in the slums of any of our English seaports."

There was a general feeling of disappointment among the passengers when the *Flying Scud* dropped anchor in the turbid waters of the La Plata. The shore was some five or six miles away, and was low and uninteresting. The towers and spires of the churches of Buenos Ayres were plainly visible, but of the town itself little could be seen. As soon as the anchor was dropped the captain's gig

was lowered, and he started for shore to make arrangements for landing the cargo. The next morning a steam tug brought out several flats, and the work of unloading commenced. A few passengers went ashore in the tug, but none of the Renshaws left the ship. Two days sufficed for getting out the goods for Buenos Ayres. The passengers who had been staying at hotels on shore came off with the last tug to the ship. Their stay ashore had been a pleasant one, and they liked the town, which, in point of cleanliness and order, they considered to be in advance of Rio.

CHAPTER V
A BOAT EXPEDITION

"Well I am not sorry we are off again," Marion Renshaw said as the men ran round with the capstan bars and the anchor came up from the shallow water. "What a contrast between this and Rio!"

"It is, indeed," Mr. Atherton, who was standing beside her, replied. "I own I should have liked to spend six months in a snug little craft going up the La Plata and Parana, especially the latter. The La Plata runs through a comparatively flat and – I will not say unfertile country, because it is fertile enough, but – a country deficient in trees, and offering but small attraction to a botanist; but the Parana flows north. Paraguay is a country but little visited by Europeans, and ought to be well worth investigation; but, as you say, I am glad enough to be out of this shallow water. In a short time we shall be looking out our wraps again. We shall want our warmest things for doubling Cape Horn, or rather what is called doubling Cape Horn, because in point of fact we do not double it at all."

"Do you mean we do not go round it?" Marion asked in surprise.

"We may, and we may not, Miss Renshaw. It will depend upon the weather, I suppose; but most vessels now go through the Straits which separate Cape Horn itself from Tierra del Fuego."

"Those are the Straits of Magellan, are they not?"

"Oh, no!" Mr. Atherton replied. "The Straits of Magellan lie still further to the north, and separate Tierra del Fuego from the mainland. I wish that we were going through them, for I believe the scenery is magnificent."

"But if they lie further north that must surely be our shortest way, so why should we not go through them?"

"If we were in a steamer we might do so, Miss Renshaw; but the channels are so narrow and intricate, and the tides and currents run with such violence, that sailing-vessels hardly ever attempt the passage. The straits we shall go through lie between Tierra del Fuego and the group of islands of which the Horn is the most southerly."

"Is the country inhabited?"

"Yes, by races of the most debased savages, with whom, I can assure you, I have no desire whatever to make any personal acquaintance."

"Not even to collect botanical specimens, Mr. Atherton?" the girl asked, smiling.

"Not even for that purpose, Miss Renshaw. I will do a good deal in pursuance of my favourite hobby, but I draw the line at the savages of Tierra del Fuego. Very few white men have ever fallen into their hands and lived to tell the tale, and certainly I should have no chance whatever."

"Why would you have less chance than other people, Mr. Atherton?"

"My attractions would be irresistible," Mr. Atherton replied gravely. "I should furnish meat for a whole tribe."

"How horrible!" Marion exclaimed. "What! are they cannibals?"

"Very much so indeed; and one can hardly blame them, for it is the only chance they have of getting flesh. Their existence is one long struggle with famine and cold. They are not hunters, and are but poor fishermen. I firmly believe that if I were in their place I should be a cannibal myself."

"How can you say such things?" Marion asked indignantly. "I never know whether you are in earnest, Mr. Atherton. I am sure you would never be a cannibal."

"There is no saying what one might be if one were driven to it," he replied placidly. "Anyhow, I trust that I shall never be driven to it. In my various journeyings and adventures I am happy to say that I have never been forced to experience a prolonged fast, and it is one of the things I have no inclination to try. This weather is perfection, is it not?" he went on, changing the subject. "The *Flying Scud* is making capital way. I only hope it may last. It is sad to think that we shall soon exchange these

balmy breezes for a biting wind. We are just saying, Wilfrid," he went on as the lad strolled up to them, "that you will soon have to lay aside your white flannels and put on a greatcoat and muffler."

"I shall not be sorry," Wilfrid replied. "After a month of hot weather one wants bracing up a bit, and I always enjoy cold."

"Then you should have gone out and settled in Iceland instead of New Zealand."

"I should not have minded that, Mr. Atherton. There is splendid fishing, I believe, and sealing, and all that sort of thing. But I do not suppose the others would have liked it. I am sure father would not. He cannot bear cold, and his study at home used always to be kept up at almost the temperature of an oven all the winter. I should think New Zealand would exactly suit him."

Before the sun set they had the satisfaction of sailing out of the muddy water of the La Plata, and of being once more in the bright blue sea. For the next week the *Flying Scud* sailed merrily southward without adventure. The air grew sensibly cooler each day, and the light garments of the tropics were already exchanged for warmer covering.

"Do you always get this sort of weather down here, captain?" Mrs. Renshaw asked.

"Not always, Mrs. Renshaw. The weather is generally fine, I admit, but occasionally short but very violent gales sweep down from off the land. They are known as pamperos; because, I suppose, they come from the pampas. They are very dangerous from the extreme suddenness with which they sweep down. If they are seen coming, and the vessel can be stripped of her canvas in time, there is little danger to be apprehended, for they are as short as they are violent."

"We have been wonderfully fortunate altogether so far," Mrs. Renshaw said. "We have not had a single gale since we left England. I trust that our good luck will continue to the end."

"I hope so too," the captain said. "I grant that a spell of such weather as we have been favoured with is apt to become a little monotonous, and I generally find my passengers have a tendency after a time to become snappish and quarrelsome from sheer want of anything to occupy their minds. Still I would very much rather put up with that than with the chances of a storm."

"People must be very foolish to get out of temper because everything is going on well," Mrs. Renshaw said. "I am sure I find it perfectly delightful sailing on as we do."

"Then you see, madam, you are an indefatigable worker. I never see your hands idle; but to people who do not work, a long voyage of unbroken weather must, I can very well understand, be monotonous. Of course with us who have duties to perform it is different. I have often heard passengers wish for what they call a good gale, but I have never heard a sailor who has once experienced one express such a wish. However staunch the ship, a great gale is a most anxious time for all concerned in the navigation of a vessel. It is, too, a time of unremitting hardship. There is but little sleep to be had; all hands are constantly on deck, and are continually wet to the skin. Great seas sweep over a ship, and each man has literally his life in his hand, for he may at any moment be torn from his hold and washed overboard, or have his limbs broken by some spar or hen-coop or other object swept along by the sea. It always makes me angry when I hear a passenger express a wish for a gale, in thoughtless ignorance of what he is desiring. If a storm comes we must face it like men; and in a good ship like the *Flying Scud*, well trimmed and not overladen, and with plenty of sea-room, we may feel pretty confident as to the result; but that is a very different thing from wishing to have one."

By the time they were a fortnight out from Buenos Ayres, Mr. Atherton and James Allen were both off the sick-list; indeed the latter had been but a week in the doctor's hands. The adventure had bound the little party more closely together than before. The Allens had quite settled that when their friends once established themselves on a holding, they would, if possible, take one up in the neighbourhood; and they and the young Renshaws often regretted that Mr. Atherton was only a bird of passage, and had no intention of fixing himself permanently in the colony. The air had grown very much colder of late, and the light clothes they had worn in the tropics had already been discarded, and in the evening all were glad to put on warm wraps when they came on deck.

"I think," the captain said as Mr. Renshaw came up for his customary walk before breakfast, "we are going to have a change. The glass has fallen a good deal, and I did not like the look of the sun when it rose this morning."

"It looks to me very much as usual," Mr. Renshaw replied, shading his eyes and looking at the sun, "except perhaps that it is not quite so bright."

"Not so bright by a good deal," the captain said. "There is a change in the colour of the sky – it is not so blue. The wind has fallen too, and I fancy by twelve o'clock there will be a calm. Of course we cannot be surprised if we do have a change. We have had a splendid spell of weather, and we are getting into stormy latitudes now."

When the passengers went up after breakfast they found that the *Flying Scud* was scarcely moving through the water. The sails hung idly against the masts, and the yards creaked as the vessel rose and fell slightly on an almost invisible swell.

"This would be a good opportunity," the captain said cheerfully, "to get down our light spars; the snugger we are the better for rounding the Horn. Mr. Ryan, send all hands aloft, and send down all spars over the topmast."

The crew swarmed up the rigging, and in two hours the *Flying Scud* was stripped of the upper yards and lofty spars.

"She looks very ugly," Marion Renshaw said. "Do you not think so, Mary?"

"Hideous," Mary Mitford agreed.

"She is in fighting trim now," Mr. Atherton said.

"Yes, but who are we going to fight?" Marion asked.

"We are going to have a skirmish with the weather, I fancy, Miss Renshaw. I don't say we are going to have a storm," he went on as the girls looked anxiously up at the sky, "but you can see for yourselves that there is a change since yesterday. The wind has dropped and the sky is dull and hazy, the sea looks sullen, the bright little waves we were accustomed to are all gone, and as you see by the motion of the vessel there is an underground swell, though we can scarcely notice it on the water."

"Which way do you think the wind will come from, Mr. Atherton?" Mary Mitford asked.

"I fancy it will come from the west, or perhaps north-west. Look at those light streaks of cloud high up in the air; they are travelling to the southeast."

"Look how fast they are going," Mary Mitford said as she looked up, "and we have not a breath of wind here."

"We shall have it soon," Mr. Atherton said. "You see that dark line on the water coming up from the west. I am glad to see it. It is very much better to have the wind freshen up gradually to a gale than to lie becalmed until it strikes you suddenly."

The girls stood at the poop-rail watching the sailors engaged in putting lashings on to every movable object on deck. In ten minutes the dark line came up to them, and the *Flying Scud* began to move through the water. The courses were brailed up and stowed. The wind rapidly increased in strength, and the captain presently requested the passengers to go below, or at any rate to give up their seats.

"There is nothing like having the deck cleared," he said. "If it comes on to blow a bit and there is any movement, the chairs would be charging about from side to side, and will not only break themselves up, but perhaps break someone's leg."

Four sailors folded up the chairs, piled them together, and passing cords over them lashed them to two ring-bolts.

"Now, Mr. Ryan, we will get the topsails reefed at once. There is a heavy bank there to windward, and we had best get everything as snug as possible before that comes up to us."

The dark bank of mist rose rapidly, and the sailors had but just reached the deck after closely reefing the topsails before it was close upon them.

"Now, ladies, please go below," the captain said sharply. "There is rain as well as wind in the clouds; it will come down in bucketfuls when it does come."

This had the desired effect of sending most of the male passengers down as well as the ladies. A few remained near the companion ready to make a dive below when the squall struck them. Suddenly the wind ceased and the topsails flapped against the masts. There was a confused roaring sound astern, and a broad white line came along at race-horse speed towards the vessel.

"Get below, lads," Mr. Atherton said as he led the way, "or you will be drenched in a moment."

They had but just reached the cabin when there was a deafening roar overhead, and almost at the same moment the vessel started as if struck by a heavy blow.

"Rain and wind together!" Mr. Atherton shouted in reply to the chorus of questions from those below. "Now, all you have got to do is to make yourselves comfortable, for there will be no going up again for some time."

For five minutes the tremendous downpour continued, and then ceased as suddenly as it commenced. The wind had dropped too; and the silence after the uproar was startling. It lasted but a few seconds; then the wind again struck the ship with even greater force than before, although, as she had not lost her way, the blow was less felt by those below. In five minutes the captain came below with his oil-skin coat and sou'-wester streaming with wet.

"I have just looked down to tell you," he said cheerfully, "that everything is going on well. The first burst of these gales is always the critical point, and we can congratulate ourselves that we have got through it without losing a spar or sail – thanks to our having had sufficient warning to get all snug, and to the gale striking us gradually. I am afraid you won't have a very comfortable time of it for the next day or two; but there is nothing to be at all uneasy about. The gale is off the land, and we have sea-room enough for anything. Now we have got rid of half our cargo the ship is in her very best trim, and though we may get her decks washed a bit by and by, she will be none the worse for that."

So saying he again went up on deck. For the next three days the gale blew with fury. There were no regular meals taken below, for the vessel rolled so tremendously that nothing would have remained on the plates and dishes; and the passengers were forced to content themselves with biscuit, with an occasional cup of coffee or basin of soup that the cook managed to warm up for them. The ladies for the most part kept their cabins, as did many of the male passengers, and the absence of regular meals was the less felt as the majority were suffering from sea-sickness. Wilfrid was occasionally ill, but managed to keep up, and from time to time went on deck for a few minutes, while Marion spent most of her time on a seat at the top of the companion, looking out on the sea.

It was a magnificent sight. Tremendous waves were following the ship, each as it approached lifting her stern high in the air and driving her along at a speed that seemed terrific, then passing on and leaving her to sink down into the valley behind it. The air was thick with flying spray torn from the crest of the waves. At first it seemed as if each sea that came up behind the vessel would break over her stern and drive her head-foremost down; but as wave passed after wave without damage the sense of anxiety passed off, and Marion was able to enjoy the grandeur of the sea. Wilfrid, Mr. Atherton, and the Allens often came in to sit with her, and to take shelter for a time from the fury of the wind. But talking was almost impossible; the roar of the wind in the rigging, the noise of the waves as they struck the ship, and the confused sound of the battle of the elements being too great to allow a voice to be heard, except when raised almost to shouting point.

But Marion had no inclination for talking. Snugly as Mr. Atherton had wedged her in with pillows and cushions, it was as much as she could do to retain her seat, as the vessel rolled till the lower yards almost touched the water, and she was too absorbed in the wild grandeur of the scene to want companionship.

"The captain says the glass is beginning to rise," Mr. Atherton said as he met her the fourth morning of the gale; "and that he thinks the worst is over."

"I shall be glad for the sake of the others," Marion replied, "for the sea to go down. Father and mother are both quite worn out; for it is almost impossible for them to sleep, as they might be thrown out of their berths if they did not hold on. For myself, I am in no hurry for the gale to be over, it is so magnificently grand. Don't you think so, Mr. Atherton?"

"It is grand, lassie, no doubt," Mr. Atherton said; "but I have rather a weakness for dry clothes and comfortable meals – to say nothing of being able to walk or sit perpendicularly, and not being obliged constantly to hold on for bare life. This morning I feel that under happier circumstances I could enjoy a steak, an Irish stew, and a couple of eggs, but a biscuit and a cup of coffee are all I can hope for."

"I believe you enjoy it as much as I do, Mr. Atherton," the girl said indignantly; "else why do you stay upon deck all the time in spite of the wind and spray?"

"Well, you see, Miss Renshaw, you ladies have an objection to my smoking my pipe below; and besides, what with the groans and moans from the cabins, and the clatter of the swinging trays, and the noise of the waves, and one thing and another, there is little to tempt me to stay below. But really I shall be very glad when it is over. The ship has been doing splendidly; and as the wind has blown from the same quarter the whole time, the sea though very high is regular, and everything is going on well. Still a gale is a gale, and you can never answer for the vagaries of the wind. If it were to veer round to another quarter, for instance, you would in a few hours get a broken sea here that would astonish you, and would try all the qualities of the *Flying Scud*. Then again we have been running south with tremendous speed for the last three days, and if it were to go on for a few days longer we might find ourselves down among the ice. Therefore, I say, the sooner the gale is over the better I shall be pleased."

Towards evening there was a sensible abatement in the force of the wind, and the following morning the gale had so far abated that the captain prepared to haul his course for the west.

"We have been running south at the rate of fully three hundred miles a day," he said, "and are now very far down. The moment this warm wind drops and we get it from the south you will find that you will need every wrap you have to keep you warm. If the gale had lasted I had made up my mind to try to get her head to it, and to lie to. We are a great deal too close to the region of ice to be pleasant."

The change in the course of the vessel was by no means appreciated by the passengers, for the motion was very much rougher and more unpleasant than that to which they had now become accustomed. However, by the following morning the wind had died away to a moderate breeze, and the sea had very sensibly abated. The topsails were shaken out of their reefs; and although the motion was still violent most of the passengers emerged from their cabins and came on deck to enjoy the sun, which was now streaming brightly through the broken clouds. The captain was in high glee; the ship had weathered the gale without the slightest damage. Not a rope had parted, not a sail been blown away, and the result fully justified the confidence he felt in his ship and her gear.

"It is a comfort," he remarked, "to sail under liberal owners. Now, my people insist on having their ships as well found as possible, and if I condemn spars, sails, ropes, or stays, they are replaced without a question. And it is the cheapest policy in the long run. There is nothing so costly as stinginess on board a ship. The giving way of a stay may mean the loss of the mast and all its gear, and that may mean the loss of a ship. The blowing away of a sail at a critical moment may mean certain disaster; and yet there are many owners who grudge a fathom of new rope or a bolt of canvas, and who will risk the safety of their vessels for the petty economy of a few pounds."

The next day the wind had dropped entirely. The topgallant masts were sent up with their yards and sails, and by dinner-time the *Flying Scud*

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.