Bindloss Harold

Thrice Armed

Harold Bindloss

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Bindloss H.

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CHAPTER I
JIMMY RENOUNCES HIS CAREER

It was with somewhat mixed feelings, and a curious little smile in his eyes, that Jim Wheelock stood with a brown hand on the *Tyee*'s wheel as the deep-loaded schooner slid out through Vancouver Narrows before a fresh easterly breeze. Dim heights of snow rose faintly white against the creeping dusk above her starboard hand, and the busy British Columbian city, girt with mazy wires and towering telegraph poles, was fading slowly amidst the great black pines astern. An aromatic smell of burning followed the schooner, and from the levels at the head of the Inlet a long gray smear blew out across the water. A fire which had, as not infrequently happens, passed the bounds of somebody's clearing was eating its way into that part of the great coniferous forest that rolls north from Oregon to Alaska along the wet seaboard of the Pacific Slope.

The schooner was making her six knots, with mainboom well out on her quarter and broad wisps of froth washing off beneath her bows, slanted until her leeward scuppers were close above the sliding foam. Wheelock stood right aft, with his shoulders just above the roof of the little deckhouse, and, foreshortened as the vessel was, she seemed from that point of view a mere patch of scarred and somewhat uncleanly deck surmounted by a towering mass of sail. Two partly seen figures were busy bending on a gaff-topsail about the foot of her foremast, and Wheelock turned as one of them came slouching aft when the sail had been sent aloft. The man wore dungaree and jean, with a dilapidated oilskin coat over them, for the wind was keen. He appeared to be at least fifty years of age. Leaning against the rail, he grinned at Wheelock confidentially.

"She'll make a short trip of it if this breeze holds," he said. "I guess you find things kind of different from what they were in the mail-boats?"

Jim Wheelock nodded as he pulled up a spoke of his wheel, for it was that difference that had brought the smile to his eyes. It was several years now since he had touched a vessel's wheel, or done more than raise a directing hand to the trimly uniformed quartermaster who controlled the big liner's steering engine. He was twenty-eight years of age, and held an extra-master's certificate, and he had just completed the year's training in a big British warship which gave him his commission as a lieutenant R.N.R. It was certainly a distinct change to figure as supernumerary on board the Canadian coasting schooner *Tyee*, but he did not resent the fact that it was the grizzled, hard-faced man leaning on the rail beside him who had brought him there.

"Aren't you going to get the main gaff-topsail on to her? We'll carry smooth water with us 'most across the Straits," he said.

This was not to the purpose, as both of them felt, but it gave the other man the opening for which he had been looking.

"No," he replied, "I guess not. We'll feel the wind fresher when she draws out from the land, and there's a streak of dry rot in her mainmast round the partners. That stick was sound right through when we put it into her, but it has stood the wind and weather quite a while, and I guess it's getting shaky, like its owner."

Now, the redwood logs hewn in the British Columbian forest as a rule make excellent masts, but they naturally deteriorate with time, and in some of them there is hidden a latent cause of trouble which now and then leads to premature decay. Jimmy was aware of this, and fancied that he knew why his companion had reminded him of it. It was scarcely two hours since he had arrived on board the

Tyee. He had made a long journey to join her, because his father's kinsman Prescott, her mate, had sent for him; and now, though he almost shrank from asking for the information, there were points on which it was necessary that the latter should enlighten him. He leaned on his wheel in silence a minute or two and the smile died out of his eyes. Prescott regarded him steadily.

Jim Wheelock, who hitherto had taken life lightly, could bear inspection, for he was a personable man, as more than one of the young women who traveled in the big liner of which he had been mate had decided, and he had seldom experienced much difficulty in finding a pretty partner at any of the dances given to the warship's officers. He had whimsical blue eyes, and, though he was Colonial-born, a face of the fair, clean-skinned English type, which had in it an occasional suggestion of latent force. He had a well-proportioned frame, and his life in the mail-boats, and the R.N.R. training, had set their stamp on him. Just then he was attired incongruously in an old skin-cap, battered gum-boots which reached to his knees, trousers showing signs of wear, and a steamboat mate's jacket with gilt buttons on it, in much the same condition; but, in spite of that, he did not appear the kind of man one would have expected to come upon steering a coasting schooner.

"What do you think about my father, Bob?" he asked.

"What I said in the letter," the other man replied. "I guess you ought to understand it, now you've seen him. Tom's going to looard fast, 'most as fast" – and he seemed to search for a metaphor – "as a center-boarder when her board won't come down. It kind of struck me it was 'bout time you came home and looked after things and him. That's why I wrote you. He'd have never done it, anyway."

Jim Wheelock knew this was true. Prescott's letter, which had come to hand at Portsmouth just after he had finished his navy training, had somewhat startled him, and, as the result of it, he had forthwith started for Vancouver, traveling second-class and by Colonist car, as one does not gain very much financially by serving in the R.N.R. On arriving there he had been further startled by the change in his father whom he had last seen several years earlier when Tom Wheelock was, apparently, at least, beyond the reach of adversity as the owner of several small coasting vessels, one of which he insisted on sailing personally, though this had not seemed needful at the time. It was evident to Jimmy that he had been going to leeward very fast in several ways since then.

"Yes," he said, "that is a sure thing. When did the change begin? I mean, when did things first go wrong with him?"

"When he lost the *Fish-hawk*– that was 'most four years ago. Anyway, that was when I began to notice it. Then the cannery people put on their steamboat, and he couldn't keep the *Eagle* going without their trade. She lay ashore in a bad berth with a big load of Wellington coal in her, and it cost him about a thousand dollars before she was fit for sea again. Things were slack that season, and he gave Merril a bond for the money. I guess that made the real trouble. Merril's a mighty hard man, and he has been putting the screw on him."

Jim Wheelock looked thoughtful. "A thousand dollars isn't such a great deal of money, after all. The old man seemed to have plenty of it when I left home."

"Well," said Prescott dryly, "it's quite certain he hasn't got it now, and I've more than a notion that there's a big bond on the *Tyee*. Why did he bring your sister Ellen back from Toronto?"

Jim Wheelock did not know. He had, in fact, once or twice asked himself the same question without finding an answer. His sister Eleanor, who was an ambitious and capable young woman, was now earning a pittance by teaching at a ranch near New Westminster; but she had never given him any reason in her letters for abandoning the studies she had gone East to pursue in Toronto.

"Anyway," said Prescott, "it's quite clear to me that your father needs a man with sense and snap to stand right behind him and see that he worries out of Merril's clutches. I don't know whether you can do it – I can't – I'm no use at business. Tom and I were always honest. Then, supposing you can do that, you're 'bout half-way through with the thing."

"Only half-way?"

"'Bout that. Tom's been drifting to looard. You want to brace him sharp up on the wind again."

He broke off somewhat abruptly, for the scuttle slide in the deckhouse roof was flung back, and a man below lifted his head above it.

"Come right down and get your supper, Jimmy. Bob will take your wheel," he said.

Jimmy left the helm to Prescott, and with an effort he braced himself for the interview before him as he descended to the little stuffy cabin. It was dimly lighted by an oil-lamp that creaked as it swung, though the *Tyee* was ploughing her way westward steadily as yet. A little stove made it almost intolerably hot, and the swirl of brine beneath the lee quarter filled it with a sound that was like the rattle of sliding gravel. Jimmy sat down, and ate the pork, potatoes, fresh bread, and desiccated apples set before him, which he surmised might be considered somewhat of a banquet on board the *Tyee*, and then he took out his pipe and turned toward his father as he filled his pannikin again with strong green tea. He had arrived in Vancouver only that afternoon, and they had had no time for conversation in the hurry of getting to sea.

"Take some whisky in it?" asked Tom Wheelock. "It's not much of a supper after what you've been used to on board the liners."

"No, thanks," said Jimmy. "I'm glad I didn't miss you."

"Got your wire," said Wheelock, who helped himself liberally to the whisky. "We weren't through with the loading until yesterday, and, though the folks want those sawmill fixings bad, I figured we could wait another twenty-four hours. It's good to see you sitting there; but I don't know yet what brought you over. It's quite a long way."

Jimmy spent some time in filling his pipe. He was a truthful person, and Prescott, who wrote the letter, had pledged him to secrecy; then, too, he was by no means certain that his father would appreciate what either of them had done, or would consider it in any way necessary. He also had scarcely got used to the change in his circumstances and surroundings, and did not feel quite at ease. On the last liner he sailed in, the officers dined in the saloon, and, though the battleship's wardroom was less luxurious, it was, at least, very different from the *Tyee*'s quarter-cabin. Tin pannikins and plates of indurated ware lay on a soiled, uncovered table; a grimy brown blanket from the skipper's bunk trailed down across the locker that served as a settee; and the fish-oil lamp smelt horribly. Then he glanced at his father, who sat silent, sipping his tea, which was freely laced with whisky.

Tom Wheelock was by no means dressed as neatly as most of the Vancouver wharf-hands, and he looked like a man who had lost heart, and pride as well. He was gaunt and big-boned, with a seaman's weather-darkened face, but there was weariness and something that suggested vacancy in its expression. He and Jimmy had the same blue eyes, and they were kindly and honest in the case of each; but Tom Wheelock's were a trifle watery, and there was a certain bagginess under them, while his mouth was slack. In fact, the man, as his son recognized, appeared to have sunk into a state of limpness that was mental as well as physical.

"Well," said Jimmy, with a little laugh, "I don't quite know. There were, you see, several reasons. To begin with, I had to come out of the mail-boat for my year's training, and when that was over there were a good many men on the Company's list to be worked off before they wanted me again. Trade is slack over there, and it seemed wiser to await my turn. After all, it doesn't cost so much to come across second-class and Colonist; and I guessed you would be glad to see me."

"So I am;" and there was no doubt that Wheelock meant it. "I've been wanting you quite a while, Jimmy. Things aren't going well with me. Take some whisky?"

It was evident to Jimmy that his father already had taken as much as was good for most men; and he did not often shrink from a responsibility, that is, when he recognized it as such, which is now and then a little difficult when one is young.

"Well," he said, "this time I guess I will."

He took the bottle, and, after helping himself sparingly, contrived to slip it out of sight on the locker.

"How's Eleanor?" he asked.

"Quite well; but though she has her mother's grit, life's hard on the girl. Ellen could have done 'most anything if she'd got her diplomas, or whatever they are, and I had figured I'd do something for one of my children when I sent her back East. It was your mother's brother – the brains come from that side of the family – did everything for you. A kind of pity you and he quarreled, Jimmy!"

Jimmy smiled drily as he remembered the year he had spent in Winnipeg with the grim business man before the call of the sea that he was born to listen to grew irresistible and the rupture came. Young as he was then, he had proved himself equal in strength of purpose to the hard old man, and had gone to sea in an English ship. It cost his father fifty pounds for his outfit and premium, and that was all that Tom Wheelock had done for him. He had made his own way into the steamers, and the extra-master certificate and the commission in the R.N.R. he owed to himself. Now it was evident that he must renounce all that they might bring him – at least, for a while.

"I don't think we ever would have hit it off together; and I can't help a fancy that, after all, he didn't blame me very much for taking my own way in spite of him," he said. "Still, it is a pity Eleanor had to come back. I suppose keeping her in Toronto was out of the question?"

Wheelock's eyes seemed to grow a trifle bloodshot, and his voice sank to a hoarser note. "Quite. I might have done it but for the bond I gave Merril when the *Eagle* went ashore. It wasn't that big a one, but he fixed up quite a lot of things I never figured on. I was to insure to full value, and have her repaired whenever his surveyor considered she wanted it. Twice the man ran me up a big unnecessary bill, and I had to go to Merril for the money. Now the boat's his, and there's a bond on the *Tyee*. When the old man goes under, you'll remember who it was squeezed the life out of him, Jimmy. Say, where d'you put that whisky?"

"I'm not quite through with it yet;" and Jimmy, who did not pass it to him, smiled reassuringly. "Anyway, I wouldn't worry too much about Merril. I've a few dollars laid by, and I'm going to stay right here and look after you. Bob Prescott tells me the Siwash wants to go ashore, and that makes a berth for me. It's scarcely likely the Company will want me for three months or more."

The old man looked at him with a gleam of comprehension in his watery eyes. "Jimmy," he said, "you have been a good son – and it wasn't quite my fault I never did anything for you. Your mother was often ailing, and when I sent her East twice to the specialists the freights I was getting would scarcely foot the bill. Oh, yes, things were generally tight with me. Now they're tight again; but when Merril wants my blood you've come back to see it out with me."

He made a gesture of weariness. "Well, I guess I'll turn in. I've been trailing round the city most of the day after a man who owes me forty dollars – and I'm 'way from being as young as I used to be."

He climbed somewhat stiffly into his bunk, and Jimmy went up on deck. It was dark now, and the *Tyee*, leaning down until the foot of her lee bulwarks was almost in the foam, swept through the dark water with a leisurely dip and swing. A dim star or two hung over her mastheads, and the peak of the big gaff-topsail swung athwart them a little blacker than the night; but there was no shimmer of light on all the water, and the schooner swung out to westward, vague and shadowy, with one blurred shape gripping her straining wheel. It reminded Jimmy of the sailing-ship days when he had set his teeth and borne what came to him – wet and cold, utter weariness, want of sleep, purposeless exactions, and brutal hazing. Those black days had gone. He had lived through them, and had been about to reap his reward when the summons had come and he had gone back West to his duty. The broken-down man in the little cabin needed him, as Jimmy, who tried not to admit the greatness of the change in him, realized. Then he turned as Prescott spoke to him from the wheel.

"Now you've had a talk to him, I guess you'll understand why I sent for you," he said. "You've got to take hold and straighten things. Tom's been letting go fast."

Jimmy Wheelock said nothing, but he knew that in the meanwhile he must put his career aside; and once more he set his lips and braced himself to face the task before him as he had done often in the sailing-ship days.

CHAPTER II
TO WINDWARD

Two days had slipped away since Jimmy joined the *Tyee*, when, with her dew-wet canvas slatting at every roll, she crept out from the narrow waters into the Pacific. Astern of her the Olympians towered high above the forests of Washington, a great serrated ridge of frosted silver that cut coldly white against the blue of the morning sky. To starboard the shore of Vancouver Island rose, a faint blur of misty pines, and ahead the sea was dimmed by drifting vapors out of which the long swell swung glassily. At times a wandering zephyr crisped it with a darker smear, and the *Tyee* crawled ahead a little. Then she stopped again, heaving her bows high out of the oily sea, while everything in her banged and rattled.

There was nothing that any one on board her could do but wait for the breeze and wonder whether it would come from the right direction. Jimmy sat on the deckhouse with his pipe in his hand, and Tom Wheelock, whose face looked careworn in the early light and showed pasty gray patches amidst its bronze, glanced westward a trifle anxiously as he held the jerking wheel.

"It's a kind of pity we lost that breeze," he said. "The people up yonder want those sawmill fixings, and with the wind from the east we'd 'most have fetched the Inlet to-night. There was talk of somebody putting a steamboat on, but the mill's a small one, and they figured they'd give me a show as long as I could keep them going. I've got to do it. There's a living in the contract."

Then his face hardened suddenly, and he sighed. "That is, there would have been if Merril hadn't got his grip on me. That man wants everything."

He appeared about to say something further, but just then Prescott flung the scuttle slide back, and a smell of coffee and frizzling pork flowed out of it.

"If you want your breakfast, Tom, I guess you'd better get it," he said, and lumbered round the deckhouse toward the wheel.

Wheelock went below, and Jimmy, who seemed to forget that he had meant to light his pipe, glanced thoughtfully at Prescott.

"Who is this Merril, Bob?" he asked.

Prescott made a vague gesture. "I guess he's everything. He has a finger in most of what goes on in this Province, and feels round with it for the money. Calls himself general broker and ship-store dealer; but he has money in everything, from bush ranches to steamboats."

"You mean he holds stock in them?"

"No," said Prescott, "I guess I don't. I'm not smart at business, and Tom isn't either, or he'd never have let Merril get his claws on him; but it's quite plain to me that stocks don't count along with mortgages and bonds. When you buy stock you take your chances, and quite often that's 'bout all; but when you hold a bond at a big interest you usually get the ship or mill. Anyway, that's how Merril fixes it."

Jimmy lighted his pipe, but he looked more thoughtful than ever, as, in fact, he was. Hitherto, he had taken life lightly, for, after all, wet and cold, screaming gale and stinging spray, are things one gets used to and faces unconcernedly; but Jimmy could recognize a responsibility, and he realized that there was now to be a change. Tom Wheelock was growing prematurely old and shaky, and it was, it seemed, his son's part to free him from the load of debt that was crushing him, if this by any means could be done; if not, at least to share it with him. He feared it would be the latter. Hitherto he had waged only the clean, primitive strife with the restless sea; but he did not shrink from the prospect of the meaner and more arduous conflict with the wiles of man and the forces of capital, or consider that in renouncing his career he was doing a commendable thing. He was by no means brilliant intellectually, though he had a certain shrewdness and a ready wit; and it only occurred to

him that the course he had decided on was the obvious one. He did not even think it worth while to mention that he had done so, which indeed would have been unnecessary, since Prescott seemed to take it for granted.

"I believe you had the wind from the east for several days," he said. "Why didn't you run across before?"

"Well," replied Prescott reflectively, "we might have done so, but Tom didn't seem greatly stuck on trying it. Took time over his loading when he got your wire. Perhaps he didn't want to leave you hanging round Vancouver until we got back again."

Jimmy said nothing – he had partly expected this; and while he smoked his second pipe, the vapors were rolled apart, and the breeze came down on them. Unfortunately it came from the northwest, which, as the sawmill they were bound for stood at the head of a deep inlet on the west coast of Vancouver Island, was ahead of them; so for a while they let her stretch out into the Pacific, close-hauled upon the starboard tack.

The *Tyee* was comparatively fast, and, under all the sail they could pile on to her, excepting the main gaff-topsail, she drove along with a wide curl of foam under her lee bow and the froth lapping high and white on her side. Then by degrees the long roll of the Pacific heaved itself up into steep, blue-sided seas with tops of incandescent whiteness, and as she lurched over them the spray whirled in filmy clouds from her plunging bows. Still the breeze freshened, and by noon they hove her to with jibs aback while they hauled two reefs down in her mainsail, and it became necessary for somebody to crawl out to the end of its tilting boom, which stretched a good fathom beyond her stern. Prescott was a little too old for that work; Tom Wheelock held the wheel; and the Siwash deck-hand was busy forward. Jimmy laughed as he swung himself up to the footrope.

"It's several years since I've done anything of this kind, but I dare say I can tie those after-points in," he said.

He clawed his way out, and, as he hung with waist across the spar and both hands busy while the *Tyee*, flinging the spray all over her, plunged upon the long, foam-tipped roll, a big Empress liner came up from the eastward, white and majestic. She drove close by the schooner with a slow and stately dip and swing, and Jimmy Wheelock, clinging to the *Tyee*'s reef-points, smiled somewhat curiously as he glanced up at her. Her tall side rose above him like a wall, and he saw the cluster of saloon passengers beneath the tier of deckhouses move toward the rail to gaze down upon the little dingy vessel, and the two trim officers high above them in the sunshine on the slanting bridge. That was his world – one in which steam did the hard work, and man merely pressed the telegraph handle or laid a finger on a spoke of the little steering wheel; but it was a world on which he had turned his back, and there was nothing to be gained by repining.

He broke two of his nails before he finished his task and dropped from the footrope to the *Tyee*'s deck, and the liner had sunk to a gleaming white blur and a smoke-trail on the rim of the sea before they had reefed the foresail and once more got way on her. Then Prescott grinned at Jimmy as he glanced toward the fading smear of vapor.

"A head-wind's quite a little matter to that boat," he said. "I guess you'd feel more at home on board of her?"

Jimmy laughed good-humoredly. "Perhaps I would, but after all I don't know that it counts for very much."

They came round some hours later, and, heading her in for the land on the other tack, found how little they had made to windward, whereupon there followed a consultation. Prescott was for running back and coming to an anchor in smooth water to wait for a shift of wind, but Wheelock would go on. He blinked at the white sea to windward with watery eyes, while the *Tyee*, putting her bows in, flung the spray all over her; but there was a certain grimness in Tom Wheelock's eyes, for, if he was not smart at business, he was at least a resolute seaman.

"Those sawmill people want their fixings, and if we're to hold on to their contract I guess they've got to have them," he said. "She should thrash down to the Inlet by to-morrow night. I figure she'd go along a little easier without her staysail."

They hauled it down; but the *Tyee*, being loaded deep with heavy machinery, was not appreciably drier afterward, and by the time the angry, saffron sunset faded off the foam-crested sea, she put her bows in somewhat frequently. Then there was a thud as she charged a big comber, and the frothy cataract that seethed in over her weather rail swirled aft a foot deep, while the spray blew all over her. Jimmy, buttoned to the throat in oilskins, stood at her wheel dripping, through four hours of darkness; and then, crawling down into the little cabin, which was intolerably foul, flung himself into his bunk and incontinently fell asleep, with the thud and swish of falling water going on above him. When he awakened, his first proceeding was to grope for the button that would summon a steward boy to bring him his morning coffee, but as he could not find it he looked around and saw his wet oilskins, which had shaken off the hook, sliding amidst the water up and down the *Tyee*'s cabin floor. Then he remembered suddenly, and, dropping from his bunk, put on the oilskins and went up on deck.

A sheet of spray temporarily blinded him as he crawled out of the scuttle, and then there was little to be seen but a haze of it flying athwart a gray sea lined by frothy ridges and smears of low-driving cloud. The *Tyee*'s slanted mastheads seemed to rake through the latter, and she was wet everywhere; but she was still hammering to windward with bows that swung up streaming over the long seas. On the one hand, a dingy smear, that might have been a point with pines on it, lifted itself out of the grayness, and Tom Wheelock pointed to it as he swayed with his wheel. His wet face was almost gray, and Jimmy could see the suggestive bagginess under his eyes.

"I guess we should fetch the Inlet by dark if it doesn't harden any more; but we'll have another reef down now you're up," he said.

They got the reef in with some difficulty, for all of them were needed to haul the leech-earing down; and, because the Siwash hand was a better boatman than sailor, Jimmy went out to the end of the boom again to tie the after-points. When he came back the *Tyee* proceeded a little more dryly, with the big gray seas that were topped with livid froth and had deep hollows between them rolling up in long succession to meet her. She went through some of them, for the sawmill machinery was a dead-weight in her, and a white cataract foamed across her forward. When she plunged into one that was larger than usual, Prescott, who now stood knee deep at her wheel, shook his head.

"Tom didn't ought to expect it of her," he said. "He wouldn't have held her at it if he hadn't been mighty afraid of losing that contract."

Jimmy made no answer. He understood by this time how his father was circumstanced, and had discovered already that the man who stands between the devil and the deep sea cannot afford to be particular. Merril, who held a bond on the *Tyee*, might, it seemed, very well stand for the devil.

They thrashed her to windward most of that day. The sea got worse, and there was not a dry stitch on any of them; but just at sunset the clouds were rent apart, and Wheelock, who was standing on the deckhouse, pointed to something that loomed amidst the vapor as they reeled inshore.

"The head!" he said. "The Inlet's about two miles beyond it."

Prescott glanced at Jimmy as he pulled up the wheel. "With a blame ugly tide-rip setting dead to windward across the mouth of it!"

Jimmy said nothing, though naturally he was aware that when the ocean streams run against the breeze they are very apt to pile up whatever sea there is into curling, hollow-crested combers. A craft of the *Tyee*'s size will often snugly ride out a hard gale – that is, if she is hove-to under a strip or two of canvas; but to drive her to windward when she must meet the onslaught of the seas, and go through them, is an altogether different matter, and it seemed to him that she was already doing as much as any one reasonably could expect from her. Then his father came down from the deckhouse.

"Well," he said, "she has got to go through it; those people want their fixings. I guess we'll heave her round."

The words were simple, but they implied a good deal. Wheelock could have heaved his schooner to, or could have run away for shelter in another inlet down the coast; but, as he had said, the sawmill people wanted their machinery, and when he must choose between it and the devil he would sooner face his ancient enemy the sea. Its attack was honest and open, and the man with nerve enough might meet and withstand the charge of its seething combers. Quickness of hand and rude, primitive valor counted here, but it was otherwise in the insidious conflict with the human schemer. Tom Wheelock's eyes were watery, but there was a snap in them as he signed to Prescott and laid his hands on the wheel.

"Get forward, Jimmy, and tend your head-sheets," he said. "We'll have her round."

She came round, but none too readily; and as they stretched out seaward Jimmy had a brief vision of great rocks and hollows filled with pines that opened out and closed on one another. Then as he glanced to windward he saw the seatops heave athwart a blaze of crimson and saffron low down under ragged wisps of cloud.

They brought her round again presently, and she reeled in shoreward to weather the second head on that side of the Inlet, with her little three-reefed mainsail wet to its peak and the two jibs above her bowsprit streaming at every plunge, while the big combers in the tideway smote her weather-bow and poured out to leeward in long wisps of brine. Still, she was slowly opening up the sheltered Inlet, and it was only a question whether she would go clear enough of the head on that tack. It was, however, a somewhat momentous question, for it seemed to Jimmy very doubtful whether she would come round with them again.

Tom Wheelock stayed at the helm, and the head that had grown dim again lifted its vast rock wall higher and higher out of the whirling vapors that streamed amid the shadowy pines. It grew very close to them, but the *Tyee* was half-buried forward most of the time, and the break beyond the crag, where smooth water lay, had crept a little forward instead of aft from under her lee-bow when a comber higher than the rest hove itself up to weather, and fell upon her. It foamed across her forward, and when it went seething aft as she swung her bows up there was a crash, and Tom Wheelock loosed the spinning wheel.

Jimmy saw him strike the bulwark and Prescott clutch him; but, knowing that the plunge would probably make an end of the schooner if she rammed another sea, he sprang to the wheel. She was coming up when he seized it, which almost threw him over it, and there was a bang like a rifle-shot as one of her streaming jibs was blown away. The veins swelled on his forehead as he forced the helm up, and as the *Tyee* fell off on her course again he had a momentary vision of a great wall of rock that seemed to be creeping up on them. He also saw a man lying in the water that sluiced about her deck, while another who strove to hold him with one hand clung to a stanchion. Then, while he set his teeth and braced himself against the drag of the wheel, he could discern nothing but a haze of flying brine, and could feel the hard-pressed vessel strain and tremble under him.

He did not know how long the tension lasted, nor for a minute or two did he see much of Prescott and his father; but at last the rocks seemed to slide away, and the *Tyee* drove through the furious turmoil in the mouth of the Inlet. Then the wind fell suddenly, and, rising upright, the dripping schooner slid forward beneath long ranks of misty pines. He left the helm to the Siwash, and Prescott and he between them got Wheelock down into the little cabin. He gasped when they had put him into his bunk and poured a liberal measure of raw whisky down his throat.

"Well," he said faintly, "I guess we've saved that contract. You weathered the head?"

"We did," answered Prescott. "Jimmy grabbed the wheel in time. Seems to me we had 'bout twenty fathoms to spare. Feel as if you'd broke anything inside you?"

Tom Wheelock moved himself a little, and groaned. "No," he said, "I guess I haven't; but it hurt me considerably when I washed up against the rail. Mightn't have felt it one time, but I'm getting old and shaky. Anyway, you can light out and get your anchor clear. I'm feeling kind of dizzy."

Prescott went up the ladder, but Jimmy stayed where he was, and did not go up on deck until his father's eyes closed. It was quite dark, and he could see only vague, shadowy mountains black

against the sky. Presently, a long Siwash canoe with several men paddling hard on board her came sliding down the dim lane of water that seemed to wind into the heart of the forests. She stopped alongside, and a man climbed on board.

"We've been expecting you the last two days, and I'm glad you got in now," he said. "Merril, who talks of running a steamer up this coast, has been worrying our Vancouver people to make him an offer for their carrying. It's quite likely they'd have made a deal with him if you'd kept us waiting."

They made the canoe fast, and the *Tyee* slowly crept on beneath the shadowy mountains and the misty pines, for only a faint air of wind disturbed the deep stillness here. Jim Wheelock, however, noticed very little as he leaned on the rail with a vindictive hatred in his heart for the man who, it seemed, was bent upon his father's ruin.

CHAPTER III
JIMMY MAKES FRIENDS

They had landed the machinery, and partly loaded the *Tyee* with dressed lumber, when Jimmy Wheelock, who was aching in every limb after a day's arduous toil, sat, cigar in hand, in the office of the sawmill manager. It was singularly untidy as well as unclean, for few men in that country have time to consider their comfort. Odd bottles of engine-oil and samples of belting lay amid the litter of sketches and specifications, while the plates and provision-cans on the table suggested that the manager and his guest had just finished their evening meal. The window was open wide, and a clean smell of freshly cut cedar drifted in with the aromatic fragrance of the pines. From where he sat Wheelock could see them rolling up the steep hillside with the white mists streaming athwart them, and the narrow lane of clear, green water winding past their feet. There was deep stillness among them, for the mill was silent at last, and it was only now and then that a voice rose faintly from the little wooden settlement which straggled up the riverside.

The manager, dressed in a store jacket and trousers of jean, lay upon what seemed to be a tool-chest, and he had, like Wheelock, a cigar of exceptional flavor in his hand. He was a young, dark-eyed man, somewhat spare of frame, and when he spoke, his quick, nervous gestures rather than his accent, which was by no means marked, proclaimed him an American of the Pacific Slope. It was characteristic that Wheelock, who had spent less than a week in his company, already felt on familiar terms with him. He had discovered that it is usually difficult to make the acquaintance of an insular Englishman in anything like that time.

"Old man feeling any better this afternoon?" inquired his companion.

"He says so;" and Jimmy looked thoughtful, as he had done somewhat frequently of late, though this had not been a habit of his. "Still, he was flung rather heavily against the rail, and, though he insisted on working, I'm not quite satisfied about him."

The American nodded comprehendingly. "Parents are a responsibility now and then. I lost mine, though. Raised myself somehow down in Washington. Anyway, your father has been going down grade fast the two years I've known him, and I'm sorry. He's a straight man. I like him."

A trace of darker color crept into Jimmy's bronze, though he was aware that candor of that kind is usual on the Pacific Slope, and there was nothing he could resent in his companion's manner. However, he made no answer, and the American spoke again.

"I'm glad you got in on time. As I told Prescott, Merril has a notion of going into the coasting trade, and wants our carrying. He has a pull on some of our stockholders, but I don't like the man, and you'll get our freight as long as you can keep us going. Why did you let the old man borrow that money from Merril?"

"I wasn't here. In fact, it's only a few weeks since I left an English ship at Portsmouth."

"Mail-boat?"

"No," said Jimmy; "a warship."

The American looked at him hard a moment, and then made a little gesture with the hand that held the cigar. He had seen Jimmy Wheelock carrying boards on his shoulder all that day, and now he was dressed in the Canadian wharf-hand's jean; but he had no difficulty in believing him.

"Lieutenant in your second fighting line? Came back to look after the old man?" he said. "Well, I guess he needs you. You want to keep your eye on Merril, too. If you don't, he'll have the schooner. It's a sure thing."

Jimmy realized, without knowing exactly why, that he could give this man, whom he had met only a few days ago, his confidence.

"The same thing has occurred to me," he said. "Do you mind telling me what you know about Merril?"

"No; it's only what everybody else knows. Merril's a machine for stamping money – out of anything. Got a ship-supply store in Vancouver, and is working himself into the general carrying business. Lends money on vessels, and fits them out. He'll give you a long credit, at a blame long interest, and by and by he gets the vessel, or a controlling share in her. He can't touch the express freight and passenger traffic – knows too much to kick against the C.P.R. or the big sound steamers; but there's the general freight for the mines, sawmills and canneries up and down the coast, and his vessels won't cost him much the way he buys them. The trade's going to be a big one. If I'd forty thousand dollars I'd buy a steamer."

Jimmy's eyes twinkled. "A steamboat isn't a sawmill. Would you know how to run her?"

The American laughed. "If I didn't, I guess I could learn. It can't be harder than playing the fiddle, and I've worried into that."

He stopped a moment, and then announced quietly with the almost dramatic abruptness which usually characterized him: "Anyway we'd make something of it. I'd put you in command of her."

"I wonder what leads you to believe I would suit you?" said Jimmy reflectively.

His companion waved his cigar. "Saw you packing lumber. You stayed right with the contract, though you'd never done the thing before. Know what the first few days are – I've been there. Stacked two-inch planks in Washington when I was seventeen and my strength hadn't quite come to me, and went home at nights walking double, with every joint in my body aching. Then they started me log-wedging, and that's 'most enough to break a weak man's heart. Still, I stayed with it, and now I'm drawing royalties on my swing-frame and gang-saw patents, and hold stock in several mills!"

This was, perhaps, a trifle egotistical; but then it was, or would have been in most other countries, somewhat of an achievement for one, who had commenced with the lowest and most brutal labor, to make himself patentee, manager and stockholder, while still a very young man; and Jimmy had met mail-boat officers who gave themselves a good many airs on the strength of possessing a refined taste in uniform tailoring and a prepossessing personality. Individually, he felt it was more reasonable to be satisfied with one's ability to invent and run a mill. Just then, however, the door opened, and another man came in. He wore a blue shirt which fell open at the neck for want of buttons, and jean trousers which were very old and torn, and there were smears of oil and paint on his hands.

"I came to ask when you are going to saw me those fir frames, Jordan?" he said.

"Take a cigar!" said the American, and turned to Jimmy, with a grin. "Ever heard of Thoreau who lived at Walden Pond?"

Jimmy had, as it happened, read his book on board one of the mail-boats, though he scarcely would have fancied that Jordan had done so. The latter indicated the newcomer with a wave of his hand.

"Well," he said, "that's another of them, though he lives in a yacht and his name is Valentine. There are men – and they're not all cranks – who seem to think the life most other people lead isn't good enough for them."

Valentine, who looked very different from any of the yachtsmen Jimmy had seen on the English coast or elsewhere, sat down, and the latter was a trifle astonished when he said, "That wasn't why Thoreau went to Walden. He was an abolitionist, and made Walden a station for running niggers into Canada. Anyway, why does a man want to go into business and slave to pile up money, when he can have the greatest thing in nature for nothing at all?"

"What's that?" asked Jordan. "It's not the young woman one may take a fancy to; she usually costs a good deal."

Valentine laughed softly, and looked hard at Jimmy. "Though you earn your bread upon it, I think you know. There's nothing in this little world to compare with the sea!"

Then he stretched out his hand for the cigar-box. "I'll take two. It's the brand your directors use. Saw those frames to-morrow, or I'll come round and raise the roof for you. In the meanwhile, if you'll come along, Mr. Wheelock, I'll show you my boat."

Jordan grinned at Jimmy. "Better go along. You'll have to see her, anyway."

The two went out and left him, and as they paddled down the Inlet past the endless ranks of climbing pines whose aromatic odors were heavy in the dew-chilled air, Valentine glanced at his companion.

"This world was made good, except the cities; but nothing was made much better than that smell," he said. "It doesn't put unrest and longing into you like the smell of the sea-grass and the sting of the powdered spray; there's tranquillity and sound sleep in it; and, too, it gives one comprehension."

This was not what Jimmy would have expected from his companion, but he understood. In that deep rift of the ranges where no wild wind ever entered, and the sunlight called up clean, healing savors from the solemn pines, one could realize that there was a beneficent purpose behind the scheme of things, and that the world was good. Still, Jimmy usually kept any fancies of that kind to himself.

"The introduction seems familiar," he said. "I almost fancy I have heard something very much like it before."

"It's quite likely;" and Valentine laughed. "It has been said of several other things, including tobacco."

"You come here often?"

"Usually to refit. It's quiet and clean; and I like Jordan. He's a man with a mind, and straight, so far as it can be expected of any one in business."

"You don't follow any?"

Valentine smiled somewhat curiously. "I'm a pariah. I take toll of the deer and halibut instead of my fellow-men – that is, except when I charter the boat now and then. Still, it's only when money is scarce that I shoot and fish for the market. You see, I'm not in any sense of the word a yachtsman. I live at sea because I like it. The boat makes an economical home."

Jimmy felt that this was as much as he was intended to know, and he asked no more questions until presently they slid alongside a powerful cutter of some thirty tons, which lay moored with an anchor outshore and a breast-rope to the pines. Valentine took him into the little plainly fitted forecastle where he lived, and afterwards led him through the ornate saloon and white-enameled after-cabin. "That," he said, as they went up the ladder again, "is for the charterers, though I'm by no means sure the next lot will be pleased. It's a little difficult to get the smell of halibut out of her."

"You sail her alone?" asked Jimmy, who sat down on the skylights.

"Generally. Wages run high in this country. But I have to ship a man or two when any of the city people charter her. She's not so much of a handful when you get used to her."

He did not seem to expect Jimmy to talk, and they sat silent a while, the latter smoking thoughtfully as he looked about him. It was growing dark, and the lower pines were wrapped in fleecy mist, out of which a rigid branch rose raggedly here and there; but the heights of the range still cut hard and sharp against the cold blueness of the evening sky. Westward, a soft smoky glow burned faintly behind a great hill shoulder, and, for no sound reached them from the little settlement, it was impressively still.

Jimmy felt the vague influence of the country creeping over him. It is a land of wild grandeur, empty for the most part as yet, though it is rich in coal and iron as well as in gold and silver, and its hillsides are draped with forests whose timber would supply the world. It is also, as he seemed to feel, for the bold man, a land of possibilities. Enterprise, and even labor, is worth a good deal there; and Jimmy felt that if his heart were stout enough such a land might have more to offer him than a mate's berth on a heavily mortgaged schooner. Jordan evidently believed that one might achieve affluence by making the requisite effort, and Jimmy considered himself equally as capable as the sawmiller. Still, as he sat there in the dewy stillness breathing the clean scent of the pines, he realized that there

was also something to be said for his companion's attitude. He asked and strove for nothing, but was content to live and enjoy what was so bountifully given him. Perhaps Valentine guessed where his thoughts were leading him, for once more he broke into his little soft laugh.

"One is as well off here as in the cities," he said. "Are you one of the hustlers like Jordan yonder?"

Though it was growing dark, Jimmy, disregarding the question, looked at him thoughtfully. "Do you know? Have you tried the other thing?"

"Oh, yes!" said Valentine, with a wry smile in his eyes. "I have tried them both, and that is one reason why I'm here. You haven't answered me; though, after all, I guess it's an unnecessary question."

This time Jimmy laughed. "I don't know that I have any option. It seems that a life of the kind Jordan leads will be forced on me. There are circumstances in which one's inclinations don't count for very much, you see. Anyway, it's almost time I turned in; I've been loading lumber since early morning."

Valentine got into the dory, and paddled him to the little wharf where the *Tyee* was lying.

"Come off again, and any time you see the boat along the coast I'll expect you on board," he said.

Jimmy climbed on board the schooner, and, descending to the little cabin, found his father lying propped up in his bunk. His eyes were more watery than ever, and when he spoke his voice was a trifle thick. The light of the fish-oil lamp projected his worn face blackly in gaunt profile on the bulkhead.

"Been talking to Jordan? He's a man to make friends with," he said. "Guess he and the other young ones with blood and grit in them are going to set their mark on this country. It mayn't count against you if you leave the mail-boats, Jimmy. Manhood stands first here, though my day has gone. Perhaps I fooled my chances, or didn't see them when they came. But you're going to be smarter; you have red blood and brains."

Jimmy said nothing. He had noticed already that Tom Wheelock had fallen into a habit of inconsequent rambling, and there were times when it pained him to listen. The old man, who did not seem to notice his silence, went on:

"You got them from your mother, as Eleanor has done. She died – and I'm often thankful – before the bad days came. Guess it would break her heart if she could see her husband now, a played-out, broken man, with a bond on which he can't pay the interest on his last vessel. Maybe things would have been different if she had lived. I was never smart at business – I am a sailorman – and it was your mother who showed me how to build the fleet up and save the money to buy each new boat. When you went to sea we had four of them. Now they're all gone. The last was the *Fish-hawk*, and she lies in six fathoms where she drove across the Qualyclot reef with her starboard bilge ground in."

"Merril doesn't own the *Tyee* yet," said Jimmy.

"No," said Wheelock drowsily; "but unless you know enough to stop him he's going to. You'll have nothing, Jimmy, when I'm gone; but you'll remember it was that man squeezed the blood out of me. Anyway, it won't be long. I'm played out, and kind of tired of it all. Couldn't worry through without your mother. Never was smart at business – I am a sailorman. It was she who made me boss of the Wheelock fleet, and now I guess she's waiting for the old and broken man."

His elbow slipped from under him, and, falling back, he lay inert and silent, with eyes that slowly closed, and his face showing very gaunt and unhealthily pallid in patches under the fish-oil lamp. There was no longer any suggestion of strength in it, for dejection had slackened his mental grip as indulgence had sapped the vigor of his body. Jimmy Wheelock, who remembered what his father had been, felt a haze creep across his eyes as he gazed at him, and then a sudden thrill of anger seemed to fill his blood with fire. Merril, who held a bond on the *Tyee*, had, it seemed, a good deal to answer for.

CHAPTER IV
IN THE TOILS

It was a month later when Jimmy Wheelock stood leaning on the *Tyee*'s rail one morning, while she lay alongside a sawmill wharf at Vancouver. The Siwash deck-hand had left them, and Jimmy, who had done his work, was very hot and grimy after trimming ballast in the hold. He and Prescott were waiting for another few loads of it, and expected that the *Tyee* would go to sea shortly after they got them. This, however, was by no means certain, since a surveyor had come on board a few days ago, and Tom Wheelock, who had been summoned to Merril's office, had not yet come back.

It was then about eleven o'clock, and the broad Inlet sparkled in a blaze of sunshine, with a fresh breeze that came off from the black pine forests crisping it into little splashing ripples. Jimmy was glad of the chill of it on his dripping face, and as grateful for the respite from toil with the shovel, as he gazed at the climbing city. It rose with the dark pines creeping close up to it, ridged with mazy wires and towering poles, roof above roof, up the low rise, and the air was filled with the sound of its activity. A train of ponderous freight-cars rolled clanging along the wharf; a great locomotive with tolling bell was backing more cars in; and the scream of saws rang stridently through the clatter of the winches as Empress liner and sound steamer hove their cargo in. Jimmy Wheelock had, of course, gazed upon a similar scene in other ports, but there was, he seemed to feel, a difference here.

In this new land the toiler was not bound by iron laws of caste and custom forever to his toil. The Mountain Province was awakening to a recognition of its wealth, and there was room in it and to spare for men with brains as well as men with muscle. There were forests to be cleared, roads to be built, and mine adits to be driven, and nobody troubled himself greatly about the antecedents of his hired hand. If the latter professed himself able to do what was required of him, he was, as they say in that country, given a show. Jimmy also knew that where all were ready to attempt the impossible, and toiled as, except in the New West, man has seldom toiled before, it was the English sailormen, runagates from their vessels, who had built the most perilous railroad trestles, and marched with the vanguard when the treasure-seekers pushed their way into the wilderness of rock and snow. He felt as he listened to the scream of the saws and the tolling of the locomotive bells that amid all that feverish activity there must be some scope for him, which was reassuring, since it was becoming clear that he would have to find some means of supporting himself and his father before very long.

Then he looked around as Prescott, who touched his arm, pointed to a trim white cutter which was sliding through the flashing water with an inclined spire of sail above her and a swath of foam at her lee bow.

"I guess that's Valentine's *Sorata*," he said. "Got the biggest topsail on her, and she has a deck-plank in. If she'd only her lower canvas, most men would find her quite a big handful to sail alone. It's when he rounds up to his mooring the circus will begin."

The *Sorata* came straight on toward them, close-hauled on the wind, until they could hear the hissing of the brine that swept a foot deep along her slanted deck; then there was a banging of canvas, and she swung as on a pivot, while a bent figure with its back against her tiller became furiously busy. Slanting sharply, she drove away on the other tack, and shot in with canvas shaking between a great four-masted ship and a steamer with white tiers of decks. Then her head-sails dropped, and she stopped with a big iron buoy which Valentine seized with his boat-hook close beneath her bowsprit. After that there was a rattle of chain, and Prescott made a gesture of approval.

"Smart," he said. "I guess there are not many men in this Province who could have brought her up in that berth without another hand on board."

Valentine appeared to see them, for he waved his hand; but the next minute Jimmy, who looked around, lost his interest in him, for Tom Wheelock was coming slowly across the wharf. He walked

wearily, with head bent and dejection expressed in every languid movement. Prescott's face grew troubled as he glanced at him.

"I guess we're not going to sea to-day," he said. "Your father has more to carry than he can stand. That – Merril has been putting the screw on him."

Wheelock dropped somewhat heavily upon the *Tyee*'s deck, and, though they looked at him questioningly, he said nothing to either of them as he made his way to the little after-cabin. When he reached it, he sat down and wiped his forehead before he poured himself out a stiff drink of whisky; then he made a little, hopeless gesture as he turned to Jimmy, who stood at the foot of the ladder with Prescott in the scuttle behind him.

"You'll stop loading that ballast," he said. "I'm fixed this time. I guess Merril has the ship. Carpenters to come on board to-morrow, and as far as I can figure, eight hundred dollars won't see them clear. Besides that, it's a sure thing we'll lose the coast mill contract."

Jimmy said nothing, but he set his lips tight, and Tom Wheelock had finished his whisky before he looked at him again. His eyes were half-closed, and he sat huddled and limp, with one hand trembling on his glass, a broken man.

"Carpenters will be here to-morrow. I guess there's no use stopping them – I've got to see the thing right out," he said. "Still, you can tell the boys we don't want that ballast. I feel kind of shaky, and I'm going to lie down. Not as strong as I used to be, Jimmy, and I haven't quite got over that thump I got against the rail."

Jimmy made a sign to Prescott and went up the ladder, and when he stood on deck the grizzled sailorman wondered at the change in him. There was no geniality in his blue eyes now, and his face was set and grim, for pity was struggling within him with a vindictive hatred of the man who had brought his father down. Tom Wheelock, it was evident, had been brought low in more ways than one.

"If you'll see about that ballast, I'll go straight to Merril's office. I want this thing made clear," he said.

"Well," advised Prescott, "I'd walk round a few blocks first; you want to simmer down before you talk to a man like that. Go slow, and get a round turn on your temper."

Jimmy, who made no answer, swung himself up on the wharf, and it was not until he had traversed part of the water-front that he remembered it might have been advisable to change his clothes. He was still clad in blue jean freely smeared with the red soil that he had been shoveling in the hold, and his face and hands were grimy and damp with perspiration. Still, that did not seem to matter greatly, since, after all, it was a costume quite in accordance with his station. The days when he had worn a naval uniform had passed.

Striding into an office in a great stone building, he accosted a clerk, who said that Mr. Merril was busy, and then appeared to grow a trifle disconcerted under Jimmy's gaze. The latter smiled at him grimly.

"Then it's probably fortunate that I'm not busy at all," he said. "In fact, I'm quite prepared to stay here until this evening; and since there seems to be only one door to the place it will perhaps save Mr. Merril inconvenience if he sees me now. You can explain that to him."

The clerk, who grinned at one of his companions, disappeared, and, coming back, ushered the insistent visitor into a sumptuously furnished office; and, when the door closed behind him, Jimmy was a little astonished to find himself as collected as he had ever been in his life. He was one of the men who do not quite realize their own capabilities until driven by necessity into strenuous action. An elderly gentleman with a pallid and somewhat expressionless face, dressed with a precision not altogether usual in that country, looked up at him.

"Well?" he said inquiringly.

Jimmy drew forward a chair, and sat down uninvited. "You know my name," he said. "I want to understand exactly why you are sending those carpenters on board the schooner?"

Merril looked at him gravely, but Jimmy did not appear to find his gaze in any way troublesome.

"I don't think you have anything to do with the matter," he said. "Still, out of courtesy – "

"No," interrupted Jimmy; "I'm not asking a favor, only anticipating things a little. It is, I am afraid, quite likely that I shall have to take over the schooner before very long."

"Then, in accordance with a clause in the agreement, the vessel must be kept in efficient repair to the satisfaction of a qualified surveyor. The man I sent down reports that she needs a new mast, decks relaid, and a good deal of new planking about her water-line. Your father has particulars."

"I suppose," said Jimmy very quietly, "there would be nothing gained by asking you to allow the repairs to stand over until we have brought down one or two more loads of lumber. I expect you know it will cost us the sawmill contract if we lay the schooner off now?"

Merril made a little gesture. "I'm afraid not. I can't afford to take the risk of having the schooner lost, to oblige you, and the fact that you may not carry out the sawmill contract naturally does not concern me."

"Has it occurred to you that we might question your surveyor's report? Half the repairs are quite unnecessary, as you no doubt know. Why the man recommended them is, of course, a question I'm not going into, though it wouldn't be very difficult to hit on the reason. There are, however, other men of his profession in this city."

Again Merril looked at him steadily, with a faint, sardonic gleam, which was more galling than anger, in his eyes. "You will, of course, do what you consider advisable, but if the repairs are not made I shall apply for an injunction to stop you from going to sea; and the law is somewhat costly. The redemption instalment and interest are overdue, and if your father has any money with him, one would fancy it would be more prudent for him to settle his obligations than to give it to the lawyers."

Jimmy realized that this was incontrovertible. Unless the arrears were paid within a fixed time, Merril could foreclose on the vessel and sell her to somebody acting in concert with him, which was, no doubt, what he wished to do. There was, it seemed, no wriggling out of his grip; and, though he felt it would be useless, Jimmy resolved to appeal to his sense of fairness.

"So far as I can figure, you have been paid in interest and charges about forty cents on every dollar you lent; and you still hold a bond for the original amount," he said. "That would be enough to satisfy most men; and all we ask is a little time and consideration. You could let those repairs stand over, and could wait a while for your interest. It will most certainly be paid if we can keep hold of the sawmill contract."

"I'm afraid you are wasting time;" and Merril glanced at the papers before him. "There are several reasons which make it necessary for me to insist on your father's carrying out the conditions of his bond. He owes me a good deal of money now."

A hard glint crept into Jimmy's blue eyes, and there was a trace of hoarseness in his voice. "I want you to understand that it will crush him," he said. "He is an old and broken man, and you would lose nothing by a little clemency. I will take every dollar of his debts upon myself."

"I'm sorry, but it can't be helped," said Merril, with a shrug of his shoulders which seemed to suggest that his patience was becoming exhausted. "The conditions laid down must be carried out."

Jimmy rose slowly. Every nerve in him tingled, though there was only the ominous scintillation in his eyes to indicate what he was feeling. Laying one hand on Merril's desk, he looked down at him, and they faced each other so for, perhaps, half a minute. The man who held in his grasp many a small industry in that Province shrank inwardly beneath the sailor's gaze.

"Then," said Jimmy, with a slow forcefulness that was the more impressive because of the restraint he put upon himself, "you shall have your money, and everything else that is due you. If I live long enough – all – my father's debt will certainly be paid."

He went out; and Merril, to whom an interview of this description was not exactly a novelty, was for once a little uneasy in his mind. There was a certain suggestion of steadfastness in the seafarer's manner that he did not like, and he felt that he could be relied on to keep his promise if the opportunity

were afforded him. Still, the bondholder fancied it would not be insuperably difficult to contrive that the occasion did not arise.

Next day the carpenters duly arrived on board the *Tyee*, and when they took possession there was nothing for any one else to do, which was partly why it happened that Jimmy sat smoking on the skylights of the *Sorata*'s saloon one hot afternoon. He had told Valentine, who lay near him on the warm deck, part of his troubles. There was scarcely a breath of air, and the smoke of the big mills hung in a long trail above the oily Inlet and floated in a filmy cloud athwart the towering pines. The tapping of the carpenters' mallets on board the *Tyee* came faintly across the water.

"It will be three weeks, anyway, before you get your new deck in, and it may be longer," said Valentine. "All the carpenters on this coast are going up to the new railroad trestles, where they're getting almost any price they ask. What are you going to do in the meanwhile?"

Jimmy said he did not know, and was sorry this was the case. He had discovered that board costs a good deal in that country, and while the *Tyee* was practically gutted it would be necessary to live ashore. Valentine appeared to ruminate, and then looked up at him.

"Well," he said reflectively, "I'm going up the coast, and I want an experienced skipper. That's easy, because I know too much about charterers to let them have my boat without taking me. Yachting's just becoming popular here. Next, there's to be a capable cook, and that could be contrived, because, although Louis is about the worst cook I know, they needn't find it out until we're well away to sea. The third man is the difficulty. He's to be warranted sober, reliable, and intelligent, since he may be required to take the young ladies out fishing in the dory. All to be civil and clean, and provided with suitable uniform. It's in the charter. They appear to be particular people."

Jimmy laughed. "Evidently. Still, I don't quite see what it all has to do with me, since I'm not going. Where's the man you had when you took the last party?"

"On the wharf; he'll never come back again with me. He was a blue-water man, and one day he broke loose and got at the charterers' whisky. Tried to kiss one of the young ladies as he was carrying her on board the dory, and, though I threw him in afterward, her father made considerable unpleasantness over the thing."

He stopped a moment, and looked at Jimmy with a whimsical twinkle in his eyes. "Now, I don't know any reason why you shouldn't come if you feel like it. You seem reasonably sober, and I guess you could be civil. Charterers aren't quite so trying here as one would fancy they are in the Old Country. I've been there; but on the Pacific Slope we haven't yet branded the people who work as quite outside the pale. You could put on the steamboat jacket, and I've an old man-o'-war cap with gold letters on it. The man who left it on board the *Sorata* privately discharged himself from one of the Pacific squadron. It was a dark night, and he was almost drowned when I got him. Well, it would bring you twelve dollars a week, all found – it's what I'd have to pay another man – besides being a favor to me."

Jimmy laughed outright. He had his cares just then, but he was, after all, a young man of somewhat whimsical temperament, and the prospect of the adventure appealed to him. The twelve dollars a week were more attractive still, since he had reasons for believing that the small sum he had brought with him to Vancouver would be badly wanted before very long, and while the *Tyee* lay idle he could not trench upon his father's scanty store.

"Well," he said, "it sounds a crazy kind of thing, but that is, perhaps, why it attracts me. I'll come."

Valentine smiled. "Then you'll come off early to-morrow, and try to remember you're a blue-water man who has hired out to me. You want to get yourself up kind of smartly. We'll go below and see what I've got. It's in the charter."

Half an hour later Jimmy was rowed ashore, and he walked back to the wharf where the *Tyee* was lying with, for the first time during several weeks, a smile in his eyes. It would be a relief to forget his troubles for a week or two, and his father would not need him in the meanwhile. Naturally

he did not know that the crazy venture on which he had embarked was to have somewhat important results for him as well as for other people.

CHAPTER V
VALENTINE'S PAID HAND

It was about five o'clock in the evening when Jimmy stood on the Vancouver wharf beside an express wagon, from which the teamster had just flung down what appeared to him an inordinate quantity of baggage. He was then attired in a steamboat officer's jacket, from which he had removed a row of buttons as well as the braid on the cuffs, an old pair of Valentine's white duck trousers carefully mended with sail-sewing twine, a pair of canvas shoes with a burst in one of them, and a somewhat dilapidated man-o'-war cap. In this get-up he expected to pass muster as a professional yacht-hand, though as yet there were very few men who followed that calling in Vancouver or Victoria. Had he been brought up in England he might have felt a little more uncomfortable than he did, but the average Westerner is troubled by no false pride, and is usually willing to earn the money he requires by any means available. Still, Jimmy was not altogether at ease, for he had, at least to some extent, become endued with his comrades' notions during the time he had spent in the mail-boats and the English warship.

A little farther up the wharf Valentine was talking to a gray-haired gentleman whose immaculate blue serge, level voice, and formal attitude seemed to stamp him as different from the men of the Pacific Slope, who have as a rule no time to waste in considering appearances. Two young ladies stood not very far away, and, though the breeze was no more than pleasantly cool, one of them was wrapped in a long cloak and shawl. Jimmy could not see the other very well because of the wagon, but when she moved across the wharf her lithe step and graceful carriage at least suggested vigorous health.

By and by the rattle of a neighboring steamer's winch ceased suddenly, and he heard the voice of the elderly gentleman, who had been glancing in his direction.

"I suppose that is your man," he said, with a clear English intonation. "Couldn't you have got him up a little more smartly? That man-o'-war cap, for instance, is a little out of keeping with the rest of his things."

Jimmy saw Valentine's badly suppressed smile, and caught his answer. "He was in one of the warships, sir, and is a reliable man. I can warrant him civil and sober."

"Well," said the other, "we may as well go off while he brings down the baggage."

The party moved toward the *Sorata*'s dory, and Jimmy was not exactly pleased when he found himself left to carry their baggage, which appeared to be unusually heavy, down a flight of awkward steps. It was not very long since he had stood beside a mail-boat's hatch, and merely raised a hand now and then while her deck-hands stowed the baggage under his direction; but he found something faintly humorous in the situation until, hampered by an awkward load, he lost his balance and fell down the steps. Still, he contrived to deposit the charterers' possessions at the water's edge, and when Valentine came back he packed them into the dory, and about fifteen minutes later staggered into the little white ladies' cabin on board the *Sorata* with a big trunk in his arms. One of the girls was busy unstrapping a valise, but the other looked around as he came in.

"Put it there!" she said, with a swift glance at him, and then, though he noticed that apparently she had something in her hand, she seemed to change her mind and turned around again.

Jimmy went out backwards, with a faint warmth in his face, and when he had brought in the rest of the baggage he went up and assisted Louis, their third hand, to break out the anchor and get the *Sorata* under way. She was sliding out through the Narrows when he dropped through the scuttle into the forecastle, and found Valentine filling a tray.

"It's part of your business to carry the baggage," he said. "You want to remember they're particular people, and you're expected to make yourself generally useful and agreeable. Still, I guess there's no need to talk as you would in a mail-boat's saloon."

Jimmy took the tray, but, as it happened, the *Sorata* lurched on the wash from a passing steamer as he went through the sliding door in the bulk-head, and, plunging into the saloon with arms stretched out, he fell against the table. It was a moment or two before he partly recovered his equanimity, and then, as he looked about him, a hoarse laugh fell through the open skylights. To make things worse, he fancied that the elderly gentleman cast a suspicious glance at him, while he was quite sure that there was a twinkle in one of the young ladies' eyes. She leaned back somewhat wearily upon a locker cushion, and her face was thin and fragile; but her companion sat upright, and Jimmy saw that she also was regarding him. She was tall and somewhat large of frame, with a quiet face that had something patrician in it, and reposeful brown eyes. Jimmy fancied that she and the others must have heard the laugh above.

"It's only that idiot Louis, sir," he said. "It's a habit he has. You'll hear him laugh to himself now and then when he's at the helm."

Then it occurred to him that he was speaking more familiarly than an Englishman would probably expect a yacht-hand to do, and, pulling himself up abruptly, he commenced to lay out the table and pour the coffee.

"You take sugar, miss?" he asked.

"She does," said the man dryly. "When a spoon is not available she prefers her own fingers."

The delicate girl laughed a little, and Jimmy felt his face grow warm, for he was conscious that her companion was watching him with quiet amusement; but he contrived to find the spoons he had forgotten, and when he was about to withdraw the girl with the brown eyes made a little sign.

"I suppose we are at liberty to read any of those books?" she asked, pointing to the hanging shelves. "They are the skipper's?"

Jimmy knew what she was thinking, because the works in question were by no means of the kind one would have expected a professional yacht-hirer to own or to appreciate. He also knew that the forecastle slide was open, and that Valentine was probably listening.

"Of course, miss," he said; "take any of them, if you can understand them. I think it's more than the skipper does. Still, he has a little education, and bought them cheap at book sales. They give a kind of tone to the boat."

"I see," said the girl with the reposeful eyes, and Jimmy backed out in haste. He fancied a little ripple of musical laughter broke out after he had closed the forecastle slide. Then he glanced deprecatingly at Valentine, who did not appear by any means pleased with him.

"I didn't expect too much from you, but the last piece of gratuitous foolery might have been left out," he said. "Did you ever come across a yacht steward who took passengers into his confidence in the casual way you do?"

"No," said Jimmy candidly, "I don't think I ever did. Now, I don't in the least know what came over me, but I can't remember ever losing my head in quite the same way before. It must have been the way the girl with the brown eyes looked at me. In fact, she seemed to be looking right through me. Who is she?"

"Miss Merril."

"Ah!" said Jimmy, a trifle sharply. "Still, it doesn't seem to be an unusual name in this country, and, after all, one couldn't hold her responsible for her father's doings – if she is the one I mean. It's quite possible they wouldn't please her if she were acquainted with them. In fact, it's distinctly probable."

"I wonder why you seem so sure of that? She is the one you mean."

"From her face. You couldn't expect a girl with a face like that to approve of anything that was not – "

He saw Valentine's smile, and broke off abruptly. "Anyway, it doesn't matter in the least to either of us. What is she doing here, and who are the others?"

Valentine laughed. "I don't think I suggested that it did. The man is Austerly, of the Crown-land offices, and English, as you can see – one of the men with a family pull on somebody in authority in the Old Country. I believe he was a yacht-club commodore at home. The delicate girl's his daughter. Not enough blood in her – phthisis, too, I think – and it's quite likely she has been recommended a trip at sea. Miss Merril is, I understand, a friend of hers, and she evidently knows something of yachting too."

"What do you know about phthisis?"

A shadow suddenly crept into Valentine's brown face. "Well," he said quietly, "as it happens, I do know a little too much."

Jimmy asked no more questions, but got his supper, and contrived to keep out of the passengers' way until about ten o'clock that night, when he sat at the helm as the *Sorata* fled westward before a fresh breeze. To port, and very high above her, a cold white line of snow gleamed ethereally under the full moon. A long roll tipped by flashing froth came up behind her, and she swung over it with the foam boiling at her bows and her boom well off, rolling so that her topsail which cut black against the moonlight swung wildly athwart the softly luminous blue.

Jimmy was watching a long sea sweep by and break into a ridge of gleaming froth, when Miss Merril came out from the little companion and stood close beside him with the silvery light upon her. She had a soft wrap of some kind about her head and shoulders, and, though he could not at first see her face, the way the fleecy fabric hung emphasized her shapely figure.

"I wonder whether you would let me steer?" she asked.

For a moment or two Jimmy hesitated. The *Sorata* was carrying a good deal of sail, and running rather wildly, while he knew that a very small blunder at the tiller would bring her big main-boom crashing over, the result of which might be disaster. Still, there was something in the girl's manner which, for no reason that he could think of, impressed him with confidence. He felt that she would not have asked him for the helm merely out of caprice, or unless she could steer.

"Well," he said, remembering he was supposed to be a yacht-hand, "we will see what kind of a show you make at it, miss. Take hold, and try to keep her bowsprit on the island. It's the little black smear in the moonlight yonder."

The girl apparently had no difficulty in doing it, though for a while he crouched upon the side-deck with a brown hand close beside the ones she laid on the tiller. Then as, feeling reassured, he relaxed his grasp, she appeared to indicate her hands with a glance.

"They are really stronger than you seem to think," she said, "and I have sailed a yacht before."

Jimmy laughed. "I only thought they were very pretty."

The girl looked around at him a moment, without indignation, but with a grave inquiry in her eyes which Jimmy, who suddenly remembered the rôle he was expected to play, found curiously disconcerting.

"What made you say that?" she asked.

"I really don't know;" and Jimmy had sense enough not to make matters worse by admitting that he had said anything unusual. "It seemed to come to me naturally. Perhaps it was because they – are – pretty."

This time Miss Merril laughed. "Well," she said, "I should just as soon they were capable. But don't you think she would steer easier with the sheet slacked off a foot or two?"

Jimmy had thought so already, but while he let the sheet run around a cleat he asked himself whether this was intended as a tactful reminder that he was merely expected to do what was necessary on board the vessel. On the whole he did not think it was. One has, after all, a certain license at sea; and though he had naturally met young ladies on board the mail-boats who apparently found pleasure in treating every man not exactly of their own station with frigid discourtesy, he fancied that Miss

Merril differed from them. However, he sat silent and out of the way upon the *Sorata*'s counter, until presently a lordly, four-masted ship swept up out of the soft blueness of the night.

She crossed the *Sorata*'s bows, braced up on the wind, and, for she carried American cotton sailcloth, she gleamed majestically white, with four great spires of slanted canvas tapering from the great arch of her courses to the little royals that swayed high up athwart the blue above a long line of dusky hull. It was hove up on the side nearest the *Sorata*, and the sea frothed white beneath her bows, which piled it high in a filmy, flashing cloud. Miss Merril could hear the roar of parted water, and, as the great vessel drove by, the refrain of a sighing chantey that fell amidst a sharp clanking from the black figures on her spray-drenched forecastle.

"Ah!" she said, "that is a picture to remember. I wonder what those men have undergone, and where they come from?"

Jimmy smiled, presuming that she was addressing him, though he could not be sure of it.

"Well," he said, "I should fancy they have borne 'most everything that a man could be expected to face, except want of food, while they thrashed her round the Horn. She's American, and, if they drive men hard on board their ships, they at least usually feed them well."

"You know what they have done?"

Jimmy laughed, and forgot his man-o'-war cap as he saw that she was interested. "I believe I do. They've crawled out on those long topsail yards probably once every watch by night and day, clawing at thundering folds of hard, drenched canvas, while the ship lay with her rail in the water when the Cape Horn squalls came down thick with blinding snow. Then they've crawled down with bleeding hands and broken nails, and flung themselves, in their dripping oilskins, into a soddened bunk to snatch a couple of hours' sleep before they were roused to get sail on her again. They have lived for days on cold provisions soaked in brine when the galley fire was drowned out, and it is very likely have not stripped a long boot off for a week. She carries a high rail, but the icy sea that chilled them to the bone has poured across it at every roll."

"Ah!" said the girl; "going west it would be to windward. In one way it's almost an epic. I suppose it's always more or less like that?"

"Yes," said Jimmy; "one of the epics nobody has ever written, perhaps because nobody really could. There are a good many of them. As you say, when one has to fight to windward, things generally happen more or less that way."

Miss Merril turned and looked at him as he sat on the *Sorata*'s counter in the navy cap, and a smile crept into her eyes.

"Still," she said, "perhaps it is, after all, worth while to face them."

They both remembered that afterward, but in the meanwhile it did not strike Jimmy as in any way incongruous that she should talk to him in such a fashion or credit him with more comprehension than one would expect from a professional yacht-hand.

"I don't know," he said simply. "One's heart is apt to fail when one looks forward and sees only the snow-squalls to drive one back to leeward, and the steep head seas."

Then he stood up suddenly with a little laugh as Louis came slouching aft from the forecastle scuttle.

"I'm relieved, and I had better see whether they want anything in the saloon," he said.

It appeared that they wanted nothing, and when he crawled into the forecastle Valentine looked at him with evident curiosity.

"You had apparently a good deal to say to Miss Merril," he observed. "Might one ask what you found to talk about?"

"The last topic was whether it is worth while to hang on and fight one's way to windward when the outlook is black. If I understood her correctly, she seems to believe it is."

Valentine grinned sardonically. "Did you discuss it like a German philosopher, or as a forecastle hand? I suppose it never struck you that it's rather an unusual subject for a yachting roustabout to go into with a young lady passenger?"

"It is," agreed Jimmy, making a little deprecatory gesture. "I'm afraid I didn't remember that before; but it probably doesn't matter, since it's hardly likely that she did either."

His comrade looked at him, and shook his head. "You can believe that – at your age?" he said. "My dear man, a young woman of Miss Merril's intelligence would notice anything that wasn't quite in character the moment you said it. Still, that is your affair. It's the other one I'm worrying about."

"The other one?"

"Miss Austerly. The girl's very sick – probably worse than her father realizes – and it's rather on my conscience that I told them that Louis could cook. Anyway, if this breeze holds we'll bring up off Victoria early to-morrow, and though we're not going in, I'll slip ashore before breakfast and see what one can pick up at the stores."

Jimmy asked him no more questions, but crept into his bunk. About nine o'clock on the morrow, when the *Sorata* was lying in a bight on the south coast of Vancouver Island, he was aroused by the dory bumping alongside, and he went out on deck. It was then raining hard, and all he could see was a stretch of gray sea and a strip of dripping boulder beach on which a little white surf was breaking. There was a good deal of water in the dory, and Valentine's oilskins were dripping when he climbed out of her with several packages under his arm. Stores open early in that country.

"Now," he said, "you can bail her out, and come down in half an hour when I've fixed up a breakfast that any one could eat."

Jimmy did so, but it was with some little diffidence that he carried the tray into the saloon. It occurred to him that Miss Merril might regret that she had unbent so far the previous night, and he wondered uneasily whether he had ventured further than was advisable. He was also conscious for the first time that the repairs Valentine had made in his garments were less artistic than evident. The girl, however, looked up with a smile, which might have meant anything, and afterward confined her attention to the articles he was laying on the table. There were Chinese preserved dainties and fruit from California, as well as the ordinary fare.

"An unusually good breakfast," said Austerly. "Does your skipper always treat his charterers so well?"

"Yes, sir," said Jimmy. "That is, when he can. You see, he couldn't get these things in Vancouver; there isn't the same demand for them as there is in the capital."

Austerly did not appear altogether satisfied with the ingenious explanation, but he said nothing further. Indeed, he was not a man who said very much on any occasion; and while he commenced his breakfast Miss Merril looked at Jimmy with her little disconcerting smile. Still, there was no malice in it.

She was as fresh that morning as when she came off the previous evening, though both Austerly and his daughter appeared a trifle the worse for the night's run. Miss Merril was wholly unostentatious in speech or bearing, and there was a certain gracious tranquillity about her which suggested latent vigor instead of languidness. She was then, he decided tolerably correctly, in her twenty-fifth year, brown-haired and brown-eyed, with broad, low forehead, unusually straight brows, and, in spite of her smile, a curiously steady gaze. Her face was a full oval, her mouth by no means small, and, while he had seen women of a somewhat similar type whose vigor was tinged with coarseness or a hint of sensuality, there was about this girl a certain daintiness of thought and speech, and a quiet dignity. What she said was, however, sufficiently prosaic.

"I presume that means he went to Victoria for the extra stores this morning; but how did he get there? It must be some distance, from what I know of the coast, and he would have a head-wind all the way back."

"He walked," said Jimmy. "It's necessary for him. One doesn't get very much exercise of that kind at sea. In fact, he walks miles whenever he can."

Miss Austerly appeared a trifle astonished, and her father looked up from his coffee.

"It's a trifle difficult to understand how he manages it," he said. "One would consider the *Sorata* forty feet long."

Jimmy felt Miss Merril's gaze upon him, and, as had happened before, his ingenuity failed him. Her smile vaguely suggested comprehension, and, for no ostensible reason, that disturbed him. He also saw Louis grinning down at him through the skylights.

"Sugar, sir?" he said; and this was so evidently an inspiration that Miss Austerly laughed, and when her father said that he had been offered it twice already, Jimmy went out with all the haste available. He closed the forecastle slide somewhat noisily, and then sat down and frowned at Valentine.

"Well?" said the latter dryly. "Been making an exhibition of yourself again?"

"I'm afraid I have," said Jimmy. "If it happens another time you can carry the things in yourself and see how nice it is. Still, I don't quite know why I lost my head. I have naturally met quite a few young ladies in my time. I suppose it's wearing that confounded cap and these more confounded clothes."

He kicked one foot out, and disgustedly contemplated a burst white shoe, while the duck trousers cracked. Valentine leaned back against the bulkhead and laughed.

"Don't be rash, or they'll split; and the jacket's opening at a seam," he said. "It's rather a pity a man can't rise above his clothes. Anyway, you may as well give Louis a hand to get the mainsail on to her. As soon as they've finished breakfast we'll break out the anchor."

CHAPTER VI
A VISION OF THE SEA

There was rain and thick weather for several days, during which the *Sorata* crept northward slowly along the wild West Vancouver coast. Austerly, it appeared, had business with an Indian agent who lived up an inlet near which the restless white prospectors were encroaching on a Siwash reserve. The boat was wet and clammy everywhere, though a bark fire burned in the little saloon stove. Miss Austerly lay for the most part silent on the leeward settee with a certain wistful patience in her hollow face which roused Jimmy's compassion. He noticed that Valentine's voice was gentler than usual when he mentioned her, and wondered why it was so, though his comrade did not favor him with an adequate explanation then or afterward.

At last one afternoon the drizzle ceased, and, during most of it, Miss Merril sat at the tiller with Jimmy's oilskin jacket round her shoulders to shield her from the spray, while the *Sorata* drove northward, close-hauled, across the long gray roll of the Pacific which was tipped with livid foam. Sometimes she swung over it, with dripping jib hove high, but at least as often she dipped her bows in the creaming froth and flung the brine aft in showers, while all the time the half-seen shore unrolled itself to starboard in a majestic panorama.

Great surf-lapped rocks rose out of the grayness, and were lost in it again; forests athwart which the vapors streamed in smoky wisps rolled by; and at times there were brief entrancing visions of a towering range, phantoms of mountains that vanished and appeared again. There was water on the lee-deck; showers of it drove into the drenched mainsail's luff; but still Miss Merril sat at the tiller with her damp hair blown about her forehead, a patch of carmine in her cheeks, and a gleam in her eyes. She seemed, as she swung with the plunging fabric when the counter rose streaming high above the froth that swept astern, wholly in harmony with the motive of the scene; and at this Jimmy wondered a little now and then, though he discovered afterward that Anthea Merril almost invariably fitted herself to her surroundings. There are men and women with that capacity, which is, perhaps, born of comprehension and sympathy.

Her grasp was firm and steady on the straining helm, her gaze quick to notice each gray comber that broke as it came down on them; but, when he looked at her, Jimmy saw in her eyes something deeper than the thrill of the encounter with the winds of heaven and the restless sea. He could find no fitting name for it. It eluded definition, but it had its effect; and he felt that a man might go far and do more than thrash a yacht to windward with such a companion, though he also realized that this was, after all, no concern of his. Apart from that, her quiet courage and readiness were noticeable, though it was, perhaps, her understanding that appealed most to him. Anthea Merril never asked an unnecessary question. She seemed able to grasp one's thoughts and motives in a fashion that set those with whom she conversed at their ease, and when in her company Jimmy usually forgot his yacht-hand's garments and the man-o'-war cap.

It was toward sunset that evening, and Miss Austerly was sitting well wrapped up on a locker in the cockpit, when the vapor melted and was blown away, as not infrequently happens about that time at sea. The dingy clouds that veiled the sky were rent, and a blaze of weird, coppery radiance smote the tumbling seas, which changed under it to smears of incandescent whiteness with ruddy gleams in them, and ridges of flashing green. It was sudden and bewildering, impelling one to hold one's breath. But a more glorious pageant leaped out of the dimness over the starboard hand. Walls of rock that burned with many colors sprang into being, with somber pines streaming upward behind them, and far aloft there were lifted gleaming heights of never-trodden snow whose stainless purity was intensified by their gray and turquoise shadows.

The vision was vouchsafed them, steeped in an immaterial splendor, for perhaps five minutes, and then it faded as though it had never been. Miss Austerly, who had gazed at it rapt and eager-eyed, drew in her breath.

"Ah!" she said; "if it was only to see that, I am glad I came – it may be the last time."

Jimmy, who was sitting on the skylights, saw the apprehension in Anthea Merril's eyes as she glanced down for a moment into the fragile face of her companion, and he fancied that Valentine did so too; but the girl smiled wistfully.

"Still," she said, "it is a good deal to have seen the glory of this world, and one would almost fancy that other one – where the sea is glassy – could not be much more beautiful."

There was a hint of reproach in Anthea Merril's quiet voice, which reached Jimmy.

"Nellie," she said, "you have morbid fancies now and then. We brought you on this trip to make you cheerful and strong."

The sick girl smiled again, and the pallor of her fragile face intensified the faint shining of her eyes. "I think you know that I shall never get strong again, and, after all, why should I wish to stay here when I may leave my pains and weaknesses behind me? You can't understand that. You have the vigor of the sea in you – and the world before you."

It apparently occurred to Valentine that he was hearing too much, for he stood up, swaying while the *Sorata* plunged, and called to Austerly through one of the open skylights of the saloon.

"We'll have the breeze down on us twice as hard in a few minutes, sir, and there's an inlet we could lie snug in not far astern," he said. "It's quite likely we might come across a Siwash or two who would pole you up the river at the head of the inlet to within easy reach of the agent's place, to-morrow."

"Very well!" said Austerly; "you can run her away."

It appeared advisable, for the *Sorata* buried her bows in a smother of frothing brine and dipped her lee-deck deep, as a blast swept down. Valentine glanced at Miss Merril somewhat dubiously.

"Do you think you could jibe her all standing?" he asked.

Jimmy almost expected Anthea Merril to say that she could not, for, unless the helmsman is skilful, when a cutter-rigged craft is brought round, stern to a fresh breeze, her great mainsail with the ponderous boom along the foot of it is apt to swing over with disastrous violence. There was, however, no hesitation in the girl's face, and Valentine made a little gesture that implied rather more than resignation.

"When you're ready!" he said. "Stand by, Jimmy!"

They laid hands on the hard, wet sheet, and, while the girl swayed with the helm, and the *Sorata* came round, stern to sea, dragged the big mainboom in foot by foot until it hung over them, lifting, with the great bellying sail ready to swing. Then, though nobody knew quite how it happened, Jimmy got a loose turn of the rope about his arm as a sea washed in across the counter. In another second or two the boom would swing over, and it seemed very probable that his arm would at least be broken. While the tightening hemp ground into his flesh, he saw the color ebb in Valentine's face, and then the girl's voice reached him sharp and insistent.

"Now!" was all she said.

The *Sorata*'s bows swung a trifle further, and no more. The boom went up with a jerk, and, while the blood started from Jimmy's compressed arm, came down again. For a second the turn of rope slackened, and he shook it clear. Then the sheet whirred through the quarter-blocks as the great sail swung over, and the *Sorata* rolled until one side of her was deep in the foam. She shook herself out of it, and Jimmy, who forgot the man-o'-war cap and what he was supposed to be, saw the girl's eyes fixed on him with a faint smile in them, and made her a little inclination. He felt that she was asking him a question.

"Thank you!" he said simply. "I don't think I was unduly frightened. I seemed to know you would not fail me."

Anthea Merril made no answer, but a slight flush crept into her cheek. She was very human, and it was in one sense an eloquent compliment. Then Jimmy went forward to haul the staysail down, though he found he had to do it with one hand, and he was kept busy until he went down with Valentine into the little forecastle, when the *Sorata* lay snug in a strip of still green water close beneath the dusky pines. Louis had just gone ashore with the dory to gather bark for fuel, and, for the scuttle was open, they could hear the splash of his oars through the deep stillness that was emphasized by the murmur of falling water. Valentine sat on a locker with the lamplight on his bronzed face, which was a trifle grave.

"Rain again, and I'd sooner lose my next charter than have bad weather now," he said.

"Why?" asked Jimmy.

His comrade made a sign of impatience. "Didn't you hear what that girl said – it was the last time? She knew that she was right, too, though it's probably only natural that her father wouldn't believe it. A last treat she's getting – and she's as fond of the sea as I am, or you are either."

Jimmy did not know why he smiled, but perhaps it was because he was stirred a little and did not wish to show it. In any case, Valentine frowned at him.

"Oh, yes," he said, "I know. It's a dog's life, and other things; but you wouldn't quit it, anyway, and that's not the question. Can't you understand what that sickly girl's life has been, with all that other women might expect to have denied her?"

There was a certain hoarse insistence in Valentine's inquiry, from which it seemed to Jimmy, who had noticed the solicitude with which he had endeavored to minister in every way to the comfort or pleasure of their delicate passenger, that his companion had some special reason for understanding what the girl's lot had been.

"Well," he said reflectively, "one would suppose that to be born foredoomed is hard upon such as Miss Austerly."

Valentine made a little abrupt gesture. "It's evident they once had a yacht of their own. Any one could see how fond of it she is; and I'm taking her father's money – he hasn't too much of it – like a – moneylender that she may have a last taste of the one thing she can take pleasure in. Lord, when one has so much for nothing, what selfish hogs we are!"

"It can't be helped, anyway. You couldn't offer a favor to a man like Austerly."

"No;" and Valentine frowned. "He's a man with all the condemned prejudices of his class, and he would, naturally, sooner see his daughter's one wish ungratified. After all, women now and then rate the value of things more justly than we do. There's Miss Merril who came with them, and somehow it was she who brought this trip about. She has her pride, full measure of it, but she has sense as well, sense of proportion, and if we had only her to deal with we'd let every other charter slide and go south to-morrow to find the summer."

Jimmy was not in the least astonished. He had, of course, listened to a certain amount of forecastle ribaldry, though, after all, conversation and badinage of that nature is, at least, as frequent in a mail-boat's smoking-room; but he knew the ways of his fellows, and it seemed a very natural thing to him that Valentine the pariah should in his own fashion reveal these depths of chivalrous compassion. He had seen hard-handed men of coarse fiber do many a gentle deed with a curse on their lips that was probably worth a good deal more than a conventional platitude. Still, it would have been wholly extraordinary if he had mentioned anything of this.

"One would fancy Miss Merril has a good deal of character," he said.

"Too much for the man she marries, if there's anything small and mean in him. That's a girl with a capacity for doing more than sail a boat to windward well, and she will probably expect a good deal. In one way there's something humorous in the fact that her father is one of the – est rogues in this Province, though there are naturally a good many people who look up to him. Of course, she isn't aware of it yet. Brought up back East, I believe, and somebody told me she had lived a good deal with her mother's people. It probably means trouble for her when she understands the reality."

He rose with a little shrug of his shoulders. "I'm talking like an old woman, and these things have nothing to do with us. We have our wet watches to keep at sea, and perhaps we are better off than the rest of them because that is all. You can turn in if you want to; I'll wait for Louis."

Five minutes later Jimmy crawled into his bunk, and fell fast asleep. When he awakened, he found that the day had broken still and sunny. There was a Siwash rancherie a mile or two up the Inlet, and when an Indian had been found who would carry a message through the forest, Austerly, who never forgot what was due to a Crown-land official, decided to stay where he was and allow the agent to visit him. He was not in any way an active man, and appeared quite content to sit in the cockpit reading, when Valentine, who had procured a Siwash river canoe – a long, light shell of cedar with some two feet beam – offered to take his daughter up the Inlet to see the rancherie. Miss Austerly was pleased to go with him, and Anthea Merril, who watched the knife-edge craft slide away, turned to Jimmy.

"If you will get the trolling-spoon I will go fishing," she said.

"Yes, miss," said Jimmy, touching his cap – a thing that is very seldom done in Western Canada. Hauling the dory alongside, he handed her into it. Then he dipped the oars, and they slid slowly up the Inlet with the silver and vermilion spoon trailing astern. He had laid Valentine's shot-gun across the thwarts.

The lane of clear green water was, perhaps, two hundred yards wide, and the stately pines which shroud all that lonely coast rose in somber ranks on either side, distilling their drowsy fragrance as their motionless needles dried in the sun. There was not a sound when the splash of Valentine's paddle died away, and Jimmy dipped his oars leisurely, now and then venturing a glance at his companion. It seemed to him that the big white hat she wore became her wonderfully well, and it is possible that she guessed as much and did not resent it, for Jimmy was, after all, a personable man.

"Your skipper is very good to Nellie Austerly," she said. "I am rather pleased with him because of it. There are, naturally, not many things in which she can take any great interest."

"I suppose," said Jimmy reflectively, "there are people who would consider it good of him, but, in one way, it really isn't. It doesn't cost him anything, and he can't help it. That man would do what he could for anybody who didn't want to take advantage of him. What's more, he would do it almost without realizing what he was about."

"Do you know why he lives as he does at sea?"

"I don't. Probably because he likes it."

Anthea Merril smiled. "Is that all? It has not occurred to you that there is, perhaps, a reason why he and Nellie Austerly understand each other?"

"Both fond of the sea?"

"That mightn't go far enough. Nellie has had to give up so much, or rather it has been taken away from her. You can understand that?"

Jimmy nodded assent. It had already occurred to him that his comrade was a man who had lost something he greatly valued, and it did not appear incongruous that Miss Merril should be speaking in this familiar fashion to him. In fact, she frequently contrived to make him forget that he was Valentine's hired hand and wore the man-o'-war cap.

"What would a boat like the *Sorata* cost to build?" she asked.

"Perhaps four thousand dollars in this country."

"Ah!" said the girl; "and with that sum one could probably set up a store, buy one of the little sawmills near a rising settlement, or start on one of the other paths that are supposed to lead to affluence."

Jimmy laughed. "Supposing he owned the big Hastings mill, what more could it offer a man with his views? As he will tell you, he gets what he likes almost for nothing. He may be right, too. After all, it is clean dirt one has to eat at sea."

"There are not many men who could live as he does; the rest would go to pieces. And isn't it rather shirking a responsibility?"

"You mean that one ought to make money?"

"I think one ought to take one's part in the struggle that is going to make this the greatest Province in the Dominion; but not exactly for that reason." Then Miss Merril apparently decided to change the subject. "You had a good halibut season?"

Jimmy saw the twinkle in her eyes, and understood it. "I hadn't. I'm afraid I wouldn't know a halibut when I saw it. There are, one believes, plenty of them, but so far very few people go fishing."

"Then you were probably killing the Americans' seals?"

"I wasn't. I am, I may mention, mate on board a lumber-carrying schooner."

His companion's nod might have meant anything. "I fancied," she said, "you had not gone to sea very often as a yacht-hand."

Jimmy, who was uncertain what she wished him to understand, pulled on leisurely, until, as they crept along the shore, a widening ripple that spread from beyond a point caught his eye, and, laying down the oars, he reached for the gun.

"I was told to bring back a duck for Miss Austerly if I could," he said. "You don't mind?"

Anthea Merril made a sign of indifference, and the dory slid on, until, as they opened up a little bay, Jimmy flung up the gun, for a slowly moving object swam in the midst of it. Then he felt a hand on his arm, and a voice said sharply, "Put it down!"

Jimmy did so before he saw the reason, and it was a moment later when he noticed a string of little fluffy bodies stretched out from the shore. The mother bird paddled toward them, and, disregarding her own danger, strove to drive them back among the boulders. Then he saw the curious gleam that was half anger and half compassion in his companion's eyes, and felt his face grow a trifle hot.

"I didn't know," he said. "It must be an unusually late brood. I never noticed them. I shouldn't like you to think I did."

"Open the gun, and take out the cartridges!" ordered his companion.

"Very well, miss," said Jimmy, who could not resist the impulse of adding, with a whimsical twinkle in his eyes: "Shall I take off the trolling-spoon?"

Anthea Merril laughed. "No," she said. "Still, I can't complain of the suggestion. Head out from shore, and row faster."

Jimmy said nothing further, but busied himself with his oars. He had discovered by this time that he could talk more or less confidentially with Anthea Merril only when it was her pleasure that he should do so, and she was able to make it clear when that time had gone. Still, he did not for a moment believe she would have been more gracious had her companion not happened to be the *Sorata*'s paid hand.

CHAPTER VII
BLOWN OFF

The evening was cool and clear. Anthea Merril and Jimmy followed an Indian path that wound through the primeval bush. On the one hand a great, smooth-scarped wall of rock ran up far above the trees that clung about its feet into the wondrous green transparency, but the light was dying out down in the hollow where towering fir and cedar clustered. They were great of girth and very old, and beneath them there was silence and solemnity.

Jimmy, who carried his companion's sketching materials, went first to clear the dew-wet fern away, and the girl walked behind him silently; but this was not because there had been any change in her attitude toward him. Indeed, a certain camaraderie had grown up between them during the few days they had spent fishing and wandering in the bush, and there was, after all, nothing astonishing in this, for Jimmy was guilty of no presumption, and social distinctions, which are, indeed, not very marked in that country, do not count for much in the wilderness. Still, that camaraderie had been a revelation to him, and he was uneasily aware that during the rest of his life he would look back upon the time when he had been Miss Merril's guide and attendant.

They had been up the bank of a river that afternoon, and the girl, who had spent an hour or two sketching a peak of the range, had remained behind with Jimmy when the rest had retraced their steps to the Inlet lest Miss Austerly should suffer from the chill of the dew. The two were accordingly coming back alone, which, indeed, had happened several times before. It was Anthea who spoke at last.

"It will be dark very soon, and it might have been wiser if we had gone back the way the others did," she said. "Still, this trail looked nearer. I suppose it must come out at the Inlet?"

"Oh, yes," said Jimmy. "I can hear the river, though it doesn't seem to be quite where I expected. The others will be on the beach by now."

"I shouldn't like to keep Nellie there," said Anthea. "Still, I scarcely think they would wait long."

"Of course not," said Jimmy. "Tom is as careful of her as if she were his sister, and they wouldn't worry about our not turning up to go off with them. They're probably getting used to it by this time."

He realized next moment that this was, perhaps, not a particularly tactful observation; but he could not see his companion's face, and, as had happened before, he had sense enough not to make things worse by any attempt to explain it, which Anthea Merril, who recognized that he had spoken unreflectively, of course, noticed. What she thought of him – and she had, naturally, formed certain opinions – did not appear until some time later.

In a few minutes he stopped abruptly where the trail wound round a screen of salmon-berry, for a creek came splashing down across their way. It appeared to be at least two feet deep, and when his companion saw it she turned to him with a little exclamation.

"Oh!" she said, "how are we going to get across? We certainly can't go back."

"I'm afraid not;" and Jimmy glanced dubiously at the sliding water. "It will be dark in half an hour, and this bush is bad enough to get through in the daylight. I'll go in anyway, and see how deep it is."

He plodded through rather above his knees in water, which was mostly freshly melted snow, and then turned and looked at the girl as she stood regarding him somewhat curiously from the opposite bank. The light had not quite gone yet, and he could see her standing, tall and supple and shapely, with her white serge skirt gathered in one hand, and a patch of crimson wine-berries at her feet. The great brown-and-gray trunk of a redwood behind her forced up the fine outline of her figure, and made a fitting background for the delicate coloring of the face that was turned toward him. Then,

as had happened once or twice before, a little thrill ran through the man, and he glanced down at the sliding water.

"You can't wade through, and there's no use trying to look for a spot where it's not running quite so fast. I don't think a Siwash could get through this bush," he said.

He stopped somewhat abruptly, and was glad that the girl met his glance without wavering, as she said, "Well?"

Jimmy's tone was deprecatory. "There's only one way, Miss Merril. I must carry you over."

Anthea laughed, though it cost her a slight effort. She was, at least, glad that he had addressed her unconcernedly, and as a yacht-hand would. She was also quite aware that young ladies who go rowing in small dories, or venture into the wilderness, have to submit to being carried occasionally; but, for all that, she would sooner the suggestion had been made by another man.

"Do you really think you could?" she asked.

Jimmy's eyes twinkled, which was more reassuring than any sign of embarrassment.

"Well," he said reflectively, and again she was pleased that he was very matter-of-fact, and had sense enough to drop back into his rôle, "I guess I'm used to carrying three-inch redwood planks."

He came splashing through the water, though he did not look at her, and in a moment or two she felt his arms about her. She wondered vaguely whether he had often carried any one else, for it was, at least, evident that he knew exactly what he meant to do, and she recognized the strength the sea had given him, as he stepped down easily into the creek, holding her high above the water, with the loose folds of her skirt wrapped about her. Anthea was reasonably substantial, as she was, of course, aware; but, though he twice floundered a little in the depths of a pool, he set her down safe on the other side and stood before her with flushed forehead, which was, as she promptly realized, in one respect a mistake. He said nothing, and did not, indeed, look at her; but as he drew in a deep breath from the physical effort she glanced at him, and saw something in his face that suggested restraint. That spoiled everything.

"It is getting late," she said quietly. "Doesn't the path go on again?"

They turned away, Jimmy walking first, for which she was thankful, because the moment or two when they had stood silent had been more than enough. There was nothing for which she could blame the man. His demeanor had been everything that one could have expected; but she had seen the momentary light in his eyes and the tightening of his lips, and knew that their relations could never be exactly what they had been. Something had come about, for the fact that he had found it necessary to put a restraint upon himself had made a change. Perhaps he felt that silence was inadvisable, and once more she appreciated the good sense that prompted him to talk, much as a seaman would have done, of the straightness of the shadowy redwoods they passed and their value as masts, though this was naturally not a subject that greatly interested her.

When they reached the beach they found that Valentine had left them the Siwash canoe; and the rest, with the exception of Nellie Austerly, were sitting in the *Sorata*'s cockpit when Jimmy paddled alongside. Miss Merril furnished a suitable explanation of their delay, but she overlooked the fact that Valentine was acquainted with the bush about that Inlet.

"You must have struck the creek," he said. "I should have remembered to tell you about it."

He looked at Jimmy, but the latter wisely decided to leave it to Miss Merril, and turned his attention to the canoe. He felt that she was competent to handle the matter.

"I was almost waist-deep when I last went through," said Valentine, who did not display his usual perspicacity. "How did you get across?"

Anthea dismissed the subject with perfect composure. "Then there could not have been anything like so much water. Jimmy helped me over."

Jimmy went forward, and disappeared through the scuttle into the forecastle, and some little while later Valentine came down and looked at him with a dry smile.

"I don't yet understand how Miss Merril got across that creek," he said.

"I fancied she told you;" and Jimmy felt his face grow warm.

Valentine laughed. "Perhaps she did, but it seems to me that she wasn't remarkably explicit."

Jimmy said nothing, and presently climbed into his berth, where he lay for a while trying to recall every incident of the journey he and Anthea Merril had made through the shadowy bush, until it occurred to him that he was only preparing trouble for himself by doing so, and he went to sleep.

It was raining when he awoke, and it rained for most of three days as hard as it often does on that coast, until the crystal depths of the Inlet grew turbid, and it flowed seaward between its dripping walls of mountains like a river. At last one afternoon the clouds were rolled away, and when fierce, glaring sunshine beat down Austerly decided that he would go ashore to fish. The men went with him, Valentine to pull the dory into the swollen river, Jimmy and Louis in the Siwash canoe to gather bark for fuel. When they approached the beach where they usually landed, Jimmy glanced thoughtfully at the great torn-up pines that went sliding by.

"If one of those logs drove across her it might start a plank," he said. "Besides, there's every sign of a vicious breeze, and I think I'll go off by and by and swing her in behind the next point. She would lie snugger there out of the stream."

Valentine looked up at the hard blue sky across which ragged cloud-wisps were driving, and nodded. "It generally does blow quite fresh after rain like what we have had," he said. "You could break the anchor out yourself. I want Louis to get a good load of bark."

Jimmy went ashore with Louis, who carried a big axe, but by and by he left the latter busy, and wandered back to the beach. He did not like the angry glare of sunlight and the way the wind fell in whirling gusts down the steep hillside. As it happened, another big log drove by while he stood among the boulders, and remembering that the two girls were alone in the yacht, he launched the canoe, and sat still, just dipping the paddle, while the stream swept him down to the *Sorata*. When he boarded her she was swinging uneasily in a swirl of muddy current, and Anthea, who sat in the cockpit, appeared pleased to see him.

"One would almost fancy it was going to blow very hard," she said.

Jimmy laughed. "I believe it is; but we should be snug against anything in the little cove yonder with a rope or two ashore. I wonder whether you could sheer her for me while I break out the anchor?"

The girl went to the tiller, and while Jimmy, standing forward, plied the little winch, the cable slowly rattled in. Then he broke out the anchor, and the boat slid astern until a cove, where dark fir branches stretched out over the still, deep water, opened up. Dropping the anchor, he turned to the girl.

"Starboard!" he said.

Anthea shoved over her tiller; but the *Sorata* did not swing into the cove as Jimmy had expected her to do, for a blast that set the pines roaring fell from the hillside and drove her out from the shore. Jimmy let more chain run, and stood still looking about him, when he felt the anchor grip. The sunlight had faded, obscured by ragged clouds, the tall pines swayed above him, and the *Sorata* had swung well out athwart the stream.

"Since I can't kedge her with this breeze, I'll take a line ashore and warp her in," he said.

It appeared advisable, for there were more pine-logs coming down, and he pitched a coil of rope into the canoe; but the rest, as he discovered, was much more difficult. Jimmy had been used to boats in which one could stand up and row, while a Siwash river canoe is a very different kind of craft. As a result, he several times almost capsized her, and lost a good deal of ground when a gust struck her lifted prow; so that some time had passed when the line brought him up still a few yards from the beach. He looked around at the *Sorata* with a shout.

"I want a few more fathoms," he called. "Can you fasten on the other line, Miss Merril?"

He saw the girl, who moved forward along the deck, stop and clutch at a shroud, but that was all, for just then the dark firs roared and the water seethed white about him as he plied the paddle. The canoe turned around in spite of him, drove out into the stream, and, while he strove desperately

to steer her, struck the *Sorata* with a crash. The boat lifted her side a little as he swung himself on board, and there was a curious harsh grating forward. Anthea, who stepped down into the cockpit, had lost her hat, and her hair whipped her face.

"I think she has started her anchor," she said.

Jimmy was sure of it when he ran forward and let several fathoms of chain run without bringing her up, for the bottom was apparently shingle washed down from the hillside.

"We'll have to get the kedge over," he said.

He dropped unceremoniously into the saloon, where Miss Austerly lay on the settee, and tore up the floorings, beneath which, as space is valuable on board a craft of the *Sorata*'s size, the smaller anchor is sometimes kept. He could not, however, find it anywhere, and when he swung himself, hot and breathless, out on deck, the yacht was driving seaward stern foremost, taking her anchor with her, while the whole Inlet was ridged with lines of white. Anthea Merril looked at him with suppressed apprehension in her eyes.

"We must get a warp ashore somehow," he said. "I might sheer her in under the staysail."

The girl went forward with him, and gasped as they hauled together at the halyard which hoisted the sail; and when half of it was up, she sped aft to the tiller, and Jimmy made desperate efforts to shorten in the cable. There was another cove not far astern into which he might work the boat. The anchor, however, came away before he expected it, and, though he did not think it was the girl's fault, the half-hoisted sail swung over, and the *Sorata*, in place of creeping back toward the beach, drove away toward the opposite shore, where the stream swept over ragged rock. Jimmy, jumping aft, seized the tiller, and while the Inlet seethed into little splashing ridges the *Sorata* swept on seaward with the breeze astern. He stood still a moment, gasping, and then, while the girl looked at him with inquiring eyes, signed her to take the helm again.

"I must get the trysail on her, and try to beat her back. We may be able to do it – I don't know," he said. "It's deep water along those rocks, and she'd chafe through and go down; otherwise I'd ram her ashore."

He spent several arduous minutes tearing every spare sail out of the stern locker before he reached the one he wanted, and it was at least five minutes more before he had laced it to its gaff, while by then there were only jagged rocks, over which the sea that washed into the open entrance to the Inlet seethed whitely, under the *Sorata*'s lee. Jimmy glanced at them, and quietly lashed the trysail gaff to the boom before he turned to Anthea Merril.

"I'm sorry," he said. "We couldn't stay her under the trysail with the puffs twisting all ways flung back by the trees. Besides, she'd probably drive down upon the reefs before I got it up. It's quite evident we can't go ashore there."

The girl glanced ahead, and her heart sank a little as she saw the long Pacific roll heave across the opening in big gray slopes that were ridged with froth. Then she turned to Jimmy, who stood regarding her gravely in the steamboat jacket, burst shoes, and man-o'-war cap, and a look of confidence crept into her eyes. She felt that this man could be depended on.

"We shall have to run out to sea?" she asked.

Jimmy nodded, and she was glad that he answered frankly, as to one who was his equal in courage.

"There is no help for it," he said. "Still, she'll go clear of the shore as she is, and I don't think we need be anxious about her when she's under trysail in open water."

Anthea looked at him again, with a spot of color in her cheek.

"It may blow for several days," she said. "If I can help in any way – "

"You can," said Jimmy abruptly. "Go down now and fix Miss Austerly and yourself something to eat. You mightn't be able to do it afterwards. Then you can bring me up some bread and coffee."

Anthea disappeared into the saloon with her cheeks tingling and a curious smile in her eyes. She understood what had happened. Now that they were at close grip with the elements, Jimmy had asserted himself in primitive fashion, and he could, she felt, be trusted to do his part.

CHAPTER VIII
JIMMY TAKES COMMAND

Darkness was closing down on the waste of tumbling foam, and the *Sorata* was clear of the shore, when Jimmy made shift to hoist the trysail reduced by two reefs to a narrow strip of drenched canvas. Then, while Anthea Merril held the helm, he proceeded to set the little spitfire jib. However, he clung to the weather-shrouds, gasping and dripping with perspiration for the first few moments, because the struggle with the trysail had tried his strength. Indeed, Anthea, who stood bareheaded at the helm with her loosened hair whipping about her, wondered how he had contrived to do it alone in that strength of wind.

His figure, shapeless in the streaming oilskins, cut darkly against the livid foam as the *Sorata* swung her bows high above the sea, and then was almost lost in a filmy cloud as she plunged and buried them in the breast of a big comber. Suddenly, however, he dropped on hands and knees, and, crouching with one arm around the forestay, hauled the strip of canvas out along the bowsprit until once more a sea smote the *Sorata* and he sank into a rush of foam. The girl caught her breath as she waited until the boat swung her head out again, for it was very evident that the man alone stood between her and destruction.

He swung into sight, clinging with an arm around jib and bowsprit until he staggered to his feet, and a strip of sailcloth that went aloft beat him with its wet folds amidst a frantic banging. Anthea scarcely dared to look at him as he struggled with the rope that hoisted it, and she gasped with relief when at last he came scrambling back and pushed her from the tiller.

"Thanks!" he said. "Go down and get Miss Austerly on to the leeward settee, and then try to sleep. The boat ought to lie-to dryly until the morning, but I can't leave the tiller."

Anthea just heard him through the turmoil of the sea, and did not resent the grasp he had laid on her shoulder. Quietly imperious as she usually was, it seemed only fitting that she should obey him then. She went down through the little companion, and Jimmy, pulling the slide to after her, settled himself for his long night-watch as darkness rolled down upon the sea. He was anxious, but not unduly so, for the boat was high of side and able; and a comparatively small craft will usually ride out a vicious breeze if one can keep her hove-to under a strip or two of sail, so as to meet the sea while not forging through it with her weather-bow. Indeed, after the first half-hour he felt somewhat reassured, and his thoughts went back to a subject which had occupied them somewhat frequently of late, and that, not unnaturally, was Anthea Merril.

She was, he knew, the daughter of the man who was ruining his father, but that was an incident and no fault of hers. It was, he fancied, clear that she knew nothing about Merril's business operations, and was unacquainted with one aspect of his character. In fact, it seemed to him that there was a painful shock in store for her when she made the discovery. He had never met a woman with so much that compelled his appreciation besides her physical beauty. Her quiet graciousness and courage had their effect on him, and he was sure, at least, that he would never feel quite the same regard for anybody else. Indeed, he admitted that she was a woman with whom he might have fallen in love had circumstances been propitious, but, as they certainly were not, he strove to assure himself that he had sense and will enough to refrain from thinking more of her than was advisable.

These reflections were, however, fragmentary, for the boat required attention, and he fancied that a good deal of water was finding its way into her. The *Sorata* would not lie-to without somebody at the helm, and he could only leave the tiller lashed for a few minutes now and then while he labored at the little rotary pump. Once or twice when he did so, a foot of brine came frothing into the cockpit across the coaming, and he commenced to wonder how long the breeze would last, for he was becoming sensible that another twelve hours of it would probably be as much as he could stand.

In the meanwhile the night was wearing through, and at last a faint light crept up from the east across the waste of tumbling seas. They were not by any means mountainous, for as a matter of fact it is very probable that the biggest ocean sea scarcely exceeds forty feet between its trough and summit, but they rolled up out of the northwest in a continuous phalanx of steep, gray ridges crested with spouting froth that looked quite big enough. The drift whirled across them, and now and then wrapped the craft in wisps of filmy smoke, while Jimmy, with smarting and temporarily blinded eyes, trusted to the feel of the tiller. He was as wet as he could be, as well as stiff and cold, and it was with relief and some astonishment that he saw the saloon companion open, and Miss Merril appear with a plate and a jug of steaming coffee.

Her skirt was woefully bedraggled, from which he surmised that there was more water than there should be in the saloon, and her hair was promptly powdered with glistening spray; but her face was quiet, and she sat down collectedly, huddling herself on a locker, where the after bulkhead of the saloon partly sheltered her. Jimmy dropped into the cockpit, and crouched there with the tiller against his shoulder, for nobody could have eaten in the face of that wind. Then he stretched out a hand for the coffee.

"I'm unusually glad to get it. It was very kind of you," he said.

Anthea smiled. "Why?" she asked. "Are you sure it wasn't selfishness? We couldn't take the boat home without you, and a man must eat if he has to go on with this kind of task."

Jimmy looked at her, and, finding no very apposite rejoinder, nodded. "Well," he said, "I suppose he must; but did you get anything for yourself or Miss Austerly? You can't live on nothing any more than I can. At least, that's the conclusion I've come to after what I've noticed in the mail-boat's saloons."

He was aware that he had made a slip, but fancied it had escaped his companion's attention, which, of course, displayed very little perspicacity. In the meanwhile, he got a turn of the weather tiller line round a cleat, and lowered himself further until he sat in the cockpit with several inches of water swishing about him.

"Nellie is asleep at last. I did not awaken her," said his companion.

"That isn't all I asked. Did you get anything yourself?"

The girl said she had not done so, and for a moment there was the faintest suspicion of color in her face.

"Then you will share what you have brought with me," said Jimmy.

"There isn't a cup. I couldn't find one that wasn't broken. The forecastle shelf has torn away."

"You couldn't have kept the coffee in it if you had. Take what you want before it gets cold," and Jimmy pointed to the jug.

Anthea raised it to her lips, and then pushed it back along the cockpit floor, while, though she had not meant to do so, she flashed a swift glance at her companion when he held it in his hand. As it happened, Jimmy looked at her just then, and she saw the little glint in his eyes. He felt that she had done so, and, while he would not have had it happen, let his gaze rest on her steadily while he made her a little inclination. Then he drank, and, after he had thrust the plate in her direction, broke off a portion of bread and canned meat; some of which crumbled and stuck to his wet oilskins.

He was quite aware that neither his attitude nor manner of eating was especially graceful, but that could not be helped, and he laughed when his companion clutched at the remnant on the plate. She smiled at him too, and he wondered why they were both apparently so much at ease. Still, it did not seem in any way an unusual or unfitting thing that he and this delicately brought up girl should make their meal as equals in the little dripping cockpit with a single plate and one drinking vessel between them. He felt that it was as a comrade she regarded him, in place of tolerating him from necessity, and he noticed that even under the very uncomfortable conditions she ate daintily.

"Where are we?" she asked at last.

"About twenty miles to leeward of the Inlet, and perhaps eight off the shore. At least, I should like to believe we are. How is it you look so fresh, instead of worn out? Where did you learn to make yourself at home in a boat?"

"In Toronto," said Anthea. "I was there two years, and they are fond of yachting in that city. I once did some sailing in England too. What do you think of their boats? It is, perhaps, fortunate Valentine made the *Sorata* a cutter, as they generally do, instead of a sloop. You could hardly have handled her under the latter's single headsail last night."

"No," said Jimmy, "I don't think I could. If she had been rigged that way she would probably have gone under by now. Still, I don't see why you should expect me to know anything about English boats."

Anthea smiled as she looked at him. "Perhaps you don't, though you don't invariably express yourself as a man would who had never been away from the Pacific Slope."

"Well," said Jimmy reflectively, "it's not quite a sure thing that the way they talk in an English ship's forecastle is very much nicer."

"There are more places in a mail-boat than her forecastle."

It seemed to Jimmy advisable to change the subject, and he made a little grimace as he glanced at the plate.

"I'm afraid I've cleaned up everything," he said.

Anthea laughed. "Which is quite as it should be. I can get more, and you can't. Still, perhaps you have left some coffee."

Jimmy was about to point out that there was no cup, but refrained, for it flashed on him that his companion was, of course, aware of this, and he gravely handed her the jug. What her purpose was he did not know, and indeed he was never clear on this point, though he fancied that she had one; but it was, at least, evident that she was damp and chilled, and needed the physical stimulant. The trifling act, it seemed, might equally be a pledge of camaraderie, or a recognition of the fact that they were for the time being no more than man and woman between whom all distinctions had vanished in the face of peril; but he seemed to feel it had a still deeper significance. He had once held her in his arms, and now they had shared the same plate and drunk from the same vessel.

Then the *Sorata* reminded him that she required attention, for a sea seethed on board her forward, and when it poured into the cockpit he swung himself back to the coaming. A minute or two later he stretched out his hand, and the girl drew in her breath as she glanced ahead, for a sail materialized suddenly out of the vapor. It was suggestively slanted, and a dusky strip that looked very small appeared beneath it when it swung high on the crest of a sea.

"Siwashes," said Jimmy; "one of their sea canoes. They have to keep her running. She wouldn't lie-to."

The craft drew abreast of them, traveling wonderfully fast, and Anthea long remembered how she drove by the *Sorata*, hove half her length out of water, riding on the ridge of a big gray sea. She was entirely open, a long, narrow, bird-headed thing, and the foam she flung off forward seemed to lap over her after-half. A little drenched spritsail was spread from an insignificant mast, and four crouching figures with dusky faces were partly visible amidst the wisps of spray that whirled about her. One of them held a long paddle, and looked fixedly ahead; the others gazed at the *Sorata*

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