

**Period: THE PRESENT TIME. Place: ENGLAND.**

**FIRST SCENE - At Sea.**

The night had come to an end. The new-born day waited for its quickening light in the silence that is never known on land--the silence before sunrise, in a calm at sea.

Not a breath came from the dead air. Not a ripple stirred on the motionless water. Nothing changed but the softly-growing light; nothing moved but the lazy mist, curling up to meet the sun, its master, on the eastward sea. By fine gradations, the airy veil of morning thinned in substance as it rose--thinned, till there dawned through it in the first rays of sunlight the tall white sails of a Schooner Yacht.

From stem to stern silence possessed the vessel--as silence possessed the sea.

But one living creature was on deck--the man at the helm, dozing peaceably with his arm over the useless tiller. Minute by minute the light grew, and the heat grew with it; and still the helmsman slumbered, the heavy sails hung noiseless, the quiet water lay sleeping against the vessel's sides. The whole orb of the sun was visible above the water-line, when the first sound pierced its way through the morning silence. From far off over the shining white ocean, the cry of a sea-bird reached the yacht on a sudden out of the last airy circles of the waning mist.

The sleeper at the helm woke; looked up at the idle sails, and yawned in sympathy with them; looked out at the sea on either side of him, and shook his head obstinately at the superior obstinacy of the calm.

"Blow, my little breeze!" said the man, whistling the sailor's invocation to the wind softly between his teeth. "Blow, my little breeze!"

"How's her head?" cried a bold and brassy voice, hailing the deck from the cabin staircase.

"Anywhere you like, master; all round the compass."