

He had served in the armed steamers during the Seminole War in Florida, and had a good deal to say about sailing up the rivers there, through the everglades, and popping off Indians on the banks. I remember his telling a story about a party being discovered at quite a distance from them; but one of the savages was made very conspicuous by a pewter plate, which he wore round his neck, and which glittered in the sun. This plate proved his death; for, according to Gun-Deck, he himself shot it through the middle, and the ball entered the wearer's heart. It was a rat-killing war, he said.

Gun-Deck had touched at Cadiz: had been to Gibraltar; and ashore at Marseilles. He had sunned himself in the Bay of Naples: eaten figs and oranges in Messina; and cheerfully lost one of his hearts at Malta, among the ladies there. And about all these things, he talked like a romantic man-of-war's man, who had seen the civilized world, and loved it; found it good, and a comfortable place to live in. So he and Larry never could agree in their respective views of civilization, and of savagery, of the Mediterranean and Madagasky.

XXII. THE HIGHLANDER PASSES A WRECK

We were still on the Banks, when a terrific storm came down upon us, the

like of which I had never before beheld, or imagined. The rain poured down in sheets and cascades; the scupper holes could hardly carry it off the decks; and in bracing the yards we waded about almost up to our knees; every thing floating about, like chips in a dock.

This violent rain was the precursor of a hard squall, for which we duly prepared, taking in our canvas to double-reefed-top-sails.

The tornado came rushing along at last, like a troop of wild horses before the flaming rush of a burning prairie. But after bowing and cringing to it awhile, the good Highlander was put off before it; and with her nose in the water, went wallowing on, ploughing milk-white waves, and leaving a streak of illuminated foam in her wake.

It was an awful scene. It made me catch my breath as I gazed. I could hardly stand on my feet, so violent was the motion of the ship. But while I reeled to and fro, the sailors only laughed at me; and bade me look out that the ship did not fall overboard; and advised me to get a handspike, and hold it down hard in the weather-scuppers, to steady her wild motions. But I was now getting a little too wise for this foolish kind of talk; though all through the voyage, they never gave it over.

This storm past, we had fair weather until we got into the Irish Sea.

The morning following the storm, when the sea and sky had become blue again, the man aloft sung out that there was a wreck on the lee-beam. We

bore away for it, all hands looking eagerly toward it, and the captain in the mizzen-top with his spy-glass. Presently, we slowly passed alongside of it.

It was a dismantled, water-logged schooner, a most dismal sight, that must have been drifting about for several long weeks. The bulwarks were pretty much gone; and here and there the bare stanchions, or posts, were left standing, splitting in two the waves which broke clear over the deck, lying almost even with the sea. The foremast was snapped off less than four feet from its base; and the shattered and splintered remnant looked like the stump of a pine tree thrown over in the woods. Every time she rolled in the trough of the sea, her open main-hatchway yawned into view; but was as quickly filled, and submerged again, with a rushing, gurgling sound, as the water ran into it with the lee-roll.

At the head of the stump of the mainmast, about ten feet above the deck, something like a sleeve seemed nailed; it was supposed to be the relic of a jacket, which must have been fastened there by the crew for a signal, and been frayed out and blown away by the wind.

Lashed, and leaning over sideways against the taffrail, were three dark, green, grassy objects, that slowly swayed with every roll, but otherwise were motionless. I saw the captain's, glass directed toward them, and heard him say at last, "They must have been dead a long time." These were sailors, who long ago had lashed themselves to the taffrail for safety; but must have perished.

Full of the awful interest of the scene, I surely thought the captain would lower a boat to bury the bodies, and find out something about the schooner. But we did not stop at all; passing on our course, without so much as learning the schooner's name, though every one supposed her to be a New Brunswick lumberman.

On the part of the sailors, no surprise was shown that our captain did not send off a boat to the wreck; but the steerage passengers were indignant at what they called his barbarity. For me, I could not but feel amazed and shocked at his indifference; but my subsequent sea experiences have shown me, that such conduct as this is very common, though not, of course, when human life can be saved.

So away we sailed, and left her; drifting, drifting on; a garden spot for barnacles, and a playhouse for the sharks.

"Look there," said Jackson, hanging over the rail and coughing-"look there; that's a sailor's coffin. Ha! ha! Buttons," turning round to me--"how do you like that, Buttons? Wouldn't you like to take a sail with them 'ere dead men? Wouldn't it be nice?" And then he tried to laugh, but only coughed again. "Don't laugh at dem poor fellows," said Max, looking grave; "do' you see dar bodies, dar souls are farder off dan de Cape of Dood Hope."

"Dood Hope, Dood Hope," shrieked Jackson, with a horrid grin, mimicking

the Dutchman, "dare is no dood hope for dem, old boy; dey are drowned and d d, as you and I will be, Red Max, one of dese dark nights."

"No, no," said Blunt, "all sailors are saved; they have plenty of squalls here below, but fair weather aloft."

"And did you get that out of your silly Dream Book, you Greek?" howled Jackson through a cough. "Don't talk of heaven to me--it's a lie--I know it--and they are all fools that believe in it. Do you think, you Greek, that there's any heaven for you? Will they let you in there, with that tarry hand, and that oily head of hair? Avast! when some shark gulps you down his hatchway one of these days, you'll find, that by dying, you'll only go from one gale of wind to another; mind that, you Irish cockney! Yes, you'll be bolted down like one of your own pills: and I should like to see the whole ship swallowed down in the Norway maelstrom, like a box on 'em. That would be a dose of salts for ye!" And so saying, he went off, holding his hands to his chest, and coughing, as if his last hour was come.

Every day this Jackson seemed to grow worse and worse, both in body and mind. He seldom spoke, but to contradict, deride, or curse; and all the time, though his face grew thinner and thinner, his eyes seemed to kindle more and more, as if he were going to die out at last, and leave them burning like tapers before a corpse.

Though he had never attended churches, and knew nothing about

Christianity; no more than a Malay pirate; and though he could not read a word, yet he was spontaneously an atheist and an infidel; and during the long night watches, would enter into arguments, to prove that there was nothing to be believed; nothing to be loved, and nothing worth living for; but every thing to be hated, in the wide world. He was a horrid desperado; and like a wild Indian, whom he resembled in his tawny skin and high cheek bones, he seemed to run amuck at heaven and earth. He was a Cain afloat; branded on his yellow brow with some inscrutable curse; and going about corrupting and searing every heart that beat near him.

But there seemed even more woe than wickedness about the man; and his wickedness seemed to spring from his woe; and for all his hideousness, there was that in his eye at times, that was ineffably pitiable and touching; and though there were moments when I almost hated this Jackson, yet I have pitied no man as I have pitied him.