

CHAPTER XI. IN WHICH JIM AND I TAKE DIFFERENT WAYS.

I was unhappy when I closed my eyes; and it was to unhappiness that I opened them again next morning, to a confused sense of some calamity still inarticulate, and to the consciousness of jaded limbs and of a swimming head. I must have lain for some time inert and stupidly miserable, before I became aware of a reiterated knocking at the door; with which discovery all my wits flowed back in their accustomed channels, and I remembered the sale, and the wreck, and Goddedaal, and Nares, and Johnson, and Black Tom, and the troubles of yesterday, and the manifold engagements of the day that was to come. The thought thrilled me like a trumpet in the hour of battle. In a moment, I had leaped from bed, crossed the office where Pinkerton lay in a deep trance of sleep on the convertible sofa, and stood in the doorway, in my night gear, to receive our visitors.

Johnson was first, by way of usher, smiling. From a little behind, with his Sunday hat tilted forward over his brow, and a cigar glowing between his lips, Captain Nares acknowledged our previous acquaintance with a succinct nod. Behind him again, in the top of the stairway, a knot of sailors, the new crew of the *Norah Creina*, stood polishing the wall with back and elbow. These I left without to their reflections. But our two officers I carried at once into the office, where (taking Jim by the shoulder) I shook him slowly into consciousness. He sat up, all abroad for the moment, and stared on the new captain.

"Jim," said I, "this is Captain Nares. Captain, Mr. Pinkerton."

Nares repeated his curt nod, still without speech; and I thought he held us both under a watchful scrutiny.

"O!" says Jim, "this is Captain Nares, is it? Good morning, Captain Nares. Happy to have the pleasure of your acquaintance, sir. I know you well by reputation."

Perhaps, under the circumstances of the moment, this was scarce a welcome speech. At least, Nares received it with a grunt.

"Well, Captain," Jim continued, "you know about the size of the business? You're to take the Nora Creina to Midway Island, break up a wreck, call at Honolulu, and back to this port? I suppose that's understood?"

"Well," returned Nares, with the same unamiable reserve, "for a reason, which I guess you know, the cruise may suit me; but there's a point or two to settle. We shall have to talk, Mr. Pinkerton. But whether I go or not, somebody will; there's no sense in losing time; and you might give Mr. Johnson a note, let him take the hands right down, and set to to overhaul the rigging. The beasts look sober," he added, with an air of great disgust, "and need putting to work to keep them so."

This being agreed upon, Nares watched his subordinate depart and drew a visible breath.

"And now we're alone and can talk," said he. "What's this thing about? It's been advertised like Barnum's museum; that poster of yours has set the Front talking; that's an objection in itself, for I'm laying a little dark just now; and anyway, before I take the ship, I require to know what I'm going after."

Thereupon Pinkerton gave him the whole tale, beginning with a businesslike precision, and working himself up, as he went on, to the boiling-point of narrative enthusiasm. Nares sat and smoked, hat still on head, and acknowledged each fresh feature of the story with a frowning nod. But his pale blue eyes betrayed him, and lighted visibly.

"Now you see for yourself," Pinkerton concluded: "there's every last chance that Trent has skipped to Honolulu, and it won't take much of that fifty thousand dollars to charter a smart schooner down to Midway. Here's where I want a man!" cried Jim, with contagious energy. "That wreck's mine; I've paid for it, money down; and if it's got to be fought for, I want to see it fought for lively. If you're not back in ninety days, I tell you plainly, I'll make one of the biggest busts ever seen upon this coast; it's life or death for Mr. Dodd and me. As like as not, it'll come to grapples on the island; and when I heard your name last night--and a blame' sight more this morning when I saw the eye you've got in your head--I said, 'Nares is good enough for me!'"

"I guess," observed Nares, studying the ash of his cigar, "the sooner I get that schooner outside the Farallones, the better you'll be pleased."

"You're the man I dreamed of!" cried Jim, bouncing on the bed. "There's not five per cent of fraud in all your carcass."

"Just hold on," said Nares. "There's another point. I heard some talk about a supercargo."

"That's Mr. Dodd, here, my partner," said Jim.

"I don't see it," returned the captain drily. "One captain's enough for any ship that ever I was aboard."

"Now don't you start disappointing me," said Pinkerton; "for you're talking without thought. I'm not going to give you the run of the books of this firm, am I? I guess not. Well, this is not only a cruise; it's a business operation; and that's in the hands of my partner. You sail that ship, you see to breaking up that wreck and keeping the men upon the jump, and you'll find your hands about full. Only, no mistake about one thing: it has to be done to Mr. Dodd's satisfaction; for it's Mr. Dodd that's paying."

"I'm accustomed to give satisfaction," said Mr. Nares, with a dark flush.

"And so you will here!" cried Pinkerton. "I understand you. You're prickly to handle, but you're straight all through."

"The position's got to be understood, though," returned Nares, perhaps a trifle mollified. "My position, I mean. I'm not going to ship sailing-master; it's enough out of my way already, to set a foot on this mosquito schooner."

"Well, I'll tell you," retorted Jim, with an indescribable twinkle: "you just meet me on the ballast, and we'll make it a barquentine."

Nares laughed a little; tactless Pinkerton had once more gained a victory in tact. "Then there's another point," resumed the captain, tacitly relinquishing the last. "How about the owners?"

"O, you leave that to me; I'm one of Longhurst's crowd, you know," said Jim, with sudden bristling vanity. "Any man that's good enough for me, is good enough for them."

"Who are they?" asked Nares.

"M'Intyre and Spittal," said Jim.

"O, well, give me a card of yours," said the captain: "you needn't bother to write; I keep M'Intyre and Spittal in my vest-pocket."

Boast for boast; it was always thus with Nares and Pinkerton--the two vainest men of my acquaintance. And having thus reinstated himself in his own opinion, the captain rose, and, with a couple of his stiff nods, departed.

"Jim," I cried, as the door closed behind him, "I don't like that man."

"You've just got to, Loudon," returned Jim. "He's a typical American seaman--brave as a lion, full of resource, and stands high with his owners. He's a man with a record."

"For brutality at sea," said I.

"Say what you like," exclaimed Pinkerton, "it was a good hour we got him in: I'd trust Mamie's life to him to-morrow."

"Well, and talking of Mamie?" says I.

Jim paused with his trousers half on. "She's the gallantest little soul God ever made!" he cried. "Loudon, I'd meant to knock you up last night, and I hope you won't take it unfriendly that I didn't. I went in and looked at you asleep; and I saw you were all broken up, and let you be. The news would keep, anyway; and even you, Loudon, couldn't feel it the same way as I did."

"What news?" I asked.

"It's this way," says Jim. "I told her how we stood, and that I backed down from marrying. 'Are you tired of me?' says she: God bless her! Well, I explained the whole thing over again, the chance of smash, your absence unavoidable, the point I made of having you for the best man, and that. 'If you're not tired of me, I think I see one way to manage,' says she. 'Let's get married to-morrow, and Mr. Loudon can be best man before he goes to sea.' That's how she said it, crisp and bright, like one of Dickens's characters. It was no good for me to talk about the smash. 'You'll want me all the more,' she said. Loudon, I only pray I can make it up to her; I prayed for it last night beside your bed, while you lay sleeping--for you, and Mamie and myself; and--I don't know if you quite believe in prayer, I'm a bit Ingersollian myself--but a kind of sweetness came over me, and I couldn't help but think it was an answer. Never was a man so lucky! You and me and Mamie; it's a triple cord, Loudon. If either of you were to die! And she likes you so much, and thinks you so accomplished and distingue-looking, and was just as set as I was to have you for best man. 'Mr. Loudon,' she calls you; seems to me so friendly! And she sat up till three in the morning fixing up a costume for the marriage; it did me good to see her, Loudon, and to see that needle going, going, and to say 'All this hurry, Jim, is just to marry you!' I couldn't believe it; it was so like some blame' fairy story. To think of those old tin-type times about turned my head; I was so unrefined then, and so illiterate, and so lonesome; and here I am in clover, and I'm blamed if I can see what I've done to deserve it."

So he poured forth with innocent volubility the fulness of his heart; and I, from these irregular communications, must pick out, here a little and there a little, the particulars of his new plan. They were to be married, sure enough, that day; the wedding breakfast was to be at Frank's; the evening to be passed in a visit of God-speed aboard the *Norah Creina*; and then we were to part, Jim and I, he to his married life, I on my sea-enterprise. If ever I cherished an ill-feeling for Miss Mamie, I forgave her now; so brave and kind, so pretty and venturesome, was her decision. The weather frowned overhead with a leaden sky, and San Francisco had never (in all my experience) looked so bleak and gaunt, and shoddy, and crazy, like a city prematurely old; but through all my wanderings and errands to and fro, by the dock side or in the jostling street, among rude sounds and ugly sights, there ran in my mind, like a tiny strain of music, the thought of my friend's happiness.

For that was indeed a day of many and incongruous occupations. Breakfast was scarce swallowed before Jim must run to the City Hall and Frank's about the cares of marriage, and I hurry to John Smith's upon the account of stores, and thence, on a visit of certification, to the *Norah Creina*. Methought she looked smaller than ever, sundry great ships overspiring her from close without. She was already a nightmare of disorder; and the wharf alongside was piled with a world of casks, and cases, and tins, and tools, and coils of rope, and miniature barrels of giant powder, such as it seemed no human ingenuity could stuff on board of her. Johnson was in the waist, in a red shirt and dungaree trousers,

his eye kindled with activity. With him I exchanged a word or two; thence stepped aft along the narrow alleyway between the house and the rail, and down the companion to the main cabin, where the captain sat with the commissioner at wine.

I gazed with disaffection at the little box which for many a day I was to call home. On the starboard was a stateroom for the captain; on the port, a pair of frowsy berths, one over the other, and abutting astern upon the side of an unsavoury cupboard. The walls were yellow and damp, the floor black and greasy; there was a prodigious litter of straw, old newspapers, and broken packing-cases; and by way of ornament, only a glass-rack, a thermometer presented "with compliments" of some advertising whiskey-dealer, and a swinging lamp. It was hard to foresee that, before a week was up, I should regard that cabin as cheerful, lightsome, airy, and even spacious.

I was presented to the commissioner, and to a young friend of his whom he had brought with him for the purpose (apparently) of smoking cigars; and after we had pledged one another in a glass of California port, a trifle sweet and sticky for a morning beverage, the functionary spread his papers on the table, and the hands were summoned. Down they trooped, accordingly, into the cabin; and stood eyeing the ceiling or the floor, the picture of sheepish embarrassment, and with a common air of wanting to expectorate and not quite daring. In admirable contrast, stood the Chinese cook, easy, dignified, set apart by spotless raiment, the hidalgo of the seas.

I daresay you never had occasion to assist at the farce which followed. Our shipping laws in the United States (thanks to the inimitable Dana) are conceived in a spirit of paternal stringency, and proceed throughout on the hypothesis that poor Jack is an imbecile, and the other parties to the contract, rogues and ruffians. A long and wordy paper of precautions, a fo'c's'le bill of rights, must be read separately to each man. I had now the benefit of hearing it five times in brisk succession; and you would suppose I was acquainted with its contents. But the commissioner (worthy man) spends his days in doing little else; and when we bear in mind the parallel case of the irreverent curate, we need not be surprised that he took the passage tempo prestissimo, in one roulade of gabble--that I, with the trained attention of an educated man, could gather but a fraction of its import--and the sailors nothing. No profanity in giving orders, no sheath-knives, Midway Island and any other port the master may direct, not to exceed six calendar months, and to this port to be paid off: so it seemed to run, with surprising verbiage; so ended. And with the end, the commissioner, in each case, fetched a deep breath, resumed his natural voice, and proceeded to business. "Now, my man," he would say, "you ship A. B. at so many dollars, American gold coin. Sign your name here, if you have one, and can write." Whereupon, and the name (with infinite hard breathing) being signed, the commissioner would proceed to fill in the man's appearance, height, etc., on the official form. In this task of literary portraiture he seemed to rely wholly upon temperament; for I could not perceive him to cast one glance on any of his models. He was assisted, however, by a

running commentary from the captain: "Hair blue and eyes red, nose five foot seven, and stature broken"--jests as old, presumably, as the American marine; and, like the similar pleasantries of the billiard board, perennially relished. The highest note of humour was reached in the case of the Chinese cook, who was shipped under the name of "One Lung," to the sound of his own protests and the self-approving chuckles of the functionary.

"Now, captain," said the latter, when the men were gone, and he had bundled up his papers, "the law requires you to carry a slop-chest and a chest of medicines."

"I guess I know that," said Nares.

"I guess you do," returned the commissioner, and helped himself to port.

But when he was gone, I appealed to Nares on the same subject, for I was well aware we carried none of these provisions.

"Well," drawled Nares, "there's sixty pounds of niggerhead on the quay, isn't there? and twenty pounds of salts; and I never travel without some painkiller in my gripsack."

As a matter of fact, we were richer. The captain had the usual sailor's provision of quack medicines, with which, in the usual sailor fashion, he would daily drug himself, displaying an extreme inconstancy, and

flitting from Kennedy's Red Discovery to Kennedy's White, and from Hood's Sarsaparilla to Mother Seigel's Syrup. And there were, besides, some mildewed and half-empty bottles, the labels obliterated, over which Nares would sometimes sniff and speculate. "Seems to smell like diarrhoea stuff," he would remark. "I wish't I knew, and I would try it." But the slop-chest was indeed represented by the plugs of niggerhead, and nothing else. Thus paternal laws are made, thus they are evaded; and the schooner put to sea, like plenty of her neighbours, liable to a fine of six hundred dollars.

This characteristic scene, which has delayed me overlong, was but a moment in that day of exercise and agitation. To fit out a schooner for sea, and improvise a marriage between dawn and dusk, involves heroic effort. All day Jim and I ran, and tramped, and laughed, and came near crying, and fell in sudden anxious consultations, and were sped (with a prepared sarcasm on our lips) to some fallacious milliner, and made dashes to the schooner and John Smith's, and at every second corner were reminded (by our own huge posters) of our desperate estate. Between whiles, I had found the time to hover at some half-a-dozen jewellers' windows; and my present, thus intemperately chosen, was graciously accepted. I believe, indeed, that was the last (though not the least) of my concerns, before the old minister, shabby and benign, was routed from his house and led to the office like a performing poodle; and there, in the growing dusk, under the cold glitter of Thirteen Star, two hundred strong, and beside the garish glories of the agricultural engine, Mamie and Jim were made one. The scene was incongruous, but the business

pretty, whimsical, and affecting: the typewriters with such kindly faces and fine posies, Mamie so demure, and Jim--how shall I describe that poor, transfigured Jim? He began by taking the minister aside to the far end of the office. I knew not what he said, but I have reason to believe he was protesting his unfitness; for he wept as he said it: and the old minister, himself genuinely moved, was heard to console and encourage him, and at one time to use this expression: "I assure you, Mr. Pinkerton, there are not many who can say so much"--from which I gathered that my friend had tempered his self-accusations with at least one legitimate boast. From this ghostly counselling, Jim turned to me; and though he never got beyond the explosive utterance of my name and one fierce handgrip, communicated some of his own emotion, like a charge of electricity, to his best man. We stood up to the ceremony at last, in a general and kindly discomposure. Jim was all abroad; and the divine himself betrayed his sympathy in voice and demeanour, and concluded with a fatherly allocution, in which he congratulated Mamie (calling her "my dear") upon the fortune of an excellent husband, and protested he had rarely married a more interesting couple. At this stage, like a glory descending, there was handed in, ex machina, the card of Douglas B. Longhurst, with congratulations and four dozen Perrier-Jouet. A bottle was opened; and the minister pledged the bride, and the bridesmaids simpered and tasted, and I made a speech with airy bacchanalianism, glass in hand. But poor Jim must leave the wine untasted. "Don't touch it," I had found the opportunity to whisper; "in your state it will make you as drunk as a fiddler." And Jim had wrung my hand with a "God bless you, Loudon!--saved me again!"

Hard following upon this, the supper passed off at Frank's with somewhat tremulous gaiety. And thence, with one half of the Perrier-Jouet--I would accept no more--we voyaged in a hack to the Norah Creina.

"What a dear little ship!" cried Mamie, as our miniature craft was pointed out to her. And then, on second thought, she turned to the best man. "And how brave you must be, Mr. Dodd," she cried, "to go in that tiny thing so far upon the ocean!" And I perceived I had risen in the lady's estimation.

The dear little ship presented a horrid picture of confusion, and its occupants of weariness and ill-humour. From the cabin the cook was storing tins into the lazarette, and the four hands, sweaty and sullen, were passing them from one to another from the waist. Johnson was three parts asleep over the table; and in his bunk, in his own cabin, the captain sourly chewed and puffed at a cigar.

"See here," he said, rising; "you'll be sorry you came. We can't stop work if we're to get away to-morrow. A ship getting ready for sea is no place for people, anyway. You'll only interrupt my men."

I was on the point of answering something tart; but Jim, who was acquainted with the breed, as he was with most things that had a bearing on affairs, made haste to pour in oil.

"Captain," he said, "I know we're a nuisance here, and that you've had a rough time. But all we want is that you should drink one glass of wine with us, Perrier-Jouet, from Longhurst, on the occasion of my marriage, and Loudon's--Mr. Dodd's--departure."

"Well, it's your lookout," said Nares. "I don't mind half an hour. Spell, O!" he added to the men; "go and kick your heels for half an hour, and then you can turn to again a trifle livelier. Johnson, see if you can't wipe off a chair for the lady."

His tone was no more gracious than his language; but when Mamie had turned upon him the soft fire of her eyes, and informed him that he was the first sea-captain she had ever met, "except captains of steamers, of course"--she so qualified the statement--and had expressed a lively sense of his courage, and perhaps implied (for I suppose the arts of ladies are the same as those of men) a modest consciousness of his good looks, our bear began insensibly to soften; and it was already part as an apology, though still with unaffected heat of temper, that he volunteered some sketch of his annoyances.

"A pretty mess we've had!" said he. "Half the stores were wrong; I'll wring John Smith's neck for him some of these days. Then two newspaper beasts came down, and tried to raise copy out of me, till I threatened them with the first thing handy; and then some kind of missionary bug, wanting to work his passage to Raiatea or somewhere. I told him I would take him off the wharf with the butt end of my boot, and he went away

cursing. This vessel's been depreciated by the look of him."

While the captain spoke, with his strange, humorous, arrogant abruptness, I observed Jim to be sizing him up, like a thing at once quaint and familiar, and with a scrutiny that was both curious and knowing.

"One word, dear boy," he said, turning suddenly to me. And when he had drawn me on deck, "That man," says he, "will carry sail till your hair grows white; but never you let on, never breathe a word. I know his line: he'll die before he'll take advice; and if you get his back up, he'll run you right under. I don't often jam in my advice, Loudon; and when I do, it means I'm thoroughly posted."

The little party in the cabin, so disastrously begun, finished, under the mellowing influence of wine and woman, in excellent feeling and with some hilarity. Mamie, in a plush Gainsborough hat and a gown of wine-coloured silk, sat, an apparent queen, among her rude surroundings and companions. The dusky litter of the cabin set off her radiant trimness: tarry Johnson was a foil to her fair beauty; she glowed in that poor place, fair as a star; until even I, who was not usually of her admirers, caught a spark of admiration; and even the captain, who was in no courtly humour, proposed that the scene should be commemorated

by my pencil. It was the last act of the evening. Hurriedly as I went about my task, the half-hour had lengthened out to more than three

before it was completed: Mamie in full value, the rest of the party figuring in outline only, and the artist himself introduced in a back view, which was pronounced a likeness. But it was to Mamie that I devoted the best of my attention; and it was with her I made my chief success.

"O!" she cried, "am I really like that? No wonder Jim ..." She paused. "Why it's just as lovely as he's good!" she cried: an epigram which was appreciated, and repeated as we made our salutations, and called out after the retreating couple as they passed away under the lamplight on the wharf.

Thus it was that our farewells were smuggled through under an ambuscade of laughter, and the parting over ere I knew it was begun. The figures vanished, the steps died away along the silent city front; on board, the men had returned to their labours, the captain to his solitary cigar; and after that long and complex day of business and emotion, I was at last alone and free. It was, perhaps, chiefly fatigue that made my heart so heavy. I leaned at least upon the house, and stared at the foggy heaven, or over the rail at the wavering reflection of the lamps, like a man that was quite done with hope and would have welcomed the asylum of the grave. And all at once, as I thus stood, the City of Pekin flashed into my mind, racing her thirteen knots for Honolulu, with the hated Trent--perhaps with the mysterious Goddedaal--on board; and with the thought, the blood leaped and careered through all my body. It seemed no chase at all; it seemed we had no chance, as we lay there bound to iron

pillars, and fooling away the precious moments over tins of beans. "Let them get there first!" I thought. "Let them! We can't be long behind." And from that moment, I date myself a man of a rounded experience: nothing had lacked but this, that I should entertain and welcome the grim thought of bloodshed.

It was long before the toil remitted in the cabin, and it was worth my while to get to bed; long after that, before sleep favoured me; and scarce a moment later (or so it seemed) when I was recalled to consciousness by bawling men and the jar of straining hawsers.

The schooner was cast off before I got on deck. In the misty obscurity of the first dawn, I saw the tug heading us with glowing fires and blowing smoke, and heard her beat the roughened waters of the bay. Beside us, on her flock of hills, the lighted city towered up and stood swollen in the raw fog. It was strange to see her burn on thus wastefully, with half-quenched luminaries, when the dawn was already grown strong enough to show me, and to suffer me to recognise, a solitary figure standing by the piles.

Or was it really the eye, and not rather the heart, that identified that shadow in the dusk, among the shoreside lamps? I know not. It was Jim, at least; Jim, come for a last look; and we had but time to wave a valedictory gesture and exchange a wordless cry. This was our second parting, and our capacities were now reversed. It was mine to play the Argonaut, to speed affairs, to plan and to accomplish--if need were, at

the price of life; it was his to sit at home, to study the calendar, and to wait. I knew besides another thing that gave me joy. I knew that my friend had succeeded in my education; that the romance of business, if our fantastic purchase merited the name, had at last stirred my diletante nature; and, as we swept under cloudy Tamalpais and through the roaring narrows of the bay, the Yankee blood sang in my veins with suspense and exultation.

Outside the heads, as if to meet my desire, we found it blowing fresh from the northeast. No time had been lost. The sun was not yet up before the tug cast off the hawser, gave us a salute of three whistles, and turned homeward toward the coast, which now began to gleam along its margin with the earliest rays of day. There was no other ship in view when the *Norah Creina*, lying over under all plain sail, began her long and lonely voyage to the wreck.