

FICTION

Laura Lee Hope

The Moving Picture Girls at Sea

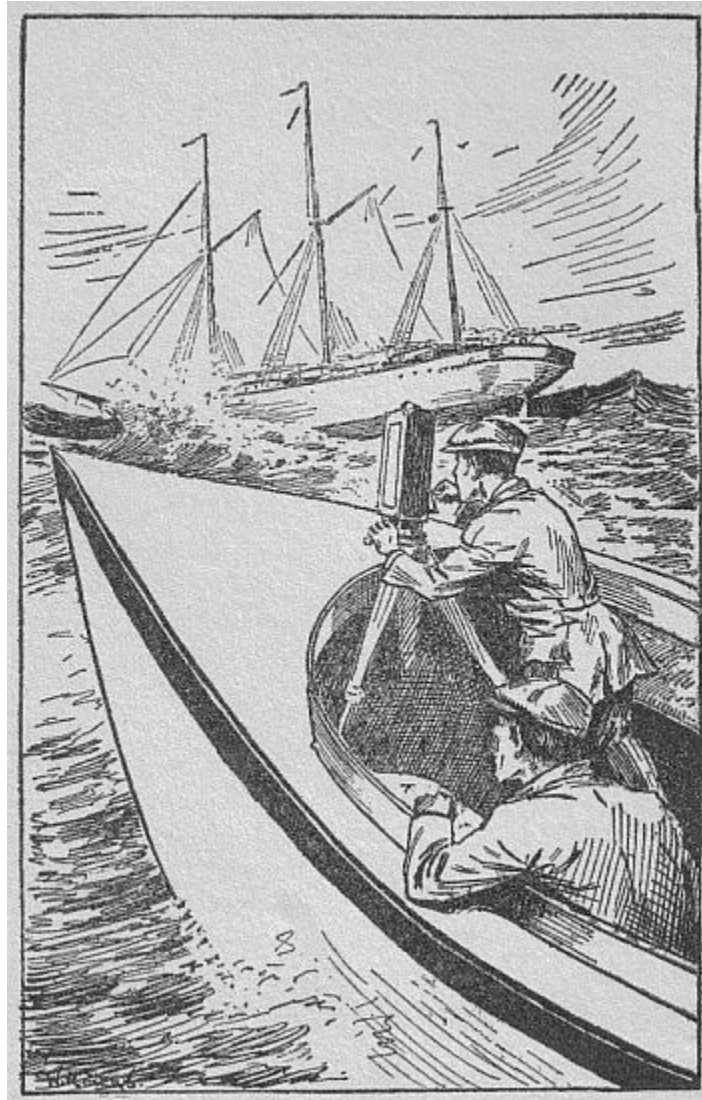


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FICTION

A PUBLIC DOMAIN BOOK

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Russ began taking many views of the pitching, tossing schooner.-

[-Page 157](#)

The Moving Picture Girls at Sea

Or

A Pictured Shipwreck That Became Real

BY LAURA LEE HOPE

AUTHOR OF "THE MOVING PICTURE GIRLS," "THE MOVING PICTURE GIRLS AT
ROCKY RANCH," "THE OUTDOOR GIRLS SERIES," "THE BOBBSEY TWINS SERIES,"
ETC.

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CHAPTER	PAGE
I THE GREAT MARINE FILM	1
II JACK JEPSON	10
III SOMETHING OF A MYSTERY	21
IV THE SAILOR'S STORY	28
V THE MARY ELLEN	36
VI CAPTAIN BRISCO	45
VII JEPSON IS WORRIED	53
VIII HARD WORK	60
IX THE RISING TIDE	68
X TOO MUCH REALISM	76
XI A REVISED FILM	87
XII OVERHEARD	94
XIII "ALL ABOARD!"	104
XIV OVERBOARD	114
XV "SAIL HO!"	123
XVI THE ACCUSATION	133
XVII THE STORM	141
XVIII GRINDING AWAY	149
XIX DISABLED	158
XX IN THE VORTEX	165
XXI WRECKED	172
XXII "MUTINY!"	182
XXIII HELP AT LAST	188
XXIV A SIGNAL OF DISTRESS	200
XXV CLEAR SKIES	206

CHAPTER I

THE GREAT MARINE FILM

"Well, at last a breathing period, Ruth. Oh, I am surely tired!" and the girl threw herself on the couch, without stopping to remove her light jacket and hat. Her head sank wearily on a cushion.

"Oh, Alice! Be careful! Look out!" exclaimed the other occupant of the pleasant little room, a room made habitable by the articles of tasteful adornment in it, rather than by the location of the apartment, or the place itself. There was a "homey" air about it.

"I'm too tired to look out, or even look in," was the answer, as the younger girl closed her eyes. Truly she seemed much "fagged," and worn out.

"But, Alice, dear--your hat!"

"It doesn't matter, Ruth. Please let me rest. I thought we'd never get home."

"But it isn't your old hat, Alice, and----"

"It's an old hat from now on!" broke in the younger girl, not opening her eyes. "It's spoiled anyhow. Some of the water from that parlor scene, where Mr. Bunn upset the globe of gold fish, splashed on it, and the spots never will come out."

"Oh, Alice, is your hat spoiled?"

"It doesn't matter. Mr. Pertell is going to buy me a new one. He said it was up to the company to do that, especially as I did so well in that burning room scene the other day. There!" and the girl on the couch raised her small fist and plumped it full on the crown of the chic little toque she was wearing.

"Alice DeVere!" cried her sister, aghast.

"Ruth DeVere--Lady Clarissa--Senorita Alamondi! Whatever you like, only let me--alone! I've posed and acted and otherwise contorted myself before at least five thousand feet of film today, and I'm not going to be disturbed now, just for the sake of a hat that is as good as paid for anyhow, so 'please go 'way and let me sleep,'" and Alice murmured the chorus of a once popular song.

Ruth sighed. Somehow, looking at her gentle and refined face, one understood that a sigh, from her, was the only possible answer under the circumstances. Not that the girl on the couch, with closed eyes, was unrefined. But there was a wholesome air of good health about her that caused one to think of a "jolly good fellow," rather than a girl who needed to be helped on and off trolley cars.

"You *are* tired," commented Ruth, after a pause. "Shall I make you a cup of tea, dear? Or we could go over to Mrs. Dalton's, if you like. You know she told us always to come in when we came from the theatre, and have tea."

"No, dear, thank you. It's awfully good of you to offer, but I don't want you to trouble. I'll be all right in a few minutes. I just want to rest."

"It was a tiresome day; wasn't it, dear?"

"I should say so, 'and then--some,' as Russ would say."

"You shouldn't quote Russ when he uses slang," was the older girl's rebuke.

"Can't help it, Ruth. That just seemed to fit. But you can't feel so very rested yourself. You had some heavy parts today."

"Oh, I don't mind. I really was in love with that role of Lady Clarissa. I always did like English plays, anyhow."

"Well, we are getting more than our share of them this season. I wish Mr. Pertell would swing to a good American drama again. Say, didn't we have fun at Rocky Ranch?" and as she asked this some of the weariness seemed to slip off Alice as a discarded garment is let fall. She sat up, her eyes flashing with fun, and her cheeks that had been pale were now suffused with a heightened color.

"Yes, we did have fun," assented Ruth. "But it was hard work, too,--especially when that prairie fire came a little too close for comfort."

"That *was* rather scary," assented Alice. "But it was outdoors, and that was what I love. Oh, I can just smell that wonderful air yet!" and she breathed in a long breath. A look of annoyance passed over her face, and she made a gesture of disapproval, "wrinkling" her nose.

"They're having corned beef and cabbage again downstairs," she said, pointing to the apartment below them.

"Well, they have a right to it," Ruth said, with a tolerant smile.

"Not when daddy hates it so," disagreed Alice. "Come on, let's make a cup of tea. And is there any cheese?"

"Cheese?"

"Yes," the younger girl went on. "I'm going to make a Welsh rarebit. Daddy just adores them, and the smell of the toast will take away the odor of that cabbage. Is there any cheese?"

"I think so. But I thought you were tired."

"I was, but I guess thinking of the moving picture days at Rocky Ranch acted as a tonic. I'm rested now. There!"

She tossed the hat, which she had so mistreated, on a chair, slipped off her jacket and started for the kitchen.

"I *think* there is some cheese," went on Ruth, following her younger sister. "But don't make the rarebit as you did last time. It was so tough that Russ said it would do very well to half sole his rubber boots."

"That was because I put the milk in too suddenly. I won't do it that way this time. Come on, we'll get up a nice little tea for daddy. He's sure to be tired also. They had to film that big scene of the accusation over three times before Mr. Pertell was satisfied."

"Is that so? I didn't know that, I was so busy with that English play. Then father will be late."

"A little. He said he'd follow us in about an hour, though. So we'll just about have it ready in time. Did Russ come out with you?"

"No," and though she uttered but this simple word the cheeks of Ruth took on a more ruddy hue.

"I saw Pearl waiting for him," went on Alice. "But----"

"You did?" cried Ruth, and then she added quickly: "Oh, I mean I suppose he had to go with her to film that scene in Central Park, near the lion's cage."

"Don't get jealous now," teased Alice. "I said Pearl waited for him, but, she is--still waiting, I guess."

"What do you mean?"

Ruth tried to appear indifferent, but it was not an unqualified success.

"I mean that Russ got one of the other camera men to take his place, and go out with Miss Pennington," said Alice with a laugh as she began cutting the bread in thin slices for toast.

"But Russ--"

"He went up town. He told me to tell you he thought he could get that book you spoke of."

"Oh, I didn't want him to go to all *that* trouble!" remonstrated Ruth, looking at her sister, and then suddenly averting her gaze.

"Guess he doesn't call much *trouble* where *you* are concerned," said Alice significantly, cutting up some chunks of cheese which she put in a double boiler with some lumps of butter. "He said if you wanted a book to give you some of the details of the country, where that English play was supposed to take place, you were going to have it."

"It's awfully good of him," murmured Ruth. "I just casually mentioned that I'd like to know something about the people of that section, and he offered to get a book he had once heard of. But I didn't want him to make such a fuss over it."

"La-la-la!" chanted Alice, about nothing in particular.

The girls busied themselves getting tea. The kettle was soon singing on the gas stove, the crisp odor of toast had replaced the heavier one of cabbage, and the rarebit was almost ready to serve, when a step was heard out in the hall of the apartment house where the DeVere family had their New York home.

"There's daddy!" exclaimed Alice.

"And just in time," added Ruth, as she poured the boiling water on the tea, adding to the fragrant food perfumes that now filled the apartment.

The key clicked in the lock, the door opened, and a rather imposing figure of a man entered, laying aside his hat and light overcoat, for the Spring day was a bit chilly.

"Hello, Daddy!" called Alice, putting up her face to be kissed, as she came in from the kitchen with a plate of delicately browned toast. "You're just in time. And it's such a *lovely* rarebit!"

"That's good, my dear."

"Oh, Father, how hoarse you are!" cried Ruth. "Is your throat bad again?"

"Well, this harbor dampness isn't just the best medicine for it. But I shall spray it, and it will be better."

He sank somewhat wearily into a chair as he spoke, and Ruth glided over to him.

"Daddy," she said, "you look worried. Has anything happened? Is anything wrong at the moving picture studio?"

"No, nothing wrong, but--"

It was evident that something out of the usual had occurred. Even light-hearted Alice sensed it.

"What is it?" she asked.

"Oh, nothing so much," her father said in weary tones. "I suppose I shouldn't make such a fuss over it. But Mr. Pertell has finally decided to film the great marine drama, and that means we shall have to go out on the water, more or less. And with my sore throat that isn't just the best thing in the world for me."

"A marine drama!" cried Alice. "Oh, I shall just love *that!*"

A look of worry still clouded Mr. DeVere's face.

"Father, there is something else," insisted Ruth. "You haven't told us all about this sea film."

"No, I--I haven't," he said. "And, to tell the truth, I'd rather we weren't going to be in that marine drama."



CHAPTER II

JACK JEPSON

Hosmer DeVere's words and manner alike were alarming to his daughters. Seldom had they seen him so moved, especially over such a seemingly simple matter as the announcement of a new moving picture drama. He and the girls, in common with the other members of the Comet Film Company, had to portray many different scenes in the course of a season's work, and though some of it was distasteful, it was seldom objected to by anyone, unless perhaps by Pepper Sneed, the "grouch," or perhaps by Mr. Wellington Bunn, an actor of the old school, who could not reconcile himself to the silent drama.

"Why, Daddy, what is the matter?" asked Alice. "I think it will be perfectly fine to have a little trip out to sea, especially now that Summer is coming on."

"But not if the damp salty air is going to irritate his throat," declared Ruth.

"Oh, it isn't so much that," Mr. DeVere said, "but you girls evidently don't know that the big scene in this drama is a shipwreck, and what follows. I am to be 'cast' in that, and so are you."

"Well, what of it?" asked Alice. "It won't be a *real* shipwreck; will it?"

"Real? Of course not!" exclaimed Ruth. "The idea!"

"I certainly hope it won't be real," Mr. DeVere said, "But--Oh, well, I suppose I may as well admit the truth. You'll probably call me fussy and all that, and laugh at the superstition of an old actor. But you know we have our traditions, though I am free to confess that I have lost many of them since entering on this moving picture work. But I had a dream about this same shipwreck, and that was before I knew we were to be in it, for I might mention that Mr. Pertell has included you girls in the drama, and has prominent parts selected for you."

"Oh, I'm glad!" cried Alice enthusiastically.

"I'm not," her father said, and he did not smile. "As I said I had a dream about this drama before I knew we were to have parts in it. And in that dream I saw----"

"Oh, Daddy! Now don't tell a depressing dream before tea!" begged Alice, slipping her arms about his neck, and imprinting a kiss on a spot, which, if it were not already bald, was fast becoming so. "Wait until after supper--the rarebit will spoil if we don't eat it at once. Wait, Daddy dear!"

"All right, I will," he assented with a sigh. "Perhaps I may have a less gloomy view of it after a cup of tea."

And while the little family party is gathered about the table, I shall take just a moment to tell my new readers something about the previous books of this series.

Ruth and Alice DeVere were moving picture girls, which you have probably guessed already. That is, they were actresses for the silent film dramas that make so much for enjoyment nowadays. Mr. DeVere was also an actor in the same company. He had been a semi-tragedian of the "old school," but his voice had failed, because of a throat ailment, and he could no longer declaim his lines over the footlights. He was in distress until it was suggested to him that he take up moving picture work.

This suggestion came from young Russ Dalwood, who, with his widowed mother and little brother, lived across the hall from the DeVere family, in the Fenmore Apartment on one of the West Sixty streets of New York. Russ had invented a new attachment for a moving picture camera, and he himself was a camera operator of ability.

At first Mr. DeVere had refused to consider moving picture work, but he finally consented, and even allowed his daughters to take their parts in the silent drama. In the initial book of the series, "The Moving Picture Girls," I related their first experiences.

All was not smooth sailing. Though Mr. Frank Pertell, manager of the Comet Film Company, was a most agreeable man, the other members of the theatrical company were like those of any other organization--some were liked, and some were not. Among the former, at least from the standpoint of Ruth and Alice, was Russ; Paul Ardite, who played juvenile leads; Pop Snooks, the property man and one who did all the odd tasks; and Carl Switzer, a round-faced German, who was funny without knowing it.

But neither Ruth nor Alice cared much for Laura Dixon and Pearl Pennington, two former vaudeville actresses who

thought they were conferring a favor on the cameras to pose for moving pictures. Mr. Bunn, an actor of the kind styled "Hams", was in like case.

Mr. Bunn was always bemoaning the fact that he had left the "legitimate" drama with a chance of playing "Hamlet", to take up moving picture work. But he might have been glad--especially on paydays--for he had made more out of camera work than he could have done on the regular stage.

Pepper Sneed was never satisfied. He was of a gloomy nature, and always looking for trouble. Sometimes he found it, and for a time he was happy in saying "I told you so." But more often he proved a dismal failure as a predictor of calamities.

This was the company, with others whom you will meet from time to time, in whose fortunes Ruth and Alice DeVere had cast their lots.

After the girls' first introduction to the camera they went to Oak Farm where a series of pictures were taken, and, incidentally, a mystery was cleared up. Getting snowbound was another experience for our friends, but they forgot the cruelties of Winter in the happy days under the palms. And they had only recently come back from Rocky Ranch, where a number of Western dramas had been filmed, when the little scene of our opening chapter took place.

Those of you who have read the previous books of this series do not need to be told much about moving pictures. And even those who select this volume as their first venture in becoming acquainted with our heroines must well know how the film pictures look from the front of the screen.

To the uninitiated I might say that in making picture plays a company, somewhat like a regular theatrical organization, is gotten together. The play is decided upon, but instead of the acts taking place before an audience they are enacted before a camera and a man who acts as director, or manager.

Some of the action takes place out of doors, amid the surroundings of nature, but most interior scenes are "filmed," or taken, in the studio, under the brilliant glare of electric lights. The pictures are taken in succession on a narrow strip of celluloid film, of the same nature as those in any camera. The strips are of a standard length of one thousand feet, though some plays may "split," and take only half a "reel" while others will fill several.

When the film has been exposed, it is developed in a dark tank, and from that one "master" film, any number of "positives" can be made for use in the projecting machines. Doubtless you know that the same machine which takes the pictures does not show them on the screen.

But enough of this detail.

"Was the rarebit good?" asked Alice, smiling up into her father's face, as the supper progressed.

"You may give me some more, which is the best answer in the world, my dear," he replied, smiling.

"Be careful!" Ruth warned him. "You may have dreams, Daddy!"

A shadow seemed to pass over the face of the old actor. He had been jokingly gay during the meal, but now there seemed to be a sense of depression.

"Might as well tell us, and have it over with," suggested Ruth. "We don't believe in dreams, anyhow. Do we Alice?"

"Not a bit, and I've named the corners of my bed ever so many times," and she laughed at that old sweethearts' superstition.

"Well, my dream was very vivid," Mr. DeVere said. "I don't usually believe in omens, but this one impressed me. I dreamed we were all at sea, on a vessel in a storm, and, somehow, we became separated. I saw you girls going down with the ship, while I was taken up on a life raft."

"Well, what of it, Daddy?" asked Alice. "I've often had unpleasant dreams myself. Probably you ate something you ought not to have taken. I'm rather sorry, now, I made this rarebit."

"Oh, not at all! It was excellent!" he exclaimed. "I would perhaps, have thought nothing of my dream had not Mr. Pertell, a short time ago, told me something of his plans for the future. He spoke of a great marine drama he had in prospect, and we are to have prominent parts in it. But I was startled when he told me that one scene--the great one, in fact--was to be a shipwreck. He has engaged an old vessel for this purpose, and he is going to sink it with all on board."

"All on board!" cried Ruth. "You don't mean----"

"Well, that's how it will appear in the camera, anyhow. You girls are to be well in front, and your swimming abilities will be very necessary, for you will have to go into the water."

"I hope it is warm," murmured Alice.

"Oh, it will be Summer before we get to the shipwreck part," went on Mr. DeVère. "But what worries me is my dream in connection with the drama. I almost told Mr. Pertell we would have nothing to do with it."

"Oh, Father! You can't do that!" exclaimed Ruth. She, as housekeeper, knew how much money was required in these days of the high cost of living. Though Mr. DeVère and his daughters received fair salaries, there were many expenses to be met, and if they refused present engagements they might not find it so easy to get others.

"Oh, of course I didn't actually turn it down," said the old actor, "but it gave me quite a turn, I must say. I haven't gotten over it yet, seeing you girls disappear under the waves."

"Don't think of it, Daddy!" urged Alice. "Have some of this apple slump. Mrs. Dalwood sent it in."

"Your idea is that a man's mind is in his stomach, isn't it, daughter," laughed her father. "Well, I will have some of the dessert. Oh, but I almost forgot, you will have to go down an hour earlier in the morning to the studio."

"Why?" Ruth wanted to know.

"A heavy day's work on, and Mr. Pertell wants to sketch out the preliminary scenes of the marine drama. We are actually going to sea, I believe, and he has engaged some old sailors, or at least one so far, to give it a proper nautical flavor. It's only for tomorrow that we have to go earlier than usual."

Mr. DeVère seemed more like himself after he had told his daughters of his vision. It did not so depress him now, and the rest of the meal passed off in a much more jolly manner.

In the evening Russ Dalwood came in from across the hall, and they played bridge whist, of which Mr. DeVère was fond.

"Fancy daddy, Russ," laughed Alice, "wanting us to give up a chance to go to sea just because he dreamed of a shipwreck!"

"Oh, I didn't actually want you to give it up," her father remonstrated. "Perhaps I was foolish even to mention it. But I can't forget it--I can't!" and he seemed to look through the walls of the room on some distant and fateful scene.

"Well, I must be getting back," Russ said. "You've won the rubber, as usual, Mr. DeVère. Lots to do tomorrow, and I have a new assistant to break in, so I'll say good-night."

There were busy times for all next day, in the studio of the moving picture concern. In the big room brilliant with electric lights as well as from the illumination that came through a sky-glass, there were several scenes from different dramas being filmed at the same time.

When Ruth and Alice DeVère entered with their father, Mr. Pertell, the manager of the Comet company, was engaged off to one side, evidently instructing a man in what he must do before the camera. The man was a sailor, and it needed but a glance to show that he was a real one, and not "made up" for the occasion.

"You see," said Mr. Pertell, "you come into the shipping office, and pretend to hand over the papers. But you slip the clerk the wrong ones, and while he is examining them you reach over behind him and take the documents you want."

"Avast there! Belay!" came the hoarse voice of the sailor. "I do that there, do I?"

"Yes."

"Steal the papers?"

"Well, it isn't *stealing*, exactly. It's only----"

"Stealin' is what I call it, and it can't be called by another name to my way of thinkin'. It won't do, sir, it won't do! Jack Jepson got into trouble once, but he isn't goin' to do it again. No sir! That stealin' won't do for Jack Jepson. You've got to get someone else to sign them articles for you. No stealin' for Jack Jepson!" and the figure of the old sailor turned and, with a rolling gait, he started across the big studio room.

CHAPTER III

SOMETHING OF A MYSTERY

"Look out there!"

"Where you going?"

"Hold him back, somebody! Look out, you'll spoil that scene! Don't cross in front of the camera!"

Half a dozen frantic voices were calling to the sailor who, with dogged persistence, kept on, shaking his grizzled and gray head, and muttering over and over again:

"It won't do for Jack Jepson! No sir! It won't do. I had one experience with trouble and I don't want any more. No sir!"

Evidently utterly unused to a moving picture studio, the old man kept on his way. He was headed directly toward a camera that was "filming" an elaborate ball room scene.

If any figure came between the scene and the camera with the pictures it was imprinting on the sensitive celluloid film (at the rate of sixteen per second) part of the elaborate work would have to be done over again. And as one of the characters in the little play was a celebrated dancer, whose time was paid for at an almost unbelievable sum per hour, it would mean a heavy expense.

"Stop him!" cried Mr. Pertell. "Come back here!"

"Halt! Vamoose! Turn about!" Paul Ardite called to the worked-up traveler of the deep blue sea.

This had no effect.

"Avast there! Belay!" cried Russ Dalwood, who was not at that moment engaged at the crank of some camera. He used the same sea terms the old man himself had uttered, but this salt-water "lingo," or translation of the command to halt, had no effect either.

Then came an interruption at a most opportune time. Just ahead of the sailor a scene from a Wild West drama was being enacted. A group of cowboys were engaged in a quarrel in the bunk house, which had been set up in the studio. The outdoor scenes of the little play were to be made later, for it is the custom in this business to make all the scenes, taking place in one locality, at the same time, regardless of their sequence in the finished play. Later the film is cut up into strips, pasted together with the proper headings, or captions, and the finished play results.

And just as the old sailor, who called himself Jack Jepson, was about to step in front of the ball room scene camera, to the frantic horror of the operator, one of the cowboys, following out his lines, drew his revolver, and fired a blank cartridge at the "villain."

In the studio the noise was like that of a small cannon.

"Mutiny!" yelled Jack Jepson, jumping in the air a foot or more. "Mutiny!"

But he stopped, and just in time. Two steps more would have brought him in front of the clicking camera.

"Mutiny!" he fairly roared. "What is this! Who's firin' a shot across my bows? All hands on deck t' repel boarders! Avast there!" and he stood looking around in bewilderment, while the smoke from the revolver floated upward.

"Come here!" called Mr. Pertell running forward, and grasping the arm of the sailor before he could get away to step in front of any of the other moving picture machines. "You don't understand, Mr. Jepson. I merely want you to----"

"Yes, I reckon I heard you say what you wanted me to do. Now look here! I don't know much about you, but you come over t' our Sailors' Snug Harbor, an' you took some pictures. That was all right, I'm not captain there an' I haven't anything t' say. You said you wanted an old able-bodied man for certain work, an' I volunteered. I didn't know where the voyage was, but I signed on, an' come here; didn't I?"

"You did," said Mr. Pertell. "But let me explain."

"No, you listen to me, first!" exclaimed the old salt, shaking a thickened and roughened finger at the manager. "I come here, willin' to do anything from slushin' th' mast, or holystonin' th' decks t' furlin' sail in a blow. But what do I get; eh? I ask you what do I get? Why an order to steal shippin' papers, that's what I get! An' that's a serious crime. I'm not goin' t' be mixed up with it. No sir! Not for Jack Jepson!" and he tried to break away.

"Wait a minute!" Mr. Pertell begged. "You don't understand. It's only the business of stealing the papers, you know."

"Well, it's mighty poor business for any man t' be in; that's my opinion. I was raised honest, an' man and boy, I've lived honest for fifty years, with one exception, an' that wasn't my fault, and now----"

Again he made an effort to leave, which effort, if not blocked, would have once more taken him in front of some clicking camera.

"Oh, can't you understand!" cried the manager with a hopeless gesture.

"Perhaps I could explain to him," suggested Ruth in a low voice. "I have plenty of time, Mr. Pertell, and though I don't know this gentleman----"

"Oh, I forgot. He's going to act with you and your sister, Miss DeVere," said the manager. "Come over and be introduced. You too, Mr. DeVere. He's to have a part in our great sea drama, that is, if I can ever get it started. I began explaining to Jepson, here, about taking the papers which have to do with the case, but he can't----"

"You can't make me believe stealin's right, no matter how you go at it!" interrupted the old salt, doggedly shaking his head.

"Perhaps *I* can," put in Ruth with a smile, as the manager mentioned their names to the newest and, seemingly, the most refractory member of the company.

"Well, Miss," said the sailor, "you look honest. I would believe what you'd tell me, for I know you couldn't do no wrong. Perhaps I was a bit hasty, but you see this is all new to me--this play-actin', an' shootin' at folks unexpected like. I wouldn't have tried it, only the captain at the Sailors' Snug Harbor, over on Staten Island, where I'm berthed, asked me as a favor to come here. But I don't like it!"

"I didn't at first," said Alice, joining with her sister, in an attempt to placate the old salt. "But I became used to it."

"Ha! You're pretty young to be in this business," said Jack Jepson, who evidently said what he thought.

"Oh, I'm older than I look," replied Alice with a smile. "I just love the sea. I wish you would tell me about some of your voyages, for I'm sure you must have been on many."

"That I have, Miss, but this is th' queerest cruise I ever started on," and he looked around at the many scenes being enacted.

Meanwhile Ruth had slipped to Mr. Pertell's side.

"Give me a brief outline of the play," she suggested. "I think I can make it plain to him. He is all fussed up because it's something new. You haven't time to go into details."

"That's right--I haven't," agreed the harassed manager. "Well, this is enough for you to know just now. There's a plot to sink a ship, and it is necessary that certain papers appear to be stolen."

"I picked Jepson up, as he says, at a sailors' home, over on Staten Island. He's a typical salt, but he balks at even a semblance of wrong-doing."

"I think I can make him understand," Ruth said as she took the typewritten pages of the scenario, or plot, of the drama from the manager.

"I wish you would," Mr. Pertell said. "I've a thousand and one things to do."

Ruth started toward the old sailor. To her surprise her sister Alice was now in earnest conversation with him. Jack Jepson seemed to have warmed to Alice at once. And Ruth heard him saying, as she approached:

"Well, Miss, you see it was this way. There was a mutiny, an' I was accused, but I wasn't guilty. There was a mystery about it when the captain disappeared, an' that mystery hasn't been solved yet, though I'd give a good bit if it were. It's hangin' over me like a nightmare, Miss. Now I'll tell you all about it, if I don't tire you."

"I should love to listen!" exclaimed Alice, with dancing eyes and flushed cheeks.

CHAPTER IV

THE SAILOR'S STORY

Ruth, on her way to explain to sailor Jack Jepson what was wanted of him in the matter of acting for moving pictures, paused as she saw Alice and the aged salt in earnest conversation.

"I think I had better defer my explanations a while," Ruth told herself. "Perhaps he will be in a better frame of mind to listen, after he has talked with Alice. What a wonderful way she has of making friends!" the older girl mused as she looked at the interested and flushed face of her pretty sister. At that moment Alice glanced up and caught Ruth's gaze on her.

"Do come and listen," she called. "I'm going to hear a wonderful story, Ruth dear."

The old sailor looked up quickly, stopping in his progress toward a bench, whither Alice was leading him. It was in a quiet corner of the studio, some distance away from the various little groups that, in three-sided rooms (before the open part of which cameras were placed, and over which big lights hissed) were going through their parts in the silent dramas.

"This is my sister," Alice said.

"Oh, yes, I remember now," Jack Jepson said. "There's so much goin' on that I get a bit confused. But I can see you two look alike. Are you goin' to put me reefin' sails or scrubbin' decks?" he asked.

"Neither one," Ruth said with a smile. "I told Mr. Pertell, our manager, that I'd explain what was wanted of you. It is very simple, and----"

"I don't call it simple t' rob an' cheat!" cried Jack with energy, "an' that's what he wanted *me* to do."

"I'll explain, and I think you'll find it all right," Ruth went on. "My sister and I are in this business," she added, "and I don't believe you think *we* would do anything wrong."

"Far be it--far be it," said the old salt, earnestly.

"Oh, but before you came, Ruth dear," suggested Alice, "Mr. Jepson was going to tell me----"

"Avast there! Belay! Hold on!" exclaimed the sailor, his voice ringing out through the studio, above the tones of those actors who, to give greater verisimilitude to their work were talking their parts, as well as going through them. They smiled at the old salt's energy.

"Wait a minute, Miss," he went on in lower tones. "I didn't mean t' be so quick, but that Mr. Jepson business won't do. Not at all!"

"Why, isn't that your name?" asked Ruth. "I understood Mr. Pertell to say----"

"Oh, that's my name--at least the Jepson part of it is. But I don't like the mister. I'm not used to it. The only time of late years when I was called Mister was when I was up before the lawyers, and I didn't like it then. Jest please call me Jack Jepson, an' 'twill sound more natural. I ask it as a favor, Miss," and he looked from Ruth to Alice.

"Why of course we'll call you Jack," assented the latter. "It will sound nicer anyhow, I think," she added. "Now go on with your story. You said there was a mystery in it. Has it anything to do with--buried treasure?" and Alice leaned forward eagerly.

"Buried treasure? No, Miss. What made you ask that?"

"The idea!" exclaimed Ruth with a laugh. "I'm afraid you'll think my sister very romantic, Mr.--er--Jack."

"That's better!" he laughed. "Well, I don't know much about romance. My life's been mostly hard work."

"I just mentioned treasure," Alice said with a little laugh, and a glance toward where Miss Pennington and Miss Dixon, having a rest from their moving picture work, were curiously eyeing the old sailor and the two girls.

"Well, my mystery hasn't anything t' do with buried treasure," resumed Jack Jepson. "It's about a mutiny that took place off th' Hole in th' Wall, about five years ago, an'----"

"Hole in the Wall!" interrupted Ruth. "I thought mutinies always took place on the high seas."

"Well, this *was* the high seas," Jack answered.

"But the Hole--?"

"That's the name of a passage between Great Abaco Island and Eleuthera, in the West Indies," the sailor replied. "I don't know why it's called that, but it is."

"A queer name," murmured Ruth.

"Go on, please," urged Alice.

"Well, I was second mate aboard a five masted schooner engaged in the lumber business," went on Jack Jepson. "We were going down to South America, in ballast t' bring back a cargo of hard woods, an' off the Hole in the Wall th' trouble started.

"Some of the crew kicked on account of the grub--that's the stuff we eat on a ship," he explained.

"Oh, we know *something* of such talk," said Alice with a laugh. "We haven't been out West among the cowboys for nothing!"

"Well, some of th' hands laid it to the grub, an' others t' th' hard work of sailing th' craft," went on Jack. "She was a mighty poor schooner in ballast, an' owing t' storms an' rough weather we had t' be takin' in or lettin' out reefs all th' while. It wasn't so bad up t' th' time we got off th' Hole in th' Wall, but from then on it was fierce!

"I'd heard rumors that th' crew was goin' t' mutiny an' demand that we put in at some port, an' get better grub, an' more hands, for we was short of sailors. But I didn't pay much attention to th' underhand talk until it was too late. Then, all at once, when we had got away down about off Anegada, th' mutiny broke in full force. The men riz up, an' overpowered th' officers--th' captain was made a prisoner in his cabin, an' I was given my choice of joinin' th' mutineers or walkin' th' plank."

"What's that?" asked Ruth, a bit startled.

"That's when they blindfold a man, and make him walk a plank that is put out over the bulwarks, or side of the ship," said Alice.

"Why, if he were blindfolded I should think he'd fall off, not knowing when he came to the end," Ruth remarked, with a little shudder.

"He doesn't know," Alice said. "That's an easy way of sending a man to his doom."

"That's it, Miss!" chimed in Jack. "You got th' idea!"

"But Alice, how did *you* know that dreadful thing?" her sister wonderingly demanded.

"Read it in a book. Go on please, Mr.--er--Jack."

"Of course I didn't want t' walk no plank," resumed the sailor, "so I temporized. I thought maybe I could beat th' mutineers after all. So I pretended t' join 'em. Things got pretty bad. Many of 'em was for puttin' th' captain away--tossin' him overboard, an' there was a fight about it. Matters got t' such a pass that pistols were fired, an' th' captain would have been shot, an' killed, only a fellow named Mike Tullane, a rough character, an' one of the leaders of th' mutiny, stepped up sudden like an' saved th' captain's life by knockin' aside th' ruffian's gun.

"Well, of course there was a fight then, but Mike seemed t' come out all right, bein' a leader, an' havin' th' men pretty well with him. Anyhow, th' mutineers were in charge of th' ship, an' off Anegada, one of th' little British Islands of the West Indies, we were put about t' run for port. Jest what was t' be done no one seemed to know. After the men got th' ship they didn't know what to do with her.

"Then came th' mystery. One night th' captain an' Mike Tullane disappeared. They was seen in th' cabin, talkin' together, an' some of th' hot-headed ones thought Mike was goin' back on his pals. They was for makin' him walk th' plank.

"But cooler heads made 'em wait. They said they wanted t' give Mike a chance to explain. But he never got it."

"Do you mean they--" began Alice, somewhat horrified.

"I mean that night he an' th' captain disappeared," Jack said. "They couldn't be found anywhere. No boat was taken, so they couldn't have gotten off in one of them craft, an' we wasn't near enough land t' make swimmin' safe. But they totally disappeared, an' that was th' mystery. Whether they had a fight, an' jumped overboard together in th' darkness,

no one ever knowed, for them mutineers didn't keep extra good watch.

"But anyhow they was gone--mysteriously missin' as they say in the paper. That sort of took the heart out of some of th' mutineers and they got careless. First we knew a British vessel overhauled us, and, not likin' th' looks of things, began to ask questions. Of course there wasn't any captain, such as there should be on a ship, an' that made it look suspicious. Th' worst of it was that nobody could say where the captain was. None of us knew.

"Then th' story of th' mutiny came out, of course, an' it was all up. The Britisher took charge of us. I was arrested as the ringleader of the mutiny, an' put in chains! An' I had no more to do with it than a baby, Miss. No more than a baby!" and Jack Jepson looked from Ruth to Alice, his blue eyes expressing the indignation he had felt at the time.

"An' that's th' story of th' mystery, as I said I'd tell your sister," he added turning to Ruth.

CHAPTER V

THE MARY ELLEN

During the silence that followed the rather sudden ending of the old salt's story, Ruth and Alice looked at each other with wonder in their eyes. On all sides of them could be heard the clicking of the moving picture cameras, the loud directions issued by the men who were managing the different little dramas, and occasionally the sound of shots from the cowboy play that was going on in front of where our friends were seated on the bench, though at some distance away, for the studio was large.

"But that can't be all of it," said Alice, at length.

"All of what, Miss?" Jack Jepson asked.

"The mystery."

"That's all there is to any mystery, Miss," he said. "A mystery is a mystery, an' if it isn't solved, it's a mystery still, an' nobody can make any more of it. Th' captain and Mike Tullane completely disappeared, an' were never heard of afterward. That's th' mystery, an' all there is to it, jest as I told you."

"But about yourself?" asked Ruth. "You said you were put in chains, under arrest, as the ringleader of the mutiny."

"So I was."

"But what became of you?"

"Well, I escaped, Miss. It may not be a very nice thing to confess, but I escaped. Th' British ship took us to a jail on some island--I forget th' name of it. Anyhow I was locked up, an' so were a lot of th' others. We were tried, an' I was accused of startin' th' mutiny. Some of th' worst men on th' ship put th' blame on me, an' I wasn't a bit guilty. But it was no use in denyin' it. They was all banded together t' accuse me t' save themselves. I was found guilty, though I wasn't at all, an' I was sentenced to a long imprisonment. I just escaped hanging by a hair, for mutiny on th' high seas is a serious crime.

"But I was innocent, an' I knew it, an' when I found th' trial goin' against me, I took a chance that offered, an' planned t' escape. I found a French vessel puttin' t' sea an' as they was short handed I signed on. Since then I've been in many vessels, but I always keep away from English ones, and from English ports, for I would be arrested the minute I set my foot on shore in one. A big reward is out for me."

"How long ago was all this?" asked Ruth.

"Oh, some years."

"But isn't the unjust charge outlawed now?" Alice wanted to know.

"I'm afraid not, Miss. Such things are never outlawed. I daren't go t' an English port, an' that's hampered me. I have to take what berths I can get."

"Can't you disprove the mutiny charge?" asked Ruth.

"Not unless some of them involved was to confess, Miss. An' land knows where those fellers are now. They've disappeared with th' captain an' Mike Tullane. Of course if I could find either one of them, I could prove my innocence, an' then I'd be free t' go where I pleased. But I've about given *that* up, Miss.

"So I sort of come t' anchor in th' Sailors' Snug Harbor, an' when I heard about this movin' picture business, and th' chance it gave t' make a little money, I took it. But when it comes t' doin' some crime for it, I draws th' line. As I said, I've always lived honest, man and boy, for many years, an' that one charge is th' only one against me. I'm not goin' t' take them papers, and substitute false ones."

"But you don't exactly understand," Ruth said with a smile. "I am going to explain it to you. Mr. Pertell said I might. Now here is the story we are supposed to act out; and, mind you, it is only *supposing*--make believe, as we children used to say."

"Oh, it's make believe; is it?" asked Jack Jepson.

"Yes, just make-believe."

"I had a little gal once--long years ago," he said softly, "an' she used to be great on make-believe games. Is this takin' of them papers a make believe game?"

"Exactly!" chimed in Alice. "My sister and I have to pretend every day. It's fun!"

"Well, of course I didn't know *that*," said Jack. "Maybe I made a mistake in bein' so quick. There was nothin' wrong in it?" he questioned.

"Not the least in the world," said Ruth. "It is just a game, played for the amusement of the public. I'll explain," and from the typewritten scenario she held she went over the outlines of the big marine drama, as one of the authors of the Comet company had written it. As she gave the details, the simple, kindly face of the sailor cleared. His doubts vanished.

"Say, wasn't I th' old landlubber though!" he cried. "T' think I thought I was really committin' a crime. Ha! Ha!"

"Well, your past experience had made you careful," Alice said.

"That's what it had, Miss. It's no fun t' be barred from the ports of the country that has more of 'em than any nation of the world. It hampers a man. But I daren't go on British soil."

"Could they come here and take you?" asked Ruth.

The old man looked around before replying.

"They maybe wouldn't know me," he hoarsely whispered. "I've grown a beard since those days."

"Well, then, how would the British authorities know you?" asked Alice with a smile.

"I'm not takin' any chances, Miss," was the answer. And though it might seem to an outsider that it would be safe, under those circumstances, for Jepson to visit British ports, if he kept away from the island where he had been imprisoned, he could not see it that way.

"No sir!" he exclaimed. "No British ports for mine!"

By this time Mr. DeVere, who had been engaged in finishing a few scenes in a play that had started the day before, came up to join his daughters.

"Well, how is the great marine drama coming on?" he asked, his voice being more hoarse than usual. He had done some talking, as he found it helped to give a better idea of the characters he portrayed, but it was not necessary, in these picture plays, to get his voice "over the footlights."

"There has been a halt," explained Ruth with a smile. "This is Jack Jepson, Father. He is to have one of the principal parts, but he balked at some underhand work, and--"

"Pleased t' know you," Jack broke in with a jerky bow. "Your daughter's a smart gal," he said. "She made everything as clear as daylight t' me. I'm goin' on with th' play now."

"That is when Mr. Pertell is ready," put in Alice. "He seems to have found some difficulty in that cowboy drama."

This was evident, for the Western play had been stopped, and the camera operator, with a weary look on his face, was leaning against a post, as if in despair of ever completing that day's run of film.

"No, no, Mr. Bunn, you must not do it that way," the manager was saying. "When Ardite, in the character of the young outlaw, shoots at you, stand up without flinching. That's your part--to be indifferent to gunfire."

"Oh, that's my part, is it? Just to be shot at!" cried the old "Ham" actor. "Well, it's a mighty poor part, that's all I've got to say! It will be the last time I ever take a part like that. Oh, why did I ever leave the legitimate stage?"

"Ha! Maybe it was because the stage would have left you, had you not left it," said Mr. Switzer, who was dressed up as a German comedian, and taking part in another play.

"Ha! What is that?" asked Mr. Bunn pompously. But Mr. Switzer did not repeat his remark. He was called to resume his part.

"Now Mr. Bunn, stand up and be shot at!" commanded Mr. Pertell. "Come, come! We can't lose all day on this little play. I've got to get busy on the marine drama, and I want some of you in that. Ready with that gun now, Paul!"

"Yes, shoot him!" murmured Mr. Pepper Sneed, the human grouch. "Aim it right at him. Of course they are only blank

cartridges," he added cheerfully, "but if the wadding hits you Bunn, lockjaw is almost sure to follow. Go on and shoot. I know something will happen," and he looked as though he would be disappointed if his prophesy were not borne out. "Go on, shoot!"

"No! No! I protest! I withdraw from this play!" cried Mr. Bunn, looking around for his tall hat, without which he seldom was seen. It was his one remnant of departed glory.

"No, you'll not withdraw!" cried Mr. Pertell. "We've got half the film run off with you on, and you've got to stick it out. Go on, Paul. And, Mr. Sneed, you needn't trouble to stand here and look on, as you're not in this cast. You have a--depressing effect."

Mr. Sneed certainly did. However, he moved away, and the play went on. It was successfully filmed, and then Mr. Pertell was free to take up, where he had left off, the discussion of the preliminaries of the marine drama. "Out on The Deep" it was to be called.

"Well, how about it?" asked the manager, as he approached the moving picture girls, their father and sailor Jack. "Have you succeeded in convincing him?"

"That's what they have, Mr. Pertell," the old salt said. "I'm sorry I made such a fuss about those false papers. I didn't know it was only make-believe."

"Well, if that difficulty is over with, we'll go on, though we can do only a few of the simple scenes today," the manager said.

"Do you understand the play?" he asked of Mr. DeVere.

"Not altogether. I will look over the scenario."

"I can save you the trouble," the manager went on. "I'll outline it briefly for you. 'Out on the Deep,' is, as you can tell by the name, a marine story. Part of it will take place in a sailors' home. That will be the Snug Harbor, where I found Jack Jepson. We will go over to Staten Island some day and film those scenes.

"Another part of the drama will take place in a shipping office. Of course that will be a studio scene, taken right here. I was starting in on that when Jack balked."

"Well, I won't again," the sailor promised.

"Glad to hear it," came from the manager. "But the big part of the play will actually take place on deep water," Mr. Pertell resumed. "We are going out in a big schooner, and----"

"A real schooner?" asked Jack, eagerly.

"Yes, a real schooner. It isn't a very good one, but it will answer our purpose, especially as we have to wreck her, and she will be a total loss. I had to pay pretty high for her, too. But I think it will be worth it. The shipwreck scenes, in the storm, ought to be great. And now, as I have decided to postpone the rehearsal of the play for a while, I think it would be a good plan for some of us to go and look at the *Mary Ellen*, and get familiar with her layout."

"The *Mary Ellen*!" cried Sailor Jack.

"Yes, that is the name of the schooner I have purchased to use as a shipwreck," said the manager.

"Why--th' *Mary Ellen*!" cried Jack. "That was th' name of th' vessel where th' mutiny was!" and he started to his feet in great excitement.

CHAPTER VI

CAPTAIN BRISCO

"Mutiny! What do you mean?" demanded Mr. Pertell, a little startled by the action of the old sailor.

"That's just what I mean, sir! Oh, I forgot you don't know. But I told these young ladies about me being in a mutiny, an' I'm under suspicion in connection with it still. I can't go in an English port, and that's a nice blight to put on a man!" he said indignantly.

Mr. Pertell looked bewildered.

"Perhaps I can explain," said Ruth, "and if I go wrong, Jack, please correct me."

"That I will, Miss!" he exclaimed.

Thereupon Ruth told the whole story, much more connectedly, and more briefly, than would have been possible for the old salt. But Ruth had the knack of condensing a long scenario into a few words.

"Was that it?" she asked Jack, when she had finished.

"That's it, Miss, an' you did me more credit in the story than I deserved."

"Oh, no I didn't," Ruth said, smiling. "I'd like to help you solve that mystery, too--the mystery of the disappearance of the captain and Mike Tullane."

"That's it!" cried Jack. "If I could only find one of them, or if some of th' real mutineers would confess, it would clear me an' I could be free t' roam wherever I wanted t' in th' world. But it's too much t' hope for that. But you said th' name of th' vessel we was t' make believe be shipwrecked on was th' *Mary Ellen*, sir," and he turned to the manager. "The *Mary Ellen* was the name of the craft where the mutiny occurred. Could it be--" he paused, hope showing on his eager face.

"No, there's hardly a chance that this is the same one," said Mr. Pertell. "*Mary Ellen* is a common name for vessels," he went on, "and there must be scores with it painted on their bows. I don't know anything about the vessel I have bought, but I doubt if she was ever in a mutiny. She is a very old craft, and isn't really fit for service now. But her owners say she will do for what I want. We are going to take her to Southern waters, and the main scenes of the drama will be photographed aboard her, and around her."

"Where is the craft now, if I may ask?" inquired Mr. DeVère.

"Over in Erie Basin," answered the manager. "I am having her fitted up, and a crew is being engaged. Of course it will be some time before we sail, but I want to get everything in readiness. So suppose we take a run over there now, and look at her."

"That suits me!" exclaimed Jack, to whom matters nautical were as the breath of life. "And I hope you'll sign me on, sir; when it comes to makin' up your crew, sir."

"I intend to ship you," was the answer. "Captain Brisco said he would need some good officers. You have a mate's certificate, have you not, Jack."

"Yes, sir, and mighty glad and proud I'll be to fill that berth, sir."

"Oh, won't it be jolly to go sailing!" exclaimed Alice. "I shall just *love* it!"

Mr. DeVère sighed resignedly.

"I'm afraid it won't be very good for your throat, Daddy," said Ruth in a low tone. "The damp air will be sure to make you cough."

"Oh, well--" he began.

Mr. Pertell overheard what was said.

"I don't like to ask you, Mr. DeVère," he said, "to do anything that will be bad for your health. But I certainly need your services, and those of your daughters, in this sea drama. Otherwise I would not ask you to run any risks with your throat."

"But I will say this. We shall not be afloat until Summer, and, as we shall be in a warm climate, perhaps the bad effects will not be so pronounced."

"No, I think so myself," the old actor admitted. "It may even do me good. I will doctor up in the meanwhile. And I realize that if I do not go, my daughters cannot. I would not like to have them miss this fine opportunity."

"Oh, Daddy! We wouldn't go if it harmed you!" Alice cried.

"Oh, I dare say I can manage," her father replied. "The new treatment I am taking seems to agree with me. Who knows? Perhaps, when it comes time to sail, my throat may not trouble me at all."

"Let us hope so," Alice broke in. "I do so love the water, and the Southern sea will be a dream!"

Perhaps if Alice could have looked ahead, and seen what lay before her, she would not have been so enthusiastic in anticipating the future.

Mr. Pertell saw that the other plays under way in the studio were running smoothly, and then prepared to take Mr. DeVere, his daughters, and the old sailor over to Erie Basin, to inspect the *Mary Ellen*, as she lay in her slip, being refitted for another voyage--her last--for she was to rest beneath the waves when she had played her part in the moving picture play.

"I wish I were going with you," said Russ Dalwood, as Ruth passed him where he was having a moment's respite from grinding away at the crank of a camera.

"I wish so, too," she answered, in a low voice.

"But I've got to stay here, and grind away at this film," he said hopelessly.

"We'll see you to-night," she called to him, as she went out.

Paul Ardite waved to Alice as she "twinkled" her fingers at him. Paul was in a cowboy costume, playing a scene in the cowboy story, which seemed to be giving more and more trouble as it proceeded.

"This is the fifth time we've done that act," Paul called to Alice in an aside as she passed. "And all because Mr. Bunn is so fussy. They'll take him out, if he isn't careful. Where are you going, Alice?"

"Over to see *Mary Ellen*."

"Who's she? A new actress?"

"Yes, she's a 'she' I suppose, and she's going to have a big part in a drama. I'll tell you about it later."

The *Mary Ellen* certainly did not present a very trim appearance as the little party went aboard her at the dock in Erie Basin. The decks were cluttered up with an assortment of ropes, planks, casks, boxes and other things, so that it was impossible to move about without great care. On coming in sight of the craft Jack Jepson's face wore a look of expectancy.

"She might be the same *Mary Ellen* that I was on," he said.

But when he saw that the craft had three masts, whereas the ship where the mutiny had occurred boasted of five, Jack shook his head.

"She isn't th' same ship," he murmured.

Yet as he stepped on deck he gave a start, and an exclamation escaped his lips.

"What's the matter?" asked Alice, who was near him.

"Well, Miss, you may think it strange," he said, "but if I had my eyes shut, I'd say I was on my old ship--th' *Mary Ellen* I was tellin' you about."

"But she had five masts, and this one----"

"Yes, I know, Miss Alice. But, masts or no masts there's somethin' about this craft that's strangely familiar. I'm sure I've been on her before, and yet--no, it can't be--three masts can't make five, no matter how you count."

"Well, this is the ship," said Mr. Pertell to his guests. "This will be our home when we get her fitted up in ship-shape. I don't know much about such things myself, so I've given Captain Brisco full charge. He is to get her in readiness."

"Well, if you were to ask me I should say it would take the greater part of a year to get this in ship-shape," said Ruth. "I never saw such confusion--never!" and she gazed about the deck.

"Why, Miss, this isn't anythin'--nothin' at all!" cried Jack Jepson. "With a few of my old shipmates I could get this craft ready for a voyage in half a day--that is, if she's all right below th' water line," he added as an afterthought.

"I'm trusting all that to Captain Brisco," said Mr. Pertell. "He was recommended to me by the ones from whom I purchased this boat. I think he will have everything in ship-shape for us in time."

As they stood looking about the deck a man came up from below. From his appearance he was unmistakably a sailor, and one in authority. He issued several orders, on hearing which a number of men bestirred themselves, and then, catching sight of the little party, he called out in rough tones.

"Come now! What's this? No visitors are allowed on board here. Get ashore at once!"

"Hello, Captain Brisco!" called Mr. Pertell. "That is, if that's the proper nautical greeting."

"Oh, Mr. Pertell. I didn't recognize you," said the commander of the *Mary Ellen*. "I beg your pardon! Won't you walk this way?"

"We are on a little tour of inspection," the manager went on. "These are some of my principle moving picture actors, and I want them to get familiar with the ship. And, Captain Brisco, this is an old salt who will be with us. He is to be second mate, I believe. Jack Jepson, let me present you to Captain Brisco."

A strange look came over the old salt's face. He stepped forward and burst out with:

"I guess I've met Captain Brisco before, but that wasn't his name--then!"

Captain Brisco started back as though a shot had been fired near him.

CHAPTER VII

JEPSON IS WORRIED

For an instant only did the commander of the *Mary Ellen* show signs of perturbation. He recovered himself with an effort, hardly obvious to the moving picture girls who were watching. It was as though a cloud had passed over the sun so quickly as to give an observer no time to glance up and see it, before the shadow was gone. Then Captain Brisco smiled.

"I think you've made a mistake, my man," he said, with the air of one used to commanding. "I'm sure I don't know you, whether or not you think you have had the pleasure of my acquaintance. How about it?"

He turned a sharp look on Jack Jepson, and the latter faltered.

"Well--well, maybe I am mistaken," he said slowly. "But I sure did take you for an old shipmate of mine. I sure did--an old shipmate," and he spoke the words slowly.

"For instance--who?" asked Captain Brisco, and the words seemed to come out like the closing of the jaws of a steel trap.

"Oh--er--you wouldn't know if I told you," said Jack. "I guess I was mistaken," he added.

"And I'm sure of it," Captain Brisco said, coolly. "I don't know many in these parts, for I've been away for some time. And--er--who might you be?" he asked, with more of that commanding air.

"This is the sailor who will be one of your mates on our little trip," explained Mr. Pertell. "You said you would need officers, even for a short voyage such as we intend making, so I picked up Jack Jepson. Do you think he'll do?"

"Depends on how much he knows of navigation," was the sharp answer.

"Oh, I have my certificate," Jack answered. "If you want t' see it I have it----"

"Never mind now," interposed Captain Brisco. "There are a thousand and one things to do, and nothing seems to be going right. Lay aloft there, some of you!" he cried to a group of men. "Get those halyards reeved and straightened out. Think we're going to lie here all Summer? Lively now! I think I could use you, if you've any knack of handling men," he added in lower tones, turning to Jack. "It's slow work, getting fitted out."

"I could come any time," Jepson answered, and Alice noted that the old sailor gazed furtively now and then at the captain. It was as though he wanted to impress his memory with the face of the commander. "I'm over in Sailors' Snug Harbor," Jepson went on, "I came over to do some actin'----"

"Yes, this play acting business is new to me, too," said Captain Brisco. "But I suppose I can get used to it. Seems rather queer to go to all this work and expense," he went on to Mr. Pertell, "just to fit a schooner out, and then sink her. It's a waste of good money, I should say."

"We'll get our money back, never fear, if the film turns out all right," said Mr. Pertell. "Now how are you coming on? That's what I came to see. I want some of my principal actors to get familiar with the ship, so I brought them down. I started with Jepson, up in the studio," he added in a lower voice, for the benefit of Captain Brisco, "but he balked, I'll tell you about it later. He can stay and help you if you like."

"Well, I probably can use him," the commander said, as he looked at Jepson, who was wandering about the deck with a curiously abstracted air.

"Sort of funny thinking he knew you, wasn't it?" commented Mr. Pertell, while Alice, Ruth and Mr. DeVere looked on with interest at the various activities connected with getting the *Mary Ellen* ready for sea.

"Oh, not at all queer," answered Captain Brisco, quickly. "I have commanded so many men and ships in my day that I must be familiar by name, at least, to hundreds of sailors. But I never saw this Jepson before. However, he seems to be a good, honest soul."

"Too honest, by far!" laughed Mr. Pertell. "He wouldn't even pretend to take some false papers to carry out a film idea. Said he'd been in enough trouble over being falsely accused in a mutiny!"

"A mutiny!" exclaimed Captain Brisco. "A mutiny!"

"Yes. Why, is that remarkable?" asked the manager, for Captain Brisco seemed startled.

"No, oh, no! I don't know as it is. I was only thinking if he was given to starting mutinies, he wouldn't be a safe man to have on board here."

"Oh, you needn't fear for Jepson," the manager said. "He was innocent in that mutiny affair, I believe. But now as to details. I want to consult with you in regard to certain matters."

And while the captain and manager sought a quiet corner, where they might converse, and go over the plot of the great marine drama, Alice and Ruth wandered about the ship. The sailors who were fitting her out looked curiously at the girls as they went to and fro. Mr. DeVere found a sheltered spot where he said he would wait until Mr. Pertell was finished with the captain.

"Does your throat pain you much?" asked Alice solicitously.

"Oh, not as much as I expected, coming so near the water. I think it will be all right. Don't worry."

"Isn't it perfectly wonderful, to think we're going to be on board this schooner!" exclaimed Alice to her sister. "And are we going to sleep here and eat here, Jack?" she asked, as the old sailor came toward them.

"Well, Miss, if you goes on a voyage you can't walk off th' ship whenever you want to, you know, to get a berth, and some grub. I mean something to eat and a place to sleep," he quickly translated. "You has to stay right on board until the voyage ends."

"Oh, and could we see where we sleep?" asked Ruth.

"The staterooms? Yes, of course," said Captain Brisco, who with Mr. Pertell came forward just then. "Jepson, take the ladies below. If you're a sailor you don't need to be told the way."

"No, sir," was the respectful answer. Jack seemed to have acquired new dignity since coming aboard; and it was noticeable, a little later, that he took more pains with his talk, being more grammatical, and pronouncing his words better, as befitted a mate.

"And I want to see where they do the cooking," remarked Ruth. "What is it they call it--the alley?"

"The galley," corrected Alice. "Don't you remember?"

"Oh, yes, so it is. What a funny name for a kitchen."

"This way," directed Jack, as he started for the companionway. Meanwhile Mr. Pertell and Captain Brisco having settled on certain details, called Mr. DeVere into consultation, since that actor was to have a prominent part in the scenes that would take place aboard the ship.

Jack Jepson led his two pretty charges below, where some men were also at work. They inspected the sleeping quarters, the galley and other parts of the ship. Then, at the suggestion of Alice they penetrated to the men's quarters--the forecabin, or "fo'cas'l," as Jack pronounced it, sailor-fashion.

As they passed two carpenters doing some "patch-work," Jack paused and looked closely at what they were doing. Suddenly he turned to Alice and asked:

"Is this craft to make a voyage all by herself?"

"A short one--yes," Alice answered, for she had looked over the scenario. "Why do you ask?"

"Oh, nothin'--nothin'--," answered Jack Jepson. "Only, oh, well, I s'pose it's all right," he went on. But as he led the way forward Ruth noticed a look of worry on the face of the old sailor. It was so evident that it startled her--the more so as she heard him murmur:

"Going all by herself; eh? Well, she certainly needs a consort."

CHAPTER VIII

HARD WORK

Ruth took advantage of the first opportunity to question Sailor Jack Jepson. The memory of that look on his face haunted her. But it was not until they had come from the *Mary Ellen* that Ruth found her chance.

While on board, arrangements had been made for taking some of the preliminary scenes of the marine drama, and Mr. Pertell urged Captain Brisco to hasten, as much as he could, the preparations for the voyage.

But finally, when Alice and her father had gone on ahead, walking with Mr. Pertell, and were deep in a discussion about a certain scene, Ruth found a chance to ask:

"Didn't you like what you saw downstairs in the *Mary Ellen*, Jack?"

"Downstairs, Miss?" the sailor questioned, a puzzled look on his face.

"Or whatever the right sea-term is for under the deck?" she went on.

"Oh, you mean below."

"Yes, didn't you like what you saw below?" asked Ruth.

"What do you mean, Miss?"

"Well, you didn't seem altogether pleased. I don't want them to hear," she went on, motioning to her father and sister, "but you looked worried. Was anything--wrong?"

"Wrong? No, Miss, not exactly wrong. But some of them fellers didn't seem to know their business in repairin' a ship, that was all. But we aren't goin' on much of a voyage, so I don't s'pose it matters--much."

"But we are going on a pretty long trip, and for a time we'll all be alone on board the *Mary Ellen*, some distance from land," Ruth said. "I know, for I've read the outlines."

"Is that so, Miss? Why--I--I didn't exactly know that. I wonder if I'd better----"

Before Jack Jepson could continue Mr. Pertell turned back and called:

"Oh, I believe I forgot to tell you people, but we are also to have a motorboat in connection with the *Mary Ellen*. A big, powerful gasoline craft, she is, called the *Ajax*. She'll follow us, part of the time, for some of the pictures have to be taken from a distance, as she trails along at the stern. We'll have plenty of time for rehearsal, though."

"Ah, a motorboat to follow us. Then there isn't so much danger," said Jack Jepson, and he seemed talking to himself.

"Danger!" exclaimed Ruth. "What do you mean by that?"

"Danger? Did I say danger, Miss?" he asked, and again Ruth was surprised at the strange look on his face.

"You certainly did say it," she replied.

"Well, I didn't mean it," he said, though he spoke with an obvious effort. "I meant it would be much more company--company for you folks as aren't used to sailin' the seas. That's all, Miss. Oh, no, there's no real danger--that is there won't be to *you*, as long as old Jack Jepson can ward it off," he murmured under his breath.

The little party went back to the studio, and, after lunch, some of the easiest and less important scenes in the marine drama were rehearsed. Sailor Jack soon understood what was wanted of him, and did very well. Ruth and Alice took pleasure in coaching the honest, simple old salt. His too-conscientious scruples about doing a seemingly wrongful act were overcome when it was explained to him, and he went through the scene in the studio shipping office very well.

"And that will be all you'll have to do for a few days," Manager Pertell told him. "You will not be needed to take part in any scenes until we get ready for the second act. Meanwhile you had better arrange to stay aboard the *Mary Ellen*, while she is in the Erie Basin, and help Captain Brisco."

"That I will! Aye, aye, sir!" exclaimed Jack. "And it'll be a relief to be where I can feel the heave of a deck, even if the craft is anchored, and to smell the real salt water again. I'll go aboard as soon as I can get back to the Snug Harbor, and stow my dunnage in a bag."

He really seemed delighted to make the change, and the worried look left his face, though Ruth could not forget the shadow it had cast. What did it mean? She asked herself this over and over again.

Meanwhile there was hard work for the moving picture girls and Mr. DeVere. A company engaged in the making of films does not content itself with merely producing one big play. There are any number of small reels that are needed, as "fillers." Some of them are called "split reels," meaning that there are two plays, or sketches, on each one. And in the intervals of going through scenes in "Out on The Deep," or rehearsing for them, Ruth and Alice took part, with others of the Comet organization, in the making of many pictures.

Several weeks went by in this way. Spring was gradually turning into Summer, to the delight of the girls, who loved the outdoors. Of course they loved Winter, too, for they had many outdoor scenes to take part in then, since snow effects are always easy to photograph.

"But Summer is the best!" cried Alice, gaily dancing about the studio, after she had finished in a little comedy scene, one day.

"I think so, too," agreed Ruth.

"And when we get out on the deep blue sea," the younger girl added, "it will be ideal. Oh, I can hardly wait for the *Mary Ellen* to start on her last voyage. Isn't it too bad she has to be sunk?" she asked.

"Yes, it is rather tragic," agreed Ruth. "I hope we get far enough away when she takes her last plunge beneath the waves," she added with an involuntary shudder.

"Oh, trust Captain Brisco for that," Alice said.

"I had rather trust--Sailor Jack Jepson," murmured Ruth in a low voice.

Meanwhile work on refitting the schooner had gone on apace. The moving picture girls, and their friends, had paid several visits to her, and found Captain Brisco, Jack Jepson and the others hard at work making the vessel a semblance of her former self.

"She's an old tub," said Jack to the girls, "but she's in better shape than she was when you were here afore, Missies."

And indeed the *Mary Ellen* did seem so. A new coat of paint added as much to her appearance, as a new dress and hat does to a young lady, though *Mary Ellen* could no longer be classed as young.

Then came a day when many members of the theatrical company, including Jack Jepson, who now enjoyed that distinction, were taken down to the seacoast, some distance from New York. They went in a tug specially hired for the occasion.

"Some of the scenes of the marine drama take place on the seacoast," explained Mr. Pertell. "I want to get them now, when we have the chance. I need a rocky shore, and this is the nearest one we can reach. Get ready now. We have rehearsed these scenes, you remember."

They were not easy scenes, and, even though they had been gone over in the studio, when it came to actually going through them on the beach, one difficulty after another arose.

In the first place it was a raw, windy day, and there was a pretty high sea, dashing up among the rocks of the shore, and sending a spray over toward the cameras.

"I can't do anything from this point!" finally complained Russ Dalwood, who was at the machine. "I've spoiled about a hundred feet of film now. We'll have to get around that point."

"All right," agreed Mr. Pertell, "but the scenery isn't so good there."

But when one difficulty was disposed of another one was found. Mr. Bunn made trouble when he was asked to do a certain "fall" in the water. He complained that he did not want to spoil his tall hat.

"Oh, you and your tall hat!" impatiently exclaimed the manager. "Go on with that scene, I tell you!"

"But I--er--I--" expostulated the old actor.

Before he could make further objection a mist of heavy spray dashed over him, thoroughly wetting his beloved hat.

"There!" cried Mr. Pertell. "Your tile is spoiled anyhow, now go on and fall in. It can't get any wetter!"

"Oh, what a life! What a life!" groaned the "Ham" actor, but he went through the "business." Perhaps he realized that

other engagements were not any too plentiful for men of his talent.

Nor did Ruth and Alice have an easy time. They had to scramble over rocks, they had to escape from smugglers, they had to hide in caves, and once Alice had to fall down on the rocks, and pretend to be hurt. It was a very real fall, too, and she did not have to make much of a pretense at limping.

"Oh, I'm so sorry!" exclaimed Paul Ardite, hastening to her side. "Shall I carry you?" he asked eagerly.

"No indeed. I'm all right. I just----"

"Keep back there, Paul! Keep back!" cried Mr. Pertell. "Don't get in range and spoil the picture. That's fine, Miss DeVere. It's very natural--that limp!"

"It ought to be!" murmured Alice, biting her lips to keep back an exclamation of pain. "It's real enough, especially the pain."

Moving picture acting is not all as easy as it seems.

CHAPTER IX

THE RISING TIDE

"Well, that's very good, so far," said Mr. Pertell, when there came a lull in the taking of the preliminary scenes of the marine film. "A little more life wouldn't have hurt any, but the conditions aren't just the best. It was fairly well done."

"Huh! Fairly well done!" exclaimed Pepper Sneed. "I wonder what he wants, anyhow? I nearly broke my neck scrambling over those rocks, and the skin is all gone from the palms of my hands, and all he says is that it was 'fairly well done!' I wonder what he wants, anyhow?"

"Ha! He wants dot you shouldt altogedder preak your neck, ain't it?" put in Mr. Switzer. "Dot would be a real funny picture, aretty yet!" he went on in his favorite character of a Dutch comedian. "Preak your neck, Mr. Sneed, und let Russ make der picture."

"Ha! I think I see myself!" exclaimed the "grouch," as he looked for a seaweed-cushioned rock whereon to sit. "There's been a lot of trouble today, but, mark my words, there'll be more before we have finished. That's all I've got to say," and by the sour look on his face anyone would have thought that he rejoiced in his prediction of trouble to come.

"What is the matter now?" asked Ruth, coming up in time to hear part of the discussion.

"Oh, Pepper is sure the world is going to come to an end before the public has a chance to see him in his great rescue act of 'Out on The Deep,' I guess," replied Paul Ardite. "Cheer up!" he added. "The worst is yet to come."

"You're right there," agreed Mr. Sneed, darkly. "There'll be an accident before this day is over, mark my words!"

"Oh, Alice, are you hurt?" asked Ruth quickly, as she saw her sister limping toward her, for the little scene in which Alice had slipped and hurt her ankle, had taken place when Ruth was busy in another part of the play, farther down the shore line.

"It isn't anything," the younger girl answered, bravely keeping back an exclamation of pain.

"Will you be able to go on?" Mr. Pertell asked. He had followed Alice, when the scene closed, and when he had stopped Paul in time to prevent the photographs from being spoiled.

"Oh, yes, I can go on, of course," Alice said, with an effort.

"Because you have some important parts yet to do," the manager continued. He was not as heartless as this sounds. Really he was most kind and considerate. Yet he knew the pictures must be made and the present was the best time. If there were a delay, there was no telling what might intervene.

He knew that Alice herself realized this. She would not give up unless positively unable to go on. The general public little realizes how often those who entertain them do so under positive pain and suffering. Of course moving picture scenes can be postponed more easily than can those in a real theatre. But the general rule holds good for the movies, as for the legitimate. "The show must go on!" That is the watchword of manager and player alike. "The show must go on!"

"I have a bottle of arnica with me," said Mrs. Maguire, the "old lady" of the company. "I heard we were to do some rock-scrambling today and I brought it along. I'll rub some of it on your ankle," she said to Alice.

"Yes, doctor her up a bit," advised Mr. Pertell. "She's too important to be left out of the film, for a while at least. I don't want to force you, Miss DeVere," he went on, "but really----"

"Oh, I'll be able to go on," Alice bravely said. "It is only a little wrench, I think."

Behind a screen of rocks Mrs. Maguire removed Alice's shoe and stocking, and the motherly old lady and Ruth bathed the injured foot. It was not as bad as Alice had feared, and when it was bound up again she found she could use it by "favoring" it slightly. She would not have to take part in a scene for nearly an hour, and she took advantage of the rest afforded by the wait.

Meanwhile Mr. DeVere and some other members of the company were going through their parts. An old fisherman's hut had been found, a little way down the beach, and for a small sum of money the grizzled old salt had agreed to vacate for the morning, and allow the moving picture actors to use his home as the background for several scenes.

"It isn't just what the scenario calls for," said Mr. Pertell, "but we can switch things around at the studio later, to make it

fit."

This is a secret of more than one film. The producer takes advantage of things as he finds them. Often, after a film has all been planned, and the pictures are being taken, a chance accident, or incident, will suggest an advantageous change, and it is made on the spot. Later the film is "cut" or added to, so that the change fits in.

Again, on going to the outdoor scene called for in the scenario, the manager may see a background that suits him better than one he intended using. On the spot he will stop and have the act take place there, altering, or adapting, the plot of the story to fit. And many an accident has been turned to good account in making a film. But these are secrets known only to the initiated, and the public that sees the finished picture in some theatre little realizes how much chance had to do with its making.

Scene after scene was "filmed," Russ and his camera associates grinding away at the machines. It was not easy work, for the wind and spray often interfered with the clearness of the picture. But of course that only added to the reality of it when the finished picture was shown.

"Now for that scene on the far rocks," called Mr. Pertell when he had brought to a satisfactory conclusion a difficult part of the drama. "Are you able to go out there, Miss DeVère?" and he looked anxiously at Alice.

"Oh, yes, I'm much better," she answered.

"All ready then!" called the manager. "Russ, I want one or two 'close-up' views in this, so prepare yourself accordingly."

"All right," answered the operator, who was talking to Ruth. He put in a fresh reel of film, and adjusted the camera.

A "close-up" view, I might explain, is one taken with the person, or subject, very close to the camera, so that it appears very large--larger than usual. For instance, it might be necessary, in some play, to show a certain ring. The hand of the person, with the ring on the finger would be held close to the camera, so that the resultant picture on the screen would show every detail of the ring clearly. You have often seen such views in moving pictures, though you may not have known what they were technically called.

The "rock scene" that was to be filmed now was to take place out on a little rocky group some distance from shore. It was reached by a long, narrow rocky ledge that curved out into the bay. Alice, Ruth and Paul were to be in this picture, and Russ would plant his camera on the rocky ledge, between the actors and the shore.

"Can you walk out there, Alice?" asked Paul, as he stepped along beside her, Russ walking with Ruth.

"Oh, yes," was the answer. "My ankle is much better now. It was silly of me to slip that way."

"You couldn't very well help it," he said.

"That seaweed is very treacherous. I hope there is none on the rocks out there."

"Why?" she asked. "Is the water deep?"

"Rather, so that fisherman said."

"Well, I'm not going to slip," declared Alice.

It was not easy work getting out to the group of rocks on the narrow path of black stone, made slippery by the spray. But they managed it, and finally Ruth, Alice and Paul took their places.

"All ready," called Mr. Pertell, who, with a copy of the scenario in his hand stood back of Russ to direct matters. "You are all supposed to be talking together, and then Paul discovers a sail out on the bay. You register surprise, Paul."

"Very good," answered the young actor.

I might explain that the word "register" is used to indicate that an actor or actress is to depict, or go through, the "business" of showing certain emotions, either by facial expression, or gestures.

"And after Paul sights the vessel, you register hope, Miss Ruth," went on the manager. "All ready now--begin."

So the filming of that scene went on.

"Very good," complimented the manager. "Just a little more force there, Paul. Wait a minute, Russ. Do that one bit over."

The scene was started over again, but it had proceeded only a minute or so before Russ gave an exclamation of

annoyance.

"What's the matter?" asked Mr. Pertell.

"Spring broke," reported the operator. "I'll have to go get the other camera, and it will take me half an hour to get it in shape."

"Well, we'll have time enough," Mr. Pertell said, with a look at the sun, which is a sort of god to photographers. Without its beams little can be done. "I'll go back and help you," said the manager who used to be an expert operator himself before he rose in the ranks.

"You'll have to wait a bit," Russ called to Ruth, Alice and Paul. "Got to fix another camera."

"All right. We'll stay here," announced Alice. "I don't want to make that trip again with my lame ankle," and she sat down in a niche of the rocks. The others followed her example. The minutes passed quickly in pleasant talk, but presently Paul jumped to his feet. There was alarm in his action.

"What's the matter?" asked Ruth, startled.

"Look!" he said. He pointed toward the shore. The path of rocks was broken midway by a stretch of water. The tide had risen, cutting off the retreat to the beach.



CHAPTER X

TOO MUCH REALISM

"Oh dear!" exclaimed Ruth. It seemed a silly, futile thing to say, but, perhaps, very natural under the circumstances. Ruth arose, and put her arms about her sister, who tottered a little as she stood upright.

"The tide has risen?" asked Alice, and her tone was questioning.

"That's what has happened," went on Paul. "Pshaw! I ought to have kept watch of it. Russ was gone longer than I thought. But here we are now, fairly caught."

"Can't we--can't we wade back to shore?" faltered Alice.

"I wouldn't like to have you try it," answered Paul, and he moved over closer to the girl.

"Why not?" she asked. "I'm not at all afraid of getting wet, and it can't be so very deep over those rocks--not yet."

"It isn't that you would get wet," Paul answered. "But the rocks were slippery enough as they were. Covered with water, as they now are between us and the shore, I'm afraid you'd slip off, especially as your ankle will give you a twinge if you twist it."

"It certainly will," agreed Alice. "It hurts worse now. But oh! We must get back to shore!" she exclaimed. "We must!"

"We--I--I think I could lift her over the place where the water is," said Ruth.

"But you might both slip in," objected Paul. "And the water is quite deep on either side of this ledge of rocks. You see the ocean washes in against them, and scoops out the sand. So that there is a deep channel, ten feet or more, right alongside of the ledge of rocks. If you fell in there----"

"Oh, don't speak of it!" begged Alice. "I wouldn't mind swimming if I were prepared for it but it isn't exactly Summer yet, and with a disabled foot----"

"It isn't to be thought of," finished Ruth. "But we *must* get ashore somehow, Paul. The water is getting higher every minute."

"Yes, the tide has just begun to come in," said the young actor. "I should have noticed it before, but I didn't. Now I wonder--"

He did not finish, but gazed back toward the beach, nearly a quarter of a mile away. To his surprise, and also alarm, not one of the members of the moving picture company was in sight.

"That's strange," thought Paul, but he did not speak his thought aloud.

"Oh!" screamed Alice, so suddenly as to startle them all.

"What is the matter?" demanded Ruth.

"A wave splashed right up behind me! Look!"

The rising wind was sending little waves over the outer edge of the small island of rocks on which the three were marooned. It was another evidence that the tide was getting higher and higher.

"What *shall* we do?" asked Ruth.

"We must get help--*somehow*!" Alice said. Then she looked shoreward, in the direction Paul was gazing, and she uttered the single expression:

"Oh!"

But it was fraught with meaning.

"Why--they've gone!" gasped Ruth. "What--what----"

"They'll be back!" Paul interrupted. "Probably Mr. Pertell just thought of some scene he could get, and he took them off down the beach to put them all in it. They'll be back in a little while, and then we can signal to them."

"If--if it isn't too--too late!" faltered Alice.

"Too late? What do you mean?" demanded her sister.

"I mean these rocks will soon be covered, and covered deep, too," Alice said. "The high water mark is away above them."

"Is it, Paul?" demanded the older girl. She wanted the statement of Alice disproved.

"I'm afraid it is," the young actor made answer. "And the tide, I am sorry to say, is likely to be unusually high today. The moon has something to do with it. But we will be taken off before then."

"Suppose we aren't?" asked Alice. "The wind and the sea are rising, and if we are swept off the rocks----"

"Don't be so tragic about it!" broke in Ruth. "If we are to go to sea, and be in a shipwreck, even if it is only pictured, we must learn to face perils. And here we are only a little way from shore."

"That's right!" cried Paul. "That's the way to look at it, Alice. There's no danger!"

"That's easy enough for you to say--you two who haven't a lame ankle," the younger girl said, seriously enough. "But I don't believe I can even swim!"

"There will be no need of that," Paul said. "They are sure to come back and see our plight soon. I can't see what's keeping Russ. He promised to come back as soon as he fixed up another camera. It's very strange."

Later they learned that when Russ and Mr. Pertell got back to the beach, leaving, as they supposed Ruth, her sister and Paul safe on the rocks, Pop Snooks, the veteran property man, discovered a certain nook that would answer for an important scene in the play. Wishing to take advantage of it at once, while the light was good, Mr. Pertell ordered the entire company over there to go through the prescribed "business." He took Russ and the two other camera operators with him, to make sure of getting at least one film.

That is why the beach opposite the rocks where the three were marooned by the rising tide, was deserted just then. For the time both Mr. Pertell and Russ forgot their three friends, or, if they thought of them at all, it was to think that they were perfectly safe, and would come to no harm by waiting a bit.

The tide rose higher and higher. In a few minutes it would lap the feet of the three marooned ones. A desperate resolve came into Paul's mind.

"I'll swim, or wade, to shore," he said, "and get a boat."

"And leave us here?" demanded Alice.

"Yes. There is nothing else to be done," he answered, desperately.

"No, please don't go!" begged Alice, putting a detaining hand on his arm. "I can't bear to be left here."

"But it will be only for a few minutes," Paul said, "and the tide isn't rising so fast that it will sweep you away in that time."

"I know--but--don't go!" begged Alice, her voice trembling.

Paul looked at Ruth.

"Perhaps you *had* better stay," suggested the older girl. "They are sure to come back soon, and--well, we don't want to be left here."

"All right," agreed Paul. "But I think I could get back with a boat in time."

However, there was no need for him to go. A moment later the moving picture company, headed by Russ and the two other camera men, came around the turn of some sand dunes.

"There they are!" cried Ruth.

"Oh, come and get us!" fairly screamed Alice.

Paul put his fingers to his mouth and sent out a shrill whistle.

It needed only a glance on the part of Mr. Pertell and the others to show the plight of the three marooned ones.

"I forgot all about them!" the manager exclaimed. "Russ--Mr. Bunn--Switzer--a boat--where's that fisherman--where's the life-saving station? This is----"

"Avast there! Belay!" came the deep tones of Jack Jepson, who had come out to do certain parts in the shore scenes. "I'll take that boat out and get 'em. Don't worry!"

"Oh, but my daughters!" exclaimed Mr. DeVere, hoarsely.

"And Alice with a sprained ankle!" gasped Mrs. Maguire.

"Don't worry! I'll get 'em!" declared the old salt. "Come on," he called to Mr. Bunn. "You look like you could handle an oar," and he started toward a dory that was drawn up on the beach.

"I--I can't row!" exclaimed the old actor. "Besides, I might----"

"Yes, he might spoil his dignity," said Russ fiercely in an undertone. "I'll go with you," he said to the sailor. "I can manage a boat!"

"Good! That's the way to talk. Come on!"

A few minutes later Russ and Jack had shoved out the fisherman's craft, and were quickly rowing toward the rocks. The tide was now so high that Paul and the two girls stood ankle-deep in the water that completely covered the rocks.

"Ahoy there! Ahoy!" sang out Jack, as he and Russ sent the boat over the waves to the rescue. "Ahoy! We'll have you safe in a minute!"

"Quick! Get that picture! Film it!" cried Mr. Pertell to one of the other camera men. "I can work that scene in--somehow."

There was very little that was not "grist" which came to the "mill" of Mr. Pertell's cameras. The film began to unreel and before they knew it Paul, Ruth and Alice were being depicted in the rescue scene, which, when it was projected on the screen, made a series of effective pictures.

There was little real harm done save for wet feet and startled nerves. Sufficient harm, one might think, but Ruth and Alice were beginning to forget they had nerves, so many were the strange acts they were called upon to perform in their moving picture work.

Jack and Russ helped the three into the boat, and rowed to shore with them, where mutual explanations were made, and Mr. Pertell was sorrowfully apologetic for his forgetful share in it.

"And the next time I forget about the tide, when I'm at the shore, I'll fine myself a box of candy to be forfeit to you girls," Paul said.

"Be sure you don't forget to pay the fine," Alice warned him.

As the company had brought along several changes of costume, there were dry shoes for the three marooned ones, and then, as it was too late to finish the scene on the rocks, they went back to New York. Some other day would have to be devoted, at least in part, to completing that film.

In the days that followed, work on the *Mary Ellen* went on apace. She was almost ready for her voyage to sea. The big motorboat, *Ajax*, was also being put in readiness. While Jack Jepson and the others were busy at the schooner there were also busy scenes at the studio, where Mr. DeVere and his daughters took part in many film plays. Nearly all the studio scenes for "Out on The Deep," had been completed.

"But we must get that river attack before we start on the voyage," said Mr. Pertell one day. This "river attack" showed one phase of the big marine drama. Ruth and Alice, in company with Mr. Bunn, as an old 'longshoreman, were supposed to be rowed across a river to escape harbor thieves. To get good local color the location of the scene was fixed on the Jersey side of the Hudson river, above the Palisades. Thither those of the company required in the scene journeyed one day.

All went well until the time when Mr. Bunn, rather against his will, was rowing Ruth and Alice toward shore. They were being pursued by some rough men in a second boat. It is needless to say that the "rough men," were also moving picture actors.

"Go on there, Mr. Bunn! Row! Row!" called Mr. Pertell, while Russ, who was with him in a third boat, was making the reel hum in the camera.

"I--I can't row any faster," said the old "Ham" actor.

"But you *must*!" the manager cried. "That's better," he added as Mr. Bunn showed a burst of speed.

"Oh dear! If ever I get through this series of pictures I'll quit the game!" groaned the former legitimate actor.

Ruth and Alice "registered" the proper business as the men in the pursuing boat came nearer and nearer. The flight was to continue along the Jersey shore.

"Jump out! Jump out!" commanded Mr. Pertell, giving directions from behind a screen of bushes, where he and Russ, having landed, were now hidden to take the land scenes.

The girls and Mr. Bunn leaped ashore. The "villains" followed, firing blank cartridges.

"Fine! That's fine!" cried the enthusiastic manager, when suddenly, from a road that ran along the shore, there sprang a number of country officers. They had their clubs in one hand and had drawn their revolvers.

"Surrender! Surrender!" cried the leading officer to the "villains," who were pursuing Mr. Bunn and the girls. "Surrender! We've got you covered! We seen you chasin' these parties! Surrender!" and the police rushed toward the actors.

"Keep back! Keep back!" implored Mr. Pertell, leaping out of concealment and waving his hands. But he was too late.



CHAPTER XI

A REVISED FILM

Just what idea the local police had in mind when they rushed forward would be hard to say. Evidently, however, they believed they were intent on rescuing the girls from some imminent peril, for the leader of the officers, showing not a little fear, even in the heroic role he was playing, fired a shot into the air, and cried:

"No you don't! No you don't! Nothin' like that there can be done while Captain Wealson is around. Up an' at 'em, men!"

He and his men rushed toward the pursuing "villains," got right in the way of the camera, and proceeded to attack those whom they thought were guilty of some crime.

"There it goes!" cried Mr. Pertell. "The picture is spoiled! It will have to be all done over again."

In obedience to a gesture of despair from the manager, Russ ceased grinding at the crank of the camera.

"That's enough! Stop!" called Mr. Pertell, and Ruth, Alice and the others who were making strenuous efforts (seemingly) to escape, came to a halt. Many times before they had heard that command which meant that something was going wrong, and that they might as well stop at once without wasting effort.

"Why, I wonder what's wrong," said Alice, who had not quite grasped the interruption. "Everything seemed to be going beautifully."

"Perhaps the film broke," suggested Ruth.

"It's the police," Paul said, waving his hand at the officers, each of whom had clutched a "prisoner," and was holding him.

"The police?" echoed Alice.

"Yes, they came in when they weren't wanted," Paul went on.

"Oh, I thought they were part of the picture!" exclaimed Ruth. And so she had. Often, to make a moving picture seem more realistic, a manager will not tell the actors all he has prepared. Thus he gets the element of surprise. Both Ruth and Alice, in this case, thought the local police had been brought into the scene at the last moment to add a touch of reality to the play. But, as it turned out, it was almost too much reality.

"Say, what do you fellows mean, anyhow?" demanded the manager, of the police leader. "What do you mean, I say," and Mr. Pertell strode up with an angry look on his face.

"What do we mean? Ha! That's a good one! Listen to him, boys! What do we mean? Why we mean to arrest these scoundrels, and we've done it, too!" he added proudly, with a wave of his hand toward the persons his men had made prisoners.

"Well, you've made a big mistake," Mr. Pertell went on.

"Mistake! Ha! I guess not!" cried the officer. "We don't make mistakes up here! One of my men seen something queer goin' on out in the river, and come and told me. Then I seen your boats puttin' off, and I knew something was wrong. So I got my forces together, and we waited for these fellows. We've got 'em, too! Every one of 'em!" he added proudly. "Lock 'em up, men!" he ordered. "We'll show these fellows what Jersey justice is like. Take 'em away."

"Hold on!" cried Mr. Pertell, and this time he allowed a smile to show on his hitherto glum face. "You don't seem to understand."

"Oh, I think I do," said the police officer calmly. "I understand a great deal more than you think I do. Come on."

"Wait! I'll explain!" cried the manager. "It's for the moving pictures!" he added. "This is only a pretended attack and pursuit. Ask the young ladies themselves," he said, motioning to Ruth and Alice who were now smiling. Certainly they did not seem to be in any great alarm or distress over their recent adventure. Their appearance must have caused the officer to doubt the wisdom of his course.

"Weren't these fellers chasing you?" he demanded, motioning to the prisoners. "Now don't say they wasn't, for I saw 'em."

"Oh, yes, they were pursuing us," admitted Ruth, "but it was all in the picture."

"The picture?" questioned the officer.

"Yes. We are moving picture actresses and actors," she went on, and her father, coming up then, though he had had no active part in the chase, confirmed what she said.

For a moment the police captain maintained a silence, and then, as he could no longer doubt what was said, since Mr. Pertell exhibited certain credentials, the representative of Jersey justice said:

"Well, this certainly is one on me! We'd better go back, boys," he added to his men, "and we'd better keep quiet about this thing. But I sure thought this was a kidnapping case."

"And you spoiled my picture," groaned Mr. Pertell. "Now we've got to go back to the middle of the river, and do it over from there."

"Hold on a minute!" exclaimed Pop Snooks, who, as property man, was also a sort of assistant manager. "Maybe this will turn out all right after all."

"How do you mean?" asked Mr. Pertell.

"Why, the police. We could have them try to stop the pursuers but get worsted in the encounter, and the rougns could keep right on after the girls. In that way we won't have to waste much film. Just go on with the picture from the point where these policemen came in."

Mr. Pertell thought for a minute.

"That's the idea!" he suddenly cried. "It will make a better picture that way. Say!" he went on to the police officers: "You're in on this!"

"In on what?" asked the captain.

"On this scene. I can use you and your men. You won't mind a little rough and tumble work, will you?"

"What do you mean?"

Thereupon the manager explained that he would turn the police to good advantage, and have them interfere in the attack, only to be outdone by the "villains."

"It's only fair for you to do this, as you came in where you weren't needed and nearly spoiled the picture," the manager said.

Whether it was this appeal to justice and fair play, or because he and his men were anxious to get into a moving picture, was not made clear; but the captain and the policemen consented to do their parts.

There was a little coaching, something of a rehearsal and then that scene went on again, with Ruth and Alice "fleeing" from the pursuers, and the police charging downhill after the men.

Then followed the improvised scene, of an attack by the police, and a repulse by the "villains."

"Good! That's great!" cried Mr. Pertell. "It will be better than I thought it would. This is fine!"

"Ha! Yes, maybe for you, but look at my eye!" cried Mr. Pepper Sneed. "Look at it!"

"Well, what's the matter with it?" asked Mr. Pertell. "It's a little red, that's all I can see." The taking of pictures had stopped for the time being.

"A little red! A little!" fairly howled the grouch. "Say it will be black and blue tomorrow. One of those policeman hit me in the eye with his elbow. It was an awful blow. I shouldn't wonder but that I went blind. Never again will I take part in anything as tough as this. I know I'll be laid up for a week," and with this gloomy thought he limped off, for he had been rather roughly handled in the melee.

"I wonder if that's all for us today?" asked Alice, as she saw Russ taking the legs off his camera.

"Why, are you tired?" asked Ruth, solicitously.

"A little, yes. I shall be glad when we get out to sea."

"Perhaps we may have even harder work than this," suggested Ruth, for the race along shore had not been easy. "A shipwreck isn't going to be any society drama, Alice."

"I know," agreed the younger girl. "But I think we shall like it."

Neither of them realized what was in store for them.

CHAPTER XII

OVERHEARD

"Well, I think this will do," Mr. Pertell announced, as the members of his company gathered on the shore of the Hudson, ready to go back to the larger boat, whence they had come in the two small ones, to depict the pursuit. "It came out better than I expected when I saw that crowd of policemen charging down on us."

"I thought sure we were in for a spell in the lock-up," remarked one of the extra men engaged as a member of the "pursuing villains."

"You had a little extra work, doing part of the scene over again, so we'll give you all a little bonus," said the manager. "We'll get back to the studio now. There are a few scenes I want to make before we start off on our trip to sea."

"How soon do we go?" asked Alice.

"As soon as we can get stocked up. Captain Brisco has a few little repairs to make to the schooner, I believe."

"Do you think the *Mary Ellen* will prove to be a safe boat in which to go to sea?" asked Mr. DeVere, when he, with his daughters, and the others, were on their way back to New York.

"Why not?" asked the manager.

"Well, I heard Jack Jepson say the schooner was a pretty old one," replied the veteran actor.

"So she is," said Mr. Pertell, "if she hadn't been, our company never could have afforded to buy her just to make a shipwreck of her. But she is perfectly safe for what traveling we shall do. Brisco has assured me of that, and has seen to it. What sort of a yarn was Jepson giving you?" and Mr. Pertell seemed a bit annoyed.

"Well, he merely said that the schooner was a pretty old one," went on Mr. DeVere, "and that she had seen her best days."

"He didn't say that she was unsafe, did he?"

"No, oh, no! Nothing like that!" exclaimed the actor quickly. "I was just wondering about her. I shouldn't like to take any chances you know," and he glanced over toward his daughters who had no part in this conversation.

"Oh, the *Mary Ellen* will be as safe as is necessary," the manager continued. "Besides we will be in Southern waters after we leave here, and there will be little danger from storms."

"I am glad of that," Mr. DeVere said. "A warm Southern clime will be beneficial to my throat. It does not take kindly to our Northern weather, even at the best."

In the days that followed there was plenty of work for the moving picture girls in the film studio. They had to take part in several little dramas that had to be completed before the sea scenes in the ocean play were undertaken.

"Anything much to do this afternoon?" asked Russ of Ruth as he passed her near her dressing room one day about a week after the episode of the mistaken policemen.

"No, I am free," she announced. "They have postponed that 'In the Slums' and I'm glad of it. I don't care for such characters as I have to assume in a play like that."

"Nor I. I'm off for the afternoon, too. What do you say we take Alice, and go for a little trip to the Erie Basin?"

"To see the *Mary Ellen* again? There can't be much change since we saw her last."

"No, not exactly to see her, though we could pay a visit if we liked. But you know we are to have a big motorboat follow us in the ocean scenes--I'm to take pictures from it, in fact--and that motorboat--the *Ajax*--is over in the Basin, near the old schooner. I thought maybe you'd like to take a look at her."

"I would!" exclaimed Ruth with enthusiasm. "I'll tell Alice. She is disengaged, I know, for I heard Mr. Pertell tell her so."

"I'm sorry we can't go for a trip in her," went on Russ, "but she isn't in shape yet. I have to go over to give some directions about building a platform for setting the camera on, and I thought we might combine business and pleasure."

"It will be a pleasure to go," said Ruth, as she went off to find her sister.

"Tell Paul, too, if you see him," Russ called after her. "We'll make a party of it."

"All right," Ruth answered.

She found Paul and Alice together--just as she half expected--and mentioned Russ's plan.

Paul was cast for a role in a little play that afternoon, but he spoke to Mr. Pertell about it, and the manager kindly postponed it, as it was not very important.

So, after lunch the four young people started for the place where the *Ajax* was being overhauled, not far from the dock of the *Mary Ellen*. On the way they talked of their plans when they should be at sea. It had been given out at the studio that they would all go aboard the *Mary Ellen*, which would be headed for the Florida coast. Somewhere off that peninsula, just where had not been decided, the moving pictures would be made, and the shipwreck would take place. The details had not yet been perfected.

"Are you going to travel alone in the motorboat?" asked Alice of Russ.

"No indeed. She is to be carried in a cradle on the deck of the *Mary Ellen*, and----"

"A cradle!" interrupted Alice. "Whoever heard of a boat being put in a cradle, as if it were a baby!"

"Well, the *Ajax* is going to be rocked in the cradle of the deep, isn't she?" asked Paul.

"Oh, what a heartless joke!" mocked Ruth.

"Just for that you'll be fined four ice cream sodas!" laughed Alice.

"No, but speaking seriously," went on Russ, "the *Ajax* will be cradled on the deck of the schooner; that is, the motorboat will be set in two V shaped affairs, called cradles. That's to prevent her rolling off into the high seas."

"Do you think it will be rough?" asked Ruth, with an apprehensive look over her shoulder, as though she already saw a "hurricane in the offing," as her sister laughingly put it.

"Well, you know we have to wait for a storm, to get some of the scenes," Russ said. "Of course the weather often gets pretty bad in these Southern waters, in spite of their peaceful name," he continued, "but I don't suppose Mr. Pertell will venture out far from the harbor in a bad blow. Even a little wind will kick up enough sea to make it look pretty rough in a picture."

"Oh, I don't mind a storm!" exclaimed Alice. "I just love it."

"Oh--Alice!" cried her sister. "You know you'll be as frightened as I'll be."

"We'll see," challenged the younger girl with sparkling eyes and a flush on her cheeks.

They found the *Ajax*, after some little difficulty, among a score of other boats, in process of repair.

"Oh, what a big one!" exclaimed Alice as she caught sight of the craft. "I do hope you'll give us a ride in her, Russ."

"Of course I shall, between times of taking pictures," he promised. "What do you think of her, Paul?"

"Pretty fine," agreed the young actor. "Has she any speed?"

"Not much, I guess. It's an old sort of tub, but pretty steady in the water, Mr. Pertell said. That's what I want for taking pictures. It won't do to have her rolling and pitching. Well, let's go aboard, and see how they're coming on."

Russ had a permit to view the craft, and as he was expected to give some instructions regarding the building of the platform, the man in charge of the overhauling work welcomed the four young people.

The *Ajax* was, as Russ had said, rather a tub, but it was a large, comfortable boat, and was capable of going on quite a cruise. There was a partially enclosed cabin, and many comforts and conveniences. But just for the present purpose, everything was being subordinated to the taking of moving pictures.

"I'm readjusting the motor," the head of the repair gang told Russ, "so she'll start and stop, as well as reverse easily and quickly. That's what you want, isn't it?"

"That's it, yes. You see I can't tell when I'll have to shift, to make allowances for what the actors and actresses will do. There's no telling about these moving picture people," and Russ gave Ruth and Alice, as well as Paul, a laughing look as though to indicate that they were very temperamental, and hard to get along with.

"Are these some of the actor folks?" asked the mechanic who was laboring over the motor.

"That's what they are, and good ones, too!" cried Russ.

"Gee! They don't look it!" was the frank remark, and the two girls broke into peals of laughter.

Paul and Russ showed Ruth and Alice over the big motorboat, and then leaving the three to their own devices for a while, the young camera operator went into details of the work with the head mechanic. Russ was told that the *Ajax* would be ready in plenty of time for him. He expressed himself as satisfied with the progress made, though he made one or two slight changes in the platform, built on the forward deck of the craft, where he was to stand when he took the pictures of the shipwreck.

"Well, how about those sodas now?" asked Russ of his companions when he had finished. "There's a nice place a few blocks up, and it's about warm enough for ice cream."

"Couldn't we take just a look at the *Mary Ellen* while we are here?" asked Alice. "Isn't that she, over there?" and she pointed across the basin.

"You speak of that ship as if she were a person," objected Ruth.

"And so she is!" Alice exclaimed. "A ship is always a lady, isn't she, Paul?"

"She ought to try to be, at least," he laughed. "How about it, Russ? Shall we take the girls over to the schooner?"

"Might as well, I guess. It won't take long, and it isn't far."

A short time later the four of them stood at the gangplank of the *Mary Ellen*. They saw no signs of any men on deck, but they were doubtless below, making the repairs, which must be nearly finished.

"Come on," said Russ, leading the way. "We'll go aboard."

As they stood on deck, looking about them, they saw no one, but the companionway was in plain sight, and they started toward it, intending to go down into the main cabin.

The place was rather dimly lighted, but when their eyes had become used to the gloom, they caught sight of a solitary figure in the forward end of the main compartment.

"It's Jack Jepson," whispered Alice to her companions. "We'll give him a surprise. Keep quiet now. His back is toward me and I'll tiptoe up behind him and put my hands over his eyes. I'll make him guess who it is. He'll think some British suffragette has taken him on that silly charge of mutiny," she went on.

"Be careful," admonished Ruth. "No pranks, Alice."

"This isn't a prank. Keep quiet now."

The old sailor was evidently not aware that visitors were in the cabin, for they had made little noise in descending the companion stairs, and what little they had caused was drowned by the distant noise of carpenters' hammers.

As Alice advanced, the others remaining back in the semi-darkness, they all heard Jack Jepson break into a sort of monologue. He was talking to himself, in fashion something like this.

"It ought to be hereabouts, if it's anywhere, and I'm sure it is. I can't be mistaken. They have cut her down, and made a lot of changes, but they can't fool me. I was suspicious when I first came aboard, and I'm more so every minute. I'm going to find out for sure, while I have the chance. Let me think now."

He leaned up against a bulkhead, while Alice glanced back at her friends in some surprise. What meant the words they had overheard? The old sailor seemed strangely excited, and he was passing his hand over the paneling of the cabin as though in search of something long forgotten, or dimly remembered.

A moment later another step was heard in the apartment, and Captain Brisco entered. He started at the sight of Jepson, though the commander had not yet seen the four young people.

"What are you doing here?" he asked in a hoarse voice. The old salt started back as though caught in some guilty act.

CHAPTER XIII

"ALL ABOARD!"

Ruth, Alice, Paul and Russ remained silent and unseen witnesses of the little scene being enacted before them. It was like some section taken from a moving picture drama, though they could not guess what the plot was, nor what the outcome would be.

"What are you doing here, Mr. Jepson?" asked Captain Brisco, and there was sarcasm in the title he bestowed on his mate, for since he was third in command, having been given the post of second mate, the old salt was entitled to be called Mister.

"I was jest--jest lookin'--lookin'--" Jepson faltered.

"Well, you'd better look forward then," came, the harsh command. "There's plenty to do there, if we're ever to start on this voyage, and of all the----"

At that moment Alice sneezed. She could not help it, and in trying to hold it back, she made more of a commotion than if she had let the sneeze come naturally.

At the sound Captain Brisco and Jack Jepson turned and stared toward the dimness that marked the companionway.

"Who's there?" called Captain Brisco, sharply.

"We just came aboard to see how matters were coming on," said Russ stepping forward and under a skylight.

"But we didn't expect to be welcomed with snuff," said Alice, as she sneezed again. This time Ruth joined her. There was an irritating odor noticeable in the cabin.

"I beg your pardon," Captain Brisco said, as the others stepped closer to Russ, so they could be discerned. "I didn't know who it was. I am glad to see you. That's a paint-remover you smell. It is irritating. I am very glad to see you."

But he did not say it at all as though he meant it. Alice said afterward she thought her sneeze had broken in on the captain's denunciation of the proposed sea voyage.

"It was just as though he were going to say it was the most foolish and nonsensical thing of which he had ever heard," Alice explained. "Oh, why *did* I have to go and sneeze just then?"

"Did you want to hear what he would have said?" asked her sister.

"Yes, I did. I don't like Captain Brisco."

"You mustn't say such things," Ruth cautioned her. But this was some time later.

Just at present the commander of the *Mary Ellen* was trying to make his unexpected guests feel a welcome he rather grudgingly extended.

"We have been over looking at the *Ajax*," explained Russ, "and we thought we'd stop in and pay you a call."

"Oh, yes, I'm to carry the *Ajax* on deck, I believe," the commander said. "Well, you'll find us all pretty busy here," he went on. "Mr. Jepson, will you kindly go forward and see how the men are coming on with that caulking?"

It was a very different voice from the one he had used when Ruth, Alice and the others had been unseen listeners.

"What about the mainmast?" asked Sailor Jack. "It's sprung, as I told you it was, and unless those stays----"

"I'll look after that!" interrupted the captain. "You do as I tell you, and leave that mast to me."

"But you said that it didn't need--" persisted the second mate.

"Never you mind what I said!" and the commander's voice was harsh. "I'll look after that. Now you go forward!"

It was more in the nature of a command than is usual between captain and mate. The girls felt this, as well as did the boys. But they said nothing.

"Come along and see how we are progressing," continued Captain Brisco in more genial tones, as Jack Jepson left the cabin.

"Then you are going to be ready in time?" asked Paul.

"Ahead of time," said the commander, boastfully.

"That's good!" exclaimed Russ. "Mr. Pertell is anxious not to be delayed."

"He won't be on *my* account," Captain Brisco assured the young operator. "A few more details, and we'll be ready for sea. About time, too, for this good weather won't hold any too long down among those West Indian islands."

"Oh, are we going there?" asked Alice. "That will be delightful!"

"I thought we were to go only to Florida," Ruth remarked.

"There has been a slight change in the plans," the captain said. "Mr. Pertell and I decided on it. I believe it is not generally known yet, but there is no secret about it. I told him he could get better results by going a little farther south than merely along the Florida coast, down toward some of the West Indies, and he agreed with me."

"The West Indies," mused Alice as she followed the others about the refinished schooner. "I wonder if we will get near the 'Hole in the Wall' that Jack told about? I'd like to see it, but I suppose a hole in the water is a pretty hard thing to find."

Alice wondered whether she would see the old sailor before they went ashore again. She had taken quite a fancy to him, as had Ruth, and the old salt, on his part, seemed to like the moving picture girls more than any other members of the Comet Film Company.

"I wonder what he was doing all alone there in the cabin?" mused Alice as she hung back a little while the others were examining some changes that had been made in the dining-cabin. "It seemed as though he were trying to discover some secret panel, a passage or hiding place, or something like that. And Captain Brisco certainly was rather brusque about it. I do hope there won't be any quarreling or mutiny aboard the *Mary Ellen* when we put out to sea."

For a time Alice was a little alarmed, but she soon recovered her composure, and was able to take her part in the conversation.

The *Mary Ellen* was indeed assuming a "ship-shape" appearance. The litter that had obstructed her decks on the first visit had given place to a semblance of neatness. The craft had been newly painted and she glistened in the sun, her brass work having been highly polished.

"A few more days and we'll pull out of here," announced Captain Brisco, as they went up on deck. "Then I suppose you folks will begin to cut up all sorts of capers," and he smiled indulgently. He seemed to have recovered his good nature, or, rather, perhaps, to have summoned some of it to be used on this occasion.

"Well, we'll leave the 'cutting-up' to Mr. Switzer," said Paul with a laugh. "He's the comedian of the company."

One of the workmen approached and asked the captain some question. It seemed to be about pumps, though the girls did not understand it very clearly.

"You needn't bother to mend those valves," the commander said. "We shan't need the pumps anyhow, and there's no use putting too much time and work on the old hulk. Pertell told me to get her ready for sea so she'd last a reasonable length of time. They're going to wreck her anyhow, you know."

"Yes, I know. But those pumps----"

"Let 'em go!" the commander ordered. "Now about those stays," and he and the sailor plunged into a mass of technical details in which the moving picture girls were not interested, nor, I am sure, would you be, my readers.

In spite of all the work that had been done on the *Mary Ellen*, she was still far from being a fine ship. Many things were left undone, as they would not show in a picture. As the captain had said, Mr. Pertell was not desirous of putting too much time or expense on her, just to send her to the bottom after a few days' use. Still the craft had to be rendered seaworthy, as some views were to be taken showing her progress down the coast to the Florida Straits.

A little later Captain Brisco was called below, and he took leave of his visitors, saying he would be busy for some hours.

"Well, it's time for us to go," Ruth said. "We promised to meet daddy at dinner," she added to her sister.

Alice assented and looked around, as though in search of someone.

"What is it?" Ruth asked.

"I was looking for Jack, to say good-bye. There he is over there," and she pointed to the old man polishing the brass work of the binnacle in front of the steering wheel. "I'm going over and speak to him," she added.

Jack Jepson had his back toward Alice, and was not aware of her approach. She heard him murmuring to himself, and the words sounded strange to her--as strange as the first ones she had overheard from him that day.

"It'll never do! It'll never do!" Jack Jepson was saying. "It's criminal wrong, that's what it is. But I'll jest keep a sharp watch, an' at the first sign of danger, I'll--"

Then he heard the footfall of Alice on the deck, and turned quickly. He smiled at her, and the smile was in strange contrast to his rather ominous words. As Alice knew very little about the sea or boats, she paid no attention.

"I came to bid you good-bye," she said. "We are going back to New York now, but we'll soon be aboard here for a long stay, I hope. My, how nice everything looks!"

"Yes, but it--it's too nice!" exclaimed Jack.

"Too nice? What do you mean?" she asked wonderingly.

"Oh, well, nothing, Miss Alice. You wouldn't understand. I'm glad to see you. This isn't a mate's work, properly speakin'," he said, as he indicated the box of polish, "but then we haven't started discipline yet. We'll do that at sea."

"And I'll hope we'll soon be out on the deep," voiced Alice.

A week later the entire moving picture company that was to take part in the marine drama assembled at the dock where the *Mary Ellen* had been refitted for her last voyage. Stores and provisions had been put aboard, the *Ajax* lay stowed in the cradle on deck, and the members of the company, the moving picture operators and the manager and his assistants, had sent their baggage aboard. There was plenty of extra film.

"All aboard!" called Captain Brisco, and the gangplank was about to be hauled in. "All aboard! We won't wait for him!" he went on, speaking to the first mate and to Mr. Pertell who stood near him.

"Won't wait for whom?" Alice heard Mr. Pertell ask.

"A new hand I hired at the last minute. He's a good navigator, better than Jepson, and that's why I took him on. But he isn't here, and so we'll go without him."

"Not short-handed, are you?" asked the manager, rather anxiously.

"No, not for this voyage. I think----"

But the captain was interrupted by a shout up the wharf. A man, seemingly a sailor, came running toward the schooner.

"There he is now!" the captain exclaimed. "All aboard. Hurry up, my man, or you'll be left."

The man flung himself on the gangplank which was separated from the dock by some little distance. He scrambled aboard, and just then, Alice, standing near Jack Jepson, heard the old sailor utter an exclamation of surprise, and murmur:

"Can that be him? Can that be him--after these years? No, it can't be!"

"All aboard!" cried Captain Brisco. And the *Mary Ellen*, in charge of a fussy little tug, began moving away from the dock.



CHAPTER XIV

OVERBOARD

Alice was so impressed with what she had heard sailor Jack say, that, in spite of the desire to give all her attention to the start of the voyage, destined to be so momentous, she looked first at Jepson and then at the new arrival. The latter appeared to be an ordinary sailor, but there was a commanding air about him, as though he were used to having his own way. But he was sufficiently subservient to Captain Brisco, saluting the commander in formal fashion.

"You're late!" growled Captain Brisco.

"Yes--couldn't help it," was the almost cheerful answer. "You knew I wouldn't be left though, didn't you?"

"Well, I wasn't sure of it," Alice heard the captain answer. "Get below, and then we'll talk later."

Alice turned to see how Jack Jepson was taking this. The old salt seemed to be listening intently, but he had his back turned.

"He knows that man who just came aboard," decided Alice, "and there is something queer about it all. In fact there is something queer about this vessel and Captain Brisco. I feel as though I were in the midst of a mystery. I'm going to see if I can't solve it."

That was Alice's way. She always did like to solve puzzles, from the time when she was a small child, and she went at this one in much the same way as had been her habit in the case of the simple ones in the juvenile papers she took when a little girl.

"There's something between Captain Brisco, Jack Jepson and this new man," Alice decided. "Jack is afraid of being recognized, and yet he wants to make sure who this new man is. Can it have anything to do with the mutiny, I wonder?"

It was a question she could not answer just then. She resolved to be on the watch, to look and listen, without saying much, until she had in her mental grasp some of the loose ends of the puzzle.

Ruth was some distance off, talking to her father. Mr. DeVere, in spite of the warmth of the day, had a light silk scarf about his throat, which had pained him during the night. The other members of the company were scattered about the schooner which was being towed out to sea. Miss Pennington and Miss Dixon were waving to some young men who had come to see them off. Mr. Wellington Bunn's face wore a glum look. Perhaps he saw no chance of doing anything with his favorite role of Hamlet in this marine story that was soon to be enacted.

Alice heard Jack muttering to himself. She could not catch all the words, but she heard him say:

"Yes, it must be the same one! He hasn't changed much--not as much as I have. He won't know me. But what am I to do?"

The old salt's musings, however, were cut short, for Captain Brisco called to him.

"I say there, Mr. Jepson," ordered the commander, "will you go forward, and see how the bits are standing up under the strain of that hawser? I don't want them to pull out, and they're none too strong. Lively now!"

"Aye, aye, sir!" dutifully answered the second mate, and he shuffled off along the deck, while Captain Brisco and the new arrival went below, being, apparently, on very friendly terms.

"And that is another queer part of it," mused Alice. "That new man is supposed to be a common sailor--he must be, as all the offices, from captain down, are filled. And yet Captain Brisco treats him as an equal. I can't understand it."

None of the others of the moving picture company appeared to find anything odd in the reception of the man who had almost been left. In fact, save for Alice and Jack Jepson, no one paid any attention to him. As the captain and the new man whom he had addressed as "Hen Lacombe" went below, the attention of Alice was taken by Ruth.

"Don't you think, dear," her sister said, "that we had better get our possessions in order. I understand that some pictures are to be taken aboard the schooner here, and we will want to get our costumes out where we can easily reach them."

"I suppose so," murmured Alice. "But I wonder who he is?" she added, half unconsciously.

"What in the world are you talking about?" asked Ruth in some surprise. "Do you mean that young man who was

waving to Miss Dixon?" for a certain youth seemed very loath to bid farewell to the former variety actress.

"Yes. Who is he?" asked Alice, accepting this chance to get out of answering, though what she had meant was the identity of the mysterious Hen Lacombe, and not the youth on the dock.

"I've seen him before," Ruth said.

"Who?" asked Alice quickly, her mind still intent on the mystery.

"Why, Alice, how odd you are! That young man of whom we are speaking, to be sure. I mean I've seen him around the studio. He seems to be quite impressed by Miss Dixon."

"Yes," said Alice, vaguely. "Well, let's go below," she suggested. "You notice how nautical I'm getting," she went on.

"Forgetful you mean," supplemented Ruth. "Well, anyhow, we have fine weather for the start."

The schooner was well out from the dock now, and the pilot was in charge, so there was nothing for Captain Brisco to do for the present. He had gone to his cabin, and the stranger, or, rather, Hen Lacombe, to give him the name bestowed on him, was with the commander.

"I wish I knew what they were talking about," said Alice, and, without intending to do so, she spoke aloud.

"Who?" asked Ruth. "Really, you are saying the strangest things this morning, Sister mine!"

"Oh, I was thinking--thinking----"

Alice was rather at a loss for words to explain.

"You must have some of your new roles on the brain," went on Ruth. "I know I've been doing a lot of thinking over mine. They are nearly all nice ones, I'm glad to say, but I don't like the parts we have to take in the shipwreck. Fancy having actually to jump into the water."

That was one of the things required, according to the scenario.

"There's no danger," Alice said, as she and her sister reached the stateroom they were to share.

"Oh, but think of *sharks* in those Southern waters!"

"I'm not going to think of them," declared Alice. "Besides, we shall be in the water only a short time, and the motorboat will pick us up. It will be nice and warm."

The plan of the shipwreck included the jumping overboard of some of the company, and their rescue in small boats, or by the motorboat *Ajax*, that would follow, with Russ in it taking the moving pictures of the "thrilling scenes."

"Well, that doesn't come until toward the end," Ruth remarked, "so I'm not going to think about it until then. Now let's unpack."

Ruth and Alice had comfortable, if rather restricted, quarters in a small cabin containing two bunks. Their father was near them, and the other members of the company had rooms scattered about. The ship's crew, of course, berthed forward, and the two mates, of whom Jack Jepson was one, were quartered with the captain. Alice wondered what would be the standing of Hen Lacombe.

She learned a little later when she saw him taking his bag "aft." That meant he was to be treated as an officer. There is all the difference in the world on a sailing ship, whether a man bunks "forward" or "aft." In the latter case he is either an officer or a passenger, and in the former case he is classed as a member of the crew, a "foremast hand," and, as such, has no authority.

"Hen Lacombe is evidently someone in power," decided Alice, though she said nothing to her sister or father, or even Jack. She managed to learn, by judicious questions, that Hen, as she began to think of him, was a friend of Captain Brisco, and a sort of passenger-helper on the *Mary Ellen*.

And now that the voyage was really started, those who were to take part in the play began to consider their roles.

In brief the plan was this. The schooner, under her own sail, would proceed to the warm West Indian waters and climate, and there, when suitable surroundings were found, the taking of the main scenes in the big drama would begin.

I shall not weary you with an account of the trip down. In spite of her age, the schooner proved a good sailor, for she had been well refitted, even if she was to be wrecked. Day after day passed and the sun shone warmer as they came

farther and farther south.

Some few scenes were filmed aboard the craft, but there was not much work for anyone, and the time was most enjoyable. Even Mr. Sneed, the "human grouch," consented to smile, now and then.

They passed Key West, but did not dock, and kept on. Alice wondered if they would come near the "Hole in the Wall," but she did not like to ask, for fear of making trouble for Jack. She did not know how much of his story he wanted known to those aboard the ship.

It was a warm, sunny day, and Mr. Pertell had announced that he would begin some of the more important scenes of the drama in a short time. The *Mary Ellen* was plowing through the blue waters, bending over under a good wind. Nearly all the members of the company were out on deck, under awnings. Alice saw Jack Jepson at some work on the port rail, and noticed Hen Lacombe and the captain stroll toward him. The two latter seemed to converse for a few minutes, when suddenly there was a heavy lurch and roll to the craft.

"Mind your helm there!" sang out Captain Brisco angrily to the steersman. At the same time there rang out a cry from Hen Lacombe.

"Man overboard! Man overboard!"

Alice, startled, leaped to her feet. Jack Jepson had disappeared!



CHAPTER XV

"SAIL HO!"

Alice DeVere was not an ordinary sort of girl. She may have been, once, but that was before her advent in moving pictures. There had been times when a sudden emergency would cause her to feel faint, if not actually to succumb to that interesting ailment, which is so useful, especially in stories and books.

But Alice, who was the nearest to the scene of what had just happened, neither fainted, nor became unduly excited. She had seen too many emergencies in the work of taking moving pictures to become "rattled," which is not used in a slangy sense at all, but merely to indicate that one's nerves vibrate too rapidly. Consequently, after her first scream, Alice was almost as calm and collected as could be expected of a veteran sailor.

"Man overboard!" Alice cried, echoing the shout of Hen Lacombe, who, she noticed, after his first hesitation, began lowering a boat, or trying to, for it needed two at that task.

"I'll help!" cried Alice rushing to the aid of the strange man who seemed so friendly with Captain Brisco.

"Oh--you----!" he exclaimed, with a swift look at her. Then he resumed the work of loosing the ropes so they would run freely in the pulley blocks of the davits.

Meanwhile Captain Brisco had bawled out an order to the helmsman to bring the ship up in the wind. A sailor had tossed overboard a life-ring, and then came to help Lacombe lower the boat, for Alice found it beyond her strength, eager as she was.

"There he is!" cried Russ, as he rushed to the rail beside Alice. He pointed to the water. Fortunately the sea was smooth, and rising and falling on the waves could be seen the head of the old sailor.

"Oh! Oh!" gasped Ruth, who glided over to the side of Alice. "If--if a shark should come now."

"There aren't any around here!" declared Russ. He did not know whether there were or not, but he said that to make the girls feel more comfortable. After all, if there were sharks, whatever he said would be of no effect, and it was better to take the best view of it, he thought.

"Lower away!" cried Hen Lacombe, and the boat went down to the water. Two sailors, beside himself, slid down the ropes into it, and took the oars. They cast off the davit blocks, and began rowing toward the bobbing head. Old Jack could swim well, it seemed, in spite of his age. The water was warm, and it was broad daylight, so he was in comparatively little danger--except from sharks and from the fact that he had on his clothes, which would soon become soaked and hamper him.

But no sharks appeared; that menacing triangular fin which marks them was not seen cutting the water, and no big twelve-foot man-eater was observed to turn on his back in order to bring his curious, under-shot mouth with its rows of keen teeth to bear on poor Jack Jepson.

If a shark had appeared, it would probably have put an end to the plans of Mr. Pertell to have his company give an idea of shipwreck by leaping into the water. No one would have jumped into those waters had they been shark-infested. But, as I have said, none of the tigers of the deep showed, and, a little later, Jack was being lifted into the small boat. They had reached him just when his strength was about exhausted.

"Oh, have they saved him?" asked Miss Pennington, coming on deck very pale. Alice said afterward she had not had time to put on her "war paint."

"I--I can't bear to look!" faltered Miss Dixon, following her friend. "Tell me dear--is he--is he dead?" she asked of Alice.

"Dead! No, of course not!" said Alice, none too politely. "Don't be silly! He just fell overboard, and they got him back again; that's all."

Miss Dixon looked angry and flounced back to her cabin with her chum. Jack and his rescuers were hoisted up in the boat, the other sailors hauling on the ropes, the blocks of which were hooked fast to rings in the bow and stern posts of the rowing craft.

"Well, you tried to leave us rather suddenly," said Mr. Pertell. "Don't go trying that again, Jack--at least until we finish making the pictures," he went on with a whimsical smile. "You're in too many important scenes to be lost that way."

"I haven't any fancy that way myself," said Jack, who seemed little the worse for his unexpected bath.

"How did it happen?" asked Captain Brisco of his mate, though it seemed as though he had been near enough to have seen for himself.

"Why, I was standing near the rail," Jack explained, "talkin' to Mr. Lacombe, here," and he indicated the strange man, "when, all at once the ship gives a lurch, and--well, I went over, that's all I guess," and he looked at Lacombe, as though to get him to confirm the account.

"Yes that's right," said the other. "I--I tried to grab him, but I was too late. I nearly went over myself," he added, grimly.

"Yes," assented the old salt, "you did," and he shot a look at the other.

Did Alice fancy it, or did Lacombe wince, and shrink back? And did a look pass between him and Captain Brisco--a look full of meaning?

Alice was puzzling over these questions in her own mind, when the helmsman spoke.

"It wasn't *my* fault," he said. "I was steering all right, but Captain Brisco came and spoke to me and handed me a paper. I took one hand off the wheel, and the----"

"No one has said it was your fault," broke in the commander quickly. "I was giving you a copy of the sailing orders for the day. I wouldn't have bothered you if I had known a puff of wind and a big wave were coming along together, to snatch the wheel out of your grip. But it wasn't your fault. However, no harm is done. You had better get below, Mr. Jepson, and put on some dry clothes. Mr. Lacombe will stand watch until you feel all right again."

"Oh, I'll be all right in a little while," Jack said. "I don't need no one to stand my trick on deck. I'll be back shortly."

He went below, the water dripping from him. The ship was put back on her course. The excitement had not lasted long.

"Too bad you didn't have a camera ready, Russ," said Paul to the operator, when matters were normal aboard the *Mary Ellen* once more. "You might have filmed a good rescue scene."

"I was too much excited to think about that," Russ admitted. "Besides, we are going to have plenty of rescue stuff in a few days, and this wasn't a particularly thrilling one. Poor old Jack! I wonder how it feels to fall overboard?"

"Not very pleasant," Paul said. He had done it more than once in the interests of the pictures.

Alice, going below for something a little later, met the old salt on his way to the deck again, he having changed to dry garments.

"Oh, are you all right?" she asked anxiously, for she and her sister, as well as Mr. DeVere, had taken a liking to Jepson. "Are you all right?"

"All right, Miss Alice," he replied. "No harm done at all."

"I thought sailors never fell overboard," she said, half jokingly. "I supposed they were so sure-footed that accidents like that never happened to them."

"They don't--not usual like, Miss," said Jack with that earnest, honest air that characterized him.

"Then how did you come to do it?"

"I--I didn't do it, Miss," Jack answered. "I didn't *fall* overboard."

"You didn't?" cried Alice, not noticing the accent Jepson put on one word.

"No, Miss. Not exactly."

He looked around as though to make sure no one was listening, and then, in a hoarse whisper, he said:

"I didn't *fall* overboard. I was *tossed!*"

Then, before she could ask him what he meant, he gave her a warning glance, and passed on. Just as he did so, Captain Brisco came along the passage way.

"I was just coming down to see how you were," he said, with a quick look at Alice. "I didn't know you were here, Miss DeVere," he continued, rather awkwardly. "Hope the accident didn't upset you."

"Oh no," she said, glad that it was rather dark, and that the commander could not notice how pale she had become at hearing the ominous words of the old sailor.

"Accidents will happen, but they don't always end so luckily," the captain went on. Jack Jepson had passed up on deck, and Alice, not feeling in the mood for talking, passed to her cabin. Captain Brisco, after a moment of hesitation, went up on deck again, and, had anyone observed him, they would have seen him in close conversation with Hen Lacombe. The two men spoke in low tones.

Jack Jepson was soon himself again, and on duty as though nothing had happened. But he had created a very queer state of mind in Alice DeVere. Her suspicions were increased, and she asked herself a multitude of questions she could not answer. Nor dared she repeat them, even to her sister.

"If he were tossed overboard, who did it?" she asked herself. "And why? The only one near him was Lacombe, and what object could he have in wanting to drown Jack? Oh, I can't understand it! I *must* ask Jack what he meant."

This was not so easy to do as Alice had expected. She wanted to speak to the old sailor privately, but there was no chance.

That afternoon there began the taking of some of the more important scenes of the marine drama. These scenes were those that had to be filmed on the ship itself, and they kept everyone busy. Besides, Alice did not want to make too obvious an effort to talk to the old salt, as she feared Captain Brisco would become suspicious. There was a nameless mystery in the air that had its effect on Alice. Ruth noticed a difference in her sister, and questioned her about it, but Alice was able to say it was due to the difficult and exacting work of the new drama, and, in part, it was.

Several days passed, and she had had no chance to speak to Jack. Each day was filled with work, or rehearsals, and some of the films had to be taken several times, due to the uncertain footing on the deck of the ship, which produced awkward motions on the part of the actors.

It was on a warm afternoon, with a hint of a storm in the atmosphere, when Mr. Pertell said:

"Well, I guess that will do for a while. This will pretty nearly bring us up to the shipwreck scene. We shall have to make a landing on one of the islands here, to get the proper background."

They were then well down among the West Indies.

"Where do we land?" asked Alice, who was on deck with her sister, standing near Jack Jepson, who was acting as lookout, with a telescope in his hand.

"Well, I'm not particular," Mr. Pertell said. "Perhaps Jack can suggest a good place."

"Well, I know something about the locality here," the old sailor answered, and he looked at Alice with a friendly wink. "I shouldn't want to go ashore at the place where I escaped from after that mutiny," he went on. "They might not want to let me go again."

"No, that's so," agreed Mr. Pertell. "It might not be just the thing, though you could prove your innocence."

"No, I can't! That's the trouble!" cried Jack, who had told his story to the manager. "I don't want to be caught, and put in jail. I'm going to keep away from that island where I was locked up."

"Which one was it?" asked Ruth.

"I don't know the name," Jack said, "but I can tell it the minute I set eyes on it. I don't want to go there. I had enough----"

Jack paused suddenly. The glass went to his eye, and he called out:

"Sail ho!"

"Where away?" demanded the helmsman.

"Two points off on the lee bow. She's a small steamer, and she--she's flying the British flag!" added the old man.

A strange look of fear came over his face.

CHAPTER XVI

THE ACCUSATION

"What's this?" demanded Captain Brisco, coming on deck just then. "What's up?"

"Sail ho!" repeated Jack Jepson. "Over there, Captain!" and he pointed, and extended the telescope. Alice noticed that the hand of the old salt trembled, though usually he was as steady as the proverbial surgeon.

"Hum! Yes. One of the English revenue ships," remarked Captain Brisco. "It's the first one we've met down here."

"It is a British vessel, isn't it?" asked Jack Jepson, and there was a queer strain in his voice.

"Yes," replied his superior. "What of it?"

"Oh, nothin' sir! Nothin'!"

But Alice thought it was something.

"Well, we haven't any need to speak to her," went on Captain Brisco. "We're going to anchor soon."

"Anchor?" asked Jepson.

"Yes, they want to take some of their pictures!" It was evident to Alice, from the tone of voice in which Captain Brisco spoke, that he had little sympathy with the work of the film actors. But he had been hired to do his part with the ship, and must carry out his agreement with Mr. Pertell.

The captain handed back the glass, and went to consult with the manager about making a landing. They were near several small islands, any one of which would probably do as a background for some of the picture-play scenes.

Left to himself Jack Jepson took another long look at the oncoming steamer.

Alice watched him curiously.

"Yes, she's a lime-juicer," he remarked, and something like a sigh escaped him.

"A--a lime-juicer?" repeated Alice in some surprise. "I thought you said she was a *steamer*."

"So she is. But we old sailors used to call all British ships 'lime-juicers,' because they used to be the only ones that was compelled by law to carry lime juice."

"Why lime juice?" Alice wanted to know.

"To prevent scurvy, Miss. Lime juice, potatoes or anything like that will keep sailors from the scurvy disease, Miss. They found it out, the Britishers did, and made their ships carry such stuff. Lime juice is easier to stow away than potatoes, and every sailor had to have his share.

"Scurvy is a bad disease, Miss. It's terrible, and though lots of fun was made of the lime juice British ships, they done their duty, Miss. It got so other nations had to fall into line. And, though lime juice isn't as needful as it was, 'cause they have other things that do as well, perhaps, I always think of a Britisher as a lime-juicer."

"I see," murmured Alice. "Yes, I can see the English flag," she went on, as she looked through the glass Jack passed to her. "She is headed right for us, too."

"That's what I make out, Miss. And I wish it was my watch below; I sure do, Miss!"

"Why, you aren't thinking that they may be after you, are you, Jack? After you on that old mutiny charge?"

"They might be, Miss," he said in a whisper, looking cautiously around. "You see that charge isn't dead, and then there's the one of escapin' from an English prison. They might overlook the mutiny, especially as they may not have all their witnesses now--some of 'em may be dead. But an English prison officer never forgets, nor forgives, an escape, and the law doesn't either. If they was to see me, I'd be taken back to stand the charges ag'in me."

"But how would they know you?" asked Alice. "Besides, it isn't at all likely that anyone on that vessel had anything to do with your being taken into custody on the mutiny charge. That was years ago."

"I know Miss, but they might remember me, even if I have changed a lot. And this is mostly English waters around

here. English islands, too. It was somewhere about here I was imprisoned. Before I set foot on land, I'm going to find out if it's English, and if it is, I'm goin' to stay on board. I'm not goin' to take any chances."

"But can't they arrest you at sea, if there should be such a possibility that they recognized you?"

"Not if I'm three miles from land, I think. Still, I may be wrong about that. I wish I hadn't come on this voyage, that's a fact. I don't like the sight of that English flag."

"Don't worry," advised Alice. "There isn't one chance in a thousand that you would be recognized after these years. In the first place, you have changed a lot. And, in the second place, probably the English officers who arrested you, and the others, are in some other part of the world now. Why do you think they may be on that steamer?"

"Well, things don't change down here as much as you might think," replied Jack, as he and Alice watched the steamer coming nearer. "And an Englishman is less likely to change than anybody else, Miss. He'll often stay in the same berth until he dies. So it's likely some of the same officers who were around here when I was arrested are here yet. And they may be on that vessel."

"But how can they recognize you?" Alice persisted.

"Well, if they didn't know me, they might know this ship."

"This ship! Why, this is only a small vessel, and yours was a big five-master."

"I know, Miss, I know," said Jack, with a nervous look over his shoulder. "But here's a secret I haven't told to anyone yet. This may be the *Mary Ellen*, but she used to be the *Halcyon*!"

Alice started back in surprise.

"The *Halcyon*!" she gasped. "How could it be?"

"This way, Miss. They built her over, cut down her length, and changed her so hardly anybody would recognize her. But I knew the *Mary Ellen* for the *Halcyon* almost as soon as I came aboard."

"And is that why you acted so--so queer?"

"Partly--yes. You see she was first the *Mary Ellen* and the mutineers named her the *Halcyon*. Then, when she was rebuilt she became *Mary Ellen* again."

"But I never knew they could make vessels over," Alice protested.

--"Oh, yes, it's often done," the sailor assured her. "This certainly was the old *Halcyon*, as she was called when the mutineers had her, and anyone who had sailed in her would know it. A sailor's eye can't be deceived. There's others on board as know it, too."

"Others here? Of the mutinous crew?"

"Hush, Miss, if you please! Not so loud! Yes, others who were in the mutiny, but who got off scott free, while I was the one to suffer. But they're tryin' to keep under cover. There's a game afoot, but I'll spoil it if I can--that is, if this British steamer don't make trouble for me."

Alice's head seemed to swim. She was getting into the depths of the mystery now with a vengeance. What did it all mean? To what did Jack have reference? Could it be that Captain Brisco, and the man with whom he was so friendly, were in a plot?

Alice felt as if she must tell someone. It was too big a secret for her to keep to herself.

One thing seemed necessary. She must rid Jack of some of his fear of being arrested again.

"But if the ship is changed so, how could any of the British officers, provided any are on that steamer, recognize her?" Alice asked.

"I don't know how, but I'm sure they could," said Jack, rather unreasonably. "And you mark my words. They'll see us and in spite of our change of rig, they will want to speak us. A sailor never forgets a ship. Of course there may be no officers on that steamer who would know the old *Halcyon*, but ag'in, there may be. I'm afeered, Miss."

"Oh, but you needn't be. Mr. Pertell will make it all right even if---"

"He isn't bigger than Johnnie Bull," said Jack ominously, "though Mr. Pertell is a good friend of mine. Ha! Didn't I tell

you? There they come right for us, and they're signallin' us to lay to."

It was evident that something had taken place aboard the steamer. A signal flag broke out at her mast, and Captain Brisco, seeing it, exclaimed impatiently:

"What can they want with us?"

"They want to talk, that's evident," said Hen Lacombe, who stood near the commander.

"But what about?"

"We'll soon know."

As the *Mary Ellen* lay almost motionless on the sea, for she had been brought up sharply, the steamer approached. It was so calm that she could come quite close without danger of a collision. A man, evidently an officer, hailed through a megaphone. Jack dared not desert his place as lookout.

"What vessel is that?" demanded the officer of the British steamer.

"The *Mary Ellen*, from New York," answered Captain Brisco. "Out on a moving picture cruise. We're in a hurry."

"Better not be," was the exasperating comment. "There's someone here who wants to ask you a few questions."

Another figure joined the speaker, and at the sight of this second officer, old Jack Jepson groaned.

"I knew it! I knew it," he whispered to Alice. "That's the man in charge of the revenue cutter who arrested me years ago. See! He recognizes me! I thought this would happen."

It was evident that something out of the ordinary was taking place.

"*Mary Ellen* ahoy!" called the second officer. "If you didn't used to be the *Halcyon*, I miss my guess. And there's a man aboard you I want! There he stands!" and he pointed an accusing finger at Jack Jepson.



CHAPTER XVII

THE STORM

The old sailor seemed to shrink down in his clothes and become smaller. He cast an appealing glance at Alice who stood near him.

"See!" he murmured. "What did I tell you?"

"It may be all right yet," she answered. "Surely after these years they can do nothing to you, especially when you were not guilty."

"Ah, but it's the escape from the prison that hangs over me," he said. "They want me more for that than on the mutiny charge. Oh, what shall I do?"

"Stay here and 'face the music,' as Russ or Paul would say," suggested Alice. "I'll speak to my father, and to Mr. Pertell. You are an American citizen, and----"

But she had no time for further advice. Again came the hail from the steamer.

"Stand by there, *Mary Ellen*, or *Halcyon*, as your name used to be," was the sharp order. "I'm going to send a boat aboard you. We want that man!" and once more he pointed accusingly at Jack.

"I don't know what you're talking about," blustered Captain Brisco. "That man is my second mate, and you can't take him from me that way. This isn't war time," and he seemed disposed to protect Jack.

"Don't let them take me, Captain!" the old sailor pleaded. "You know what it means. Don't let them take me away!"

"I won't!" declared Captain Brisco, and for the moment the heart of Alice warmed to him. She fancied she had misjudged him. But as she looked at him, she saw a look on his face that made her doubt. It was a look that made his words seem insincere. And when the moving picture girl saw the captain speaking in an aside to Hen Lcomb, her doubts were redoubled.

"Stand by!" someone on the steamer ordered. "We're sending a boat to take the prisoner."

"This is a pretty how-d'-do!" blustered Captain Brisco. "They're going to leave me short-handed, and just at a time when I'm likely to need every man I can get, too," and he cast an anxious look around the horizon. It had suddenly become quite dark. A bank of clouds, slate colored, and fringed with an ominous yellow, had gathered in the west, and there was a moaning in the air as though a far-off wind were sending a message to those in peril to beware of its breath.

The sea, too, had a glassy look. The big waves rose sullenly, and sank back into troughs, with an oily smooth motion as though they resented being thus confined. It was like the action of some raging beast in leash. There was a curious oppressiveness in the air, too, and more than one found difficulty in breathing.

"What is it? Oh, what is it?" asked Ruth, as she came toward her sister. "I feel as though something terrible were going to happen."

"Something *has* happened!" Alice exclaimed. "They've got poor old Jack! Isn't it a shame, when everything was going so nicely?"

"Got him!" questioned Ruth. "What do you mean?"

"It's those Britishers! They recognized this ship as the one on which the mutiny occurred. She's been built over--the ship I mean--but the steamer knew her--I mean some officer did. And they're going to take Jack away. You know he told us how he broke out of jail, after he was locked up on an unjust charge. Well, they want him for that, but he doesn't want him to go--at least he pretends he doesn't."

Alice paused for breath--she needed it.

"Well!" exclaimed Ruth. "You may understand what you mean, but I don't, my dear. Who wants whom, and who doesn't want whom--and what?"

Thereupon Alice explained how Captain Brisco had declared Jack should not be taken, and yet how Alice, herself, believed he would give him up.

"But what does it all mean--that enmity you say Captain Brisco has against Jack?" Ruth asked Alice, for Alice spoke

about the time Jack had fallen overboard, and mentioned how the sailor had said he was tossed over the rail.

"I don't know what it means," the younger girl replied. "It is all queer and mysterious, and it's getting worse. But I think there is some secret between Captain Brisco and that Hen Lcomb that Jack has found out, and they're afraid he'll tell. That's why I think they would be glad to see him taken away--no matter what happened to him. It's all very well for Captain Brisco to say he doesn't want Jack to go, but I believe he's glad this happened."

"Oh, Alice! What a thing to say!"

"I don't care! I believe it!"

All this while preparations had been under way aboard the steamer to lower a small boat, but there seemed to be some delay.

Meanwhile Jack Jepson remained as lookout on the *Mary Ellen*, though there was no need of him there, for the schooner was now merely drifting, with sails aback, and the steamer, too, was at the call of the wind and currents.

"Come on, mate!" hoarsely whispered a sailor to Jack. "Slip below, mate, and we'll hide you. If they try to take you, we'll stand 'em off. I don't like the Britishers anyhow. I was shanghaied into one of their lime-juicers once, an' I never forgot it! Slip below!"

"No, I'll take my medicine!" said Jack grimly. "Might as well get it done with. This thing has been hangin' over my head a number of years now, and I'll be glad to hear the last of it. It's a terrible thing for an innocent man."

"Perhaps some way may be found for clearing you," suggested Alice. "I'll speak to my father. He knows some prominent lawyers in New York, and they will induce the government to take up your case. Go quietly, Jack, and we'll do all we can for you."

"Oh, I shan't raise a row, Miss, never fear. No good'd come of that, and it would only make trouble. I'll go quietly enough."

"Ha! What is going on?" asked Mr. DeVere, who had been down below. "Has anything happened?"

Alice and Ruth tried to tell him at once, the former eager to enlist his sympathies in Jack's cause. Mr. DeVere promised readily enough.

"Though I can't hold out any hope for you," he said. "I know nothing of law, but international affairs are always slow."

"But I ought to get justice in the end, ought I not?" asked Jack, respectfully.

"You ought, my man, and I'll do all I can for you," said Mr. DeVere.

"Oh, what a pretty sight!" exclaimed the voice of Miss Dixon, as she emerged from a companionway with her chum, Miss Pennington. "Isn't it romantic--stopping to speak to a steamer at sea?"

"Delightful," agreed Miss Pennington. "I wonder if the captain of the steamer will ask us to tea? It's a British vessel, and Englishmen are so fond of tea."

"Yes, and they are so romantic and good-looking," agreed Miss Dixon. "But perhaps this is only for moving pictures."

"Oh, pshaw! Perhaps it is!" sighed her companion, and the two of them, who had been taking surreptitious glances in mirrors, enclosed in the flaps of their bags, ceased "primping," until they could be sure whether or not there was any object in it.

"What's it all about?" asked Miss Dixon again.

"Oh, they're going to take one of our men, I believe," said Pop Snooks, the property "angel," as the ladies often called him.

"Oh dear! What are they? Pirates?" gasped Miss Pennington.

"No, it's Jack Jepson they're after. Some old charge, I believe."

"Ha! I knew something would happen on this voyage!" exclaimed Mr. Pepper Sneed. "I felt it in my bones all along."

"Good thing you're not disappointed," murmured Alice.

"Oh dear!" sighed her sister. "It's too bad. And I liked Jack so."

"So did I," returned Alice. "But they're a long while sending that boat."

It did seem so, for there were no signs yet, of one being lowered over the side, though Captain Brisco, after the command to lay to, had ordered his accommodation ladder lowered to receive the visitors.

Then came another hail from the steamer.

"*Mary Ellen* ahoy!"

"Aye, aye!"

"We won't send a boat right away. A hurricane is sweeping up fast, and this is a bad locality in which to be caught," called one of the steamer's officers through a megaphone. "We'll have to get out of here, and so had you better. There's no sea-room here. We'll pick you up later, and don't forget you are in English waters, and subject to our orders. We're going to have that man!"

"Well, if you put it that way, of course I'll have to give in," said Captain Brisco. "I'll wait for you after the blow."

"Well, that's a respite, anyhow, but not a very pleasant one," said Alice.

"No," agreed Jack Jepson, who breathed easier now. "We're in for a bad storm, I reckon. We'll have to make everything snug."

"Attention!" once more came the hail from the steamer, and when Captain Brisco answered, he was ordered to follow a certain course by compass, as being safest.

"Then I can pick you up!" the steamer captain cried as the propellers began to churn the water. The British vessel swept away, leaving Jack Jepson still on the schooner, but under threat of arrest.

Then the forerunner of the storm came, filling the sails of the *Mary Ellen*, and heeling her over until the lee scuppers were awash.

"Make everything snug!" cried Captain Brisco. "It's coming on to blow great guns!"



CHAPTER XVIII

GRINDING AWAY

Events aboard the *Mary Ellen* did not transpire at all slowly. In a comparatively short space of time she had been converted from an old hulk into a good sailing vessel, she had put to sea with a party of moving picture workers, including a sailor accused of mutiny, who had broken jail. She had been stopped by the English ship, and now the old schooner was starting to scud before the blast of a hurricane. For the time being the accusation against Jack Jepson was forgotten.

"Lively now, everyone!" cried Captain Brisco. "When a storm breaks down here, it isn't any child's play. Double reefs in all sails, and two men at the wheel. Lash everything fast, pass life-lines, and passengers keep below."

"Oh, but I want to see the storm!" exclaimed Alice.

"Oh, how can you!" remonstrated Ruth. "It is going to be--awful!"

And indeed, if the evidence of sky and sea, and the moaning of the wind, were any indication, a great storm was in prospect.

The billows that had been rolling with oily smoothness now began to show little feathery crests of foam, and they were following one another with greater quickness, as if impatient to be at their shattering work.

The wind seemed most ominous of all. It was as though it came from afar off, down behind the horizon line that showed black, with a fringe of angry yellow in the west. A low, mumbling, roaring, moaning wind it was, that whistled mournfully through the rigging of the schooner, and howled down the companionways.

"Oh dear!" sighed Ruth, as she slipped her arm into that of her sister, and started for their cabin. "Come on, Alice. I'm afraid!"

"Nonsense! What of? Nothing has happened--yet."

"No, but there is going to be a terrible storm!"

"And I just love a blow. I've never seen one at sea, and, as this may be the only chance I'll get, I'm not going to miss it. Stay up with me, Ruth. Don't be like those sillies, and go below," and she motioned to Miss Pennington and Miss Dixon who were scurrying for cover, as the wind and the sea increased.

"Well, I'll stay up a little while," agreed Ruth. "But I--I'm afraid all the same."

"Nonsense!" cried Alice gaily. "We have a good ship under us. It went through a mutiny, and I guess it can weather a storm."

"That's just the point--can it?" asked Ruth in a low voice.

"What do you mean?" Alice asked in a curiously strained voice.

"I mean that this is an old vessel, 'made over,' as we would say of a dress, Alice, it can't be as good and strong as a new one would be, and in a storm----"

"Oh, don't be nervous!" broke in Alice. "Here, I'll ask Mr. Blake," and she stopped the first mate who was hurrying to and fro directing the men at their work of making everything snug below and aloft.

"Isn't she safe, Mr. Blake?" Alice appealed.

"Who?" the first mate wanted to know.

"This ship."

"I--I think so," he said. "Yes, surely," he added quickly. "We will ride out the storm, never fear. It hasn't gotten here yet, and we may only get the outer edge of it. But you must excuse me now," and he hastened along the deck.

"There!" cried Alice. "What did I tell you?" she asked triumphantly.

"Well, I'll stay here with you a little while," Ruth agreed. "Then I'm going below and----"

"Bundle up all your possessions and sit on a life preserver," broke in Alice with a laugh. "Oh, Ruth, you are--"

hopeless!"

"Yes, but look at that!" and the older sister pointed to the west. There had been a rapid change. There was more yellow in the clouds now and less blackness, though there was enough of that ominous color too. "Doesn't it scare you, Alice?"

"Not so much, no. Of course I've never been in a bad storm down here, and I don't know what they do to one. But I think we'll weather it, as the sailors say. But I wonder what Mr. Pertell is doing?"

She motioned to the manager who was seen amidships, talking to Russ, the chief camera operator. They were near the big motorboat *Ajax*, which still rested in the cradle on deck.

Mr. DeVere was also in conversation with the manager and his chief helper.

"Let's go over and see what it is," suggested Alice. "Maybe they are frightened too."

"I wouldn't blame them," murmured Ruth, with a nervous glance over her shoulder at the oncoming storm.

The two girls joined their father and the others. Pop Snooks, the property man, who could make almost anything from a brick wall to a king's palace, on short notice, was called into the consultation.

"I'm sure they're going to do something!" Alice exclaimed, as she noticed Mr. Pertell beckon Captain Brisco to him. And when the girls reached the group they learned what was afoot.

"Why yes, you'd have time for some pictures before the storm gets here," Captain Brisco was saying. "It's evidently going to be slow in breaking."

"And it wouldn't be too rough for the motorboat?" asked Mr. Pertell.

"Oh, no. She's built dory fashion, and bigger waves than these wouldn't swamp her. It's a question though, if your man is game."

"Oh, don't worry about me!" exclaimed Russ Dalwood. "I'll make pictures as long as the light will hold good. How is the boat? Is she all ready to start?"

"All ready to put into the water," the captain assured him. "She has been that way since we reached this locality. What do you say?" he asked the manager. "Shall we lower away?"

"I think so," was the answer from Mr. Pertell. "I want to get some views of the schooner sailing off before the storm. It will be a sort of introduction to the shipwreck that is to come later."

"All right!" exclaimed Russ. "That suits me. I'll get the camera and films ready. I'll need a helper."

"Oh, of course," agreed the manager. "You can't manage the boat and the engine and work the camera too. Grinding away at the film will keep you busy, especially as the water's a bit rough."

"A *bit* rough!" exclaimed Russ with a smile. "I like the way you say it. But the rougher it is the better effect we'll get on the film. I'll be ready when you are, Captain Brisco."

"All right, I'll have the boat over at once," and the commander gave the necessary orders for lowering the *Ajax* over the side. This had been provided for when she was cradled, so there was little delay at this task.

"Are we to do any 'stunts,' while Russ is taking pictures?" asked Alice of the manager.

"No, you are just to stand around on deck, and look a bit anxious. You are supposed to be an old-time passenger packet you know, on a long voyage, and you are running away from the storm. We don't want many feet of this film--just enough to indicate what is to come. The real shipwreck--that is the imitation of it--will come later, when this storm blows over. Get on the side where the motorboat will be," the manager directed, "and line up along the rail."

While Russ was "loading" his camera, Ruth and Alice watched the sailors getting the *Ajax* ready. The engine had been tested, and seemed to work well. Jack Jepson came along with a small keg of water, and a bundle done up in a piece of sail cloth.

"What's that for?" asked Alice.

"Provisions and water," answered the old sailor.

"But they're only going to be away a few minutes," the girl objected. "They won't want anything to eat or drink."

"It's a rule of th' sea," said old Jack, "never to put a boat over the side without provisioning and watering her. You never can tell what will happen on th' ocean. I've seen boats put out just for a little row around, and a fog would come up, and they'd be away nearly a week. And when they didn't have any water or food aboard--well, Miss, them's not nice things to talk about to ladies," he said simply. And Alice understood.

The storm seemed to be holding off, at least for a time. Far away the dark mass of the British steamer could be seen. The *Ajax* was soon ready, and lowered to the heaving water.

"Mr. Sneed, you get in and help Russ," ordered Mr. Pertell. "You know something about motor-boats, don't you?"

"A little, yes. But I--er--I don't like to get in one when a storm is coming up."

"Nonsense!" the manager ejaculated. "There's no danger! You are going only a short distance away from the schooner, to get some views of her as she rides the waves. It will make a good film, the coming storm, and the waters rising and falling. Get aboard, Mr. Sneed, and do whatever Russ wants you to. He'll be busy with the camera so you will have to steer, and run the engine. The last won't bother you though, for it has a self-starter on and a gear clutch. You'll be in no danger."

Mr. Sneed did not seem anxious to go. However, orders were orders, and members of the company, even Mr. Wellington Bunn, thought twice before refusing Mr. Pertell. So, when Russ came up with his cameras, bringing two in case of emergency, Mr. Sneed was already in the boat, which was rising and falling at the foot of the accommodation ladder over the side of the schooner.

"All aboard!" sang out Russ gaily, as he prepared to descend, his cameras having been lowered to Mr. Sneed by a rope. "Look pleasant, girls, you're going to have your pictures took," and he laughed.

There was an ominous hush in the air now. The moaning of the wind seemed to have died down, at least for the time being, but the waves were higher, the swells were long, and did not break much.

It was lighter, also, though the light was of a sickly yellowish cast. However, it would serve for a few pictures.

"Let her go, Pepper!" called Russ to his actor-helper and the motor whirred, as the *Ajax* started away from the side of the schooner. Russ, setting his camera up on the platform made for it in the bow, began grinding at the crank, taking many views of the pitching, tossing schooner as it rose and fell on the bosom of the heaving ocean.

"I don't like this!" exclaimed Mr. Sneed, when a dash of spray wet him, as he sat at the wheel. "I wish I hadn't come. I'm sure something will happen!"

"Something sure *will*, if you don't keep her headed up into the seas," declared Russ. "We'll be swamped, that's what will happen. Steady now. I'm getting some good ones," and he worked away at the camera, while the schooner sailed farther and farther away. Russ wanted to give the idea of distance on the film.



CHAPTER XIX

DISABLED

"How much longer you going to be?" asked Mr. Pepper Sneed, as he saw Russ change slightly the position of the camera.

"Oh, not much longer now," was the answer. "I have about all they'll want, I guess. This is only a sort of 'cut-in' effect, anyhow--a preliminary to the grand performance that is to come later. Poor old *Mary Ellen*, we'll soon see the last of her, I expect."

"Burr-r-r!" exclaimed Mr. Sneed as he shifted his helm. "Don't talk that way. It sounds rather prophetic, you know, seeing the last of the ship, and all that, you know."

"Well, I meant that they're going to sink her. You knew that, didn't you?"

"Oh, yes, worse luck! I'm to be one of the last to jump over the side, I believe. I don't like it."

"Well, it won't be for long," Russ said. "It will be all over in a few minutes--I mean the shipwreck proper, though there'll be a lot of rescue scenes, and then the castaways on an island, and all that sort of thing. Put me over a little more to the left, Pepper. I can get a fine view that way, with the light shining on the passengers at the rail."

He clicked away at the camera crank, and then exclaimed:

"No, no! I said to the left. You're putting me to the right."

"Oh, so I am. I was watching that storm. I don't like the looks of things, Russ. I believe we're going to be in for it sooner than they thought."

"It does look as though it were going to burst," Russ agreed, as he looked up from the "finder" of his machine long enough to take a glimpse at the weather. "Mr. Pertell said he'd signal us with a flag when he thought we had enough, but I don't see anything of a signal, do you?"

"No," answered the gloomy actor, who had not been needed in the present scenes. "And I wish I *could* see it. It's getting too rough out here for me, even if we have a good boat," and he adjusted the gasoline feed to give a little more power to the engine.

"Well, it's getting almost too dark to get any more pictures, anyhow," Russ declared. "We sure are in for a blow. It's coming up fast too. We'd better get back to the ship without waiting for a signal. They may have hoisted one, that we didn't see."

"That's it, I think!" cried the other. "Say, where is the schooner, anyhow?"

Russ, who was taking the tripod from his camera looked up quickly.

"Why, can't you see her?" asked the young operator.

"No, and I don't believe you can, either, nor can your camera find her. She's disappeared!"

"Disappeared? Nonsense!" Russ cried. "It's just that the sea mist has come up and hidden her. It will blow away in a moment. Say, but it is getting rough!"

Well might he say that, for he could hardly keep his footing on the platform where he had stood to make the views. He came down into the half-covered cabin which formed the forward part of the *Ajax*.

"Well, where is the schooner, if you can see her?" growled Pepper Sneed. "Steer for her if you can sight her--I can't!"

He seemed morose and angry. Perhaps it was just fear. Russ did not stop to determine that point. The operator took the steering wheel, first standing up to get an idea of his course.

"Say, it *is* getting dark!" he cried. "Well, we'll have to go it blind. We'll pick up the schooner in a minute or two, I expect. She ought to be right over there," and he pointed.

"Where?" asked Mr. Sneed.

"There," said Russ again.

"Humph! You're away off!" declared his companion. "The last I saw her, and I was headed right for her, she was over there," and he indicated a direction differing from that Russ had shown by at least forty-five degrees.

"I wish they'd show a light!" Russ murmured as he tried to peer through the mist and the gathering darkness. "Why don't they show a light? We could see that!"

"Maybe they don't know we're lost," suggested Pepper Sneed.

"Lost!" cried Russ. "We're not lost! We'll be up to them in a minute or so, but I do wish they'd show a light."

The motorboat *Ajax* was chugging over the heaving water at good speed, but as far as the eyes of either of her occupants could see, she might have been driving straight into the utter desolation of a vast ocean, for not an object was in sight.

The wind had again taken up that nerve-racking moaning and groaning sound, as of an unseen giant in distress, and the spray from the crests of the waves blew in the faces of the two young men, as they crouched down behind the shelter of the half-cabin.

It seemed as though the storm had begun, had halted in its purpose, or had gone off momentarily in some other direction, and was now headed back, to sweep destruction down on those aboard the *Mary Ellen*, and the two in the motorboat.

But where was the *Mary Ellen*?

That was a question Russ and Mr. Sneed asked of themselves over and over again as they drove into the very teeth of the storm. They had to head into it, as in the small boat no other course would have been safe. Fortunately the *Ajax* was built dory-fashion, with high bow and stern, after the pattern of the skiffs in which the fishermen of the New Foundland banks go out in heavy weather.

"What are you going to do?" asked Mr. Sneed, as Russ increased the speed of the engine, so that the small craft fairly tore up the inclined hills of green waters, which the waves represented, and slid down them with sickening speed on the other slope.

"I'm going to keep on until I find her--find the schooner," Russ said, grimly. "That's all we can do. But I can't understand why they don't show a light."

"Maybe they're having troubles of their own," suggested the actor.

"Well, they could shout, so as to let us know where to steer," Russ went on, rather provoked.

"We could do that ourselves," Pepper Sneed said.

"Do what?" asked Russ, hardly conscious of what he was saying, for just then a heavy wave threatened to swamp the dory, and it required skillful handling to keep her from being swamped.

"We could yell," suggested Mr. Sneed. "Come on, give 'em a call!"

Russ agreed to this, and, standing up, so their voices would carry better, and bracing themselves against the tumbling, swaying motion of the craft, they sent out a cry for aid--and yet not so much a cry for aid, as they were not yet in distress, but a cry for direction.

"If I could only see where to steer," Russ exclaimed, when they had paused in their yelling, well-nigh exhausted, "it wouldn't be so bad! But I can't see a thing. It's getting darker every minute. I never saw such a funny storm."

"It's coming up all right," declared the actor. "Going to blow great guns soon."

"It's blowing them now," said Russ, grimly, as he clung to the wheel. "I can hardly keep her on the course."

"What's the use of steering a course when you don't know whether it's right or not?" asked the actor.

"Well, I'm not going to give up," Russ said, grimly. "I think I'm headed for the schooner, though I ought to have fetched her sooner than this, at the speed we're going."

"Perhaps she's blowing away from us," suggested Mr. Sneed.

"That's it!" Russ cried. "Why didn't I think of that before? She's running away from us. She can't help it, though, for she must scud before this storm. We've got to increase our speed to catch up to her. The wind and our engine ought to be more than a match for her sails alone. I'll put on more speed."

The wind was now a howling gale.

Suddenly, as they drove on, the motor seemed to increase its speed.

"What's that?" asked Mr. Sneed. "I thought you had her running at her limit."

"So did I," Russ answered, bending over the machinery. Then he cried: "She's racing! We've lost our propeller! We're disabled in this storm!"



CHAPTER XX

IN THE VORTEX

"Haven't we looked distressed long enough?"

"I'm going below. I can't bear to watch that storm!"

The speakers were Alice and Ruth DeVere respectively, and they were leaning over the rail of the *Mary Ellen*, peering off into the swirl of driving mists, and across the heaving waters toward where the motorboat had been last seen.

"Yes, I think Russ has enough pictures," Mr. Pertell said in answer to the remark of Alice. "I think you all looked sufficiently distressful. If the scenes of the shipwreck itself go as well as the first part of the drama has gone, we'll have a fine film."

"Then may I go below?" asked Ruth. "I don't like the looks of the weather."

"It does seem as though we'd get the storm after all," her father remarked.

"Go below, by all means," assented the manager. "We have done enough for today, and I'll signal Russ to come in, if he hasn't already started to do so. My, but this wind is blowing a regular gale!"

Others than Ruth found it uncomfortable on deck, and there was a general movement toward the cabins which had been fitted up with considerable comfort, even if the craft was an old one.

But just then, when there was a partial calm before another burst of fury on the part of the storm, something occurred that threw the ship into a flurry of excitement for a time. The sailors were making some changes in the craft's canvas, when suddenly the throat and peak halyards of the mainsail either parted, or, coming loose from the cleats, came down on the run. The effect was to lower the sail so quickly, and in such a fashion, with the wind blowing hard against it, that there was a crash, a banging and booming of the canvas, and the boom and gaff. The first mate, who was standing near the mast, was knocked down, narrowly escaping going overboard.

"Oh, what has happened?" cried Ruth.

"Be still!" commanded Alice, clutching her sister by the arm. "Yelling isn't going to do any good. We're not hurt."

They were standing near a companionway, well out of reach of the falling sail.

"Oh, we're sinking! We're sinking!" screamed Miss Dixon.

"And the sharks! The terrible sharks in the water!" hysterically added her friend.

The other ladies of the party were very much frightened, naturally, not only by the accident to the sail, but by the screams of the two former vaudeville actresses.

"Lively now, men!" called Jack Jepson, who happened to be nearest the confusion of tangled ropes and sail. "Get him below. He doesn't seem to be much hurt."

He pointed to the motionless body of the first mate. A quick examination showed that the man was badly stunned, but that seemed to be the extent of his injuries, as far as could be told.

"Up with her now! Up with her!" the second mate cried, as he gave orders for hoisting the sail again, for the schooner was not under proper control with the main canvas down, and a storm coming up rapidly. The sail had been reefed, so the gaff had not fallen as far as otherwise would have been the case.

"What's the matter?" shouted Captain Brisco who came up from his cabin with Hen Lcomb. The two were seldom apart of late. A glance served to tell the commander what had happened. He saw that Jack Jepson had matters well in hand, and though Alice guessed that Captain Brisco had no love for his second mate, the commander knew seamanship when he saw it.

"Lively now!" he cried. "That's the idea! We'll run before the gale now."

"But the motorboat!" cried Ruth, who had conquered her desire to flee to the cabin, and hide her eyes and ears from such nerve-racking sights and sounds. "Where is the *Ajax*--and Mr. Sneed--and--Russ?" she faltered.

"They'll probably be coming in now," the captain said, but he did not take the trouble to look around and see. "We

can't wait for them in this wind," he went on.

"But we *must* wait for him!" Ruth cried, getting excited. "We can't go off and leave them in that motorboat, on the ocean, in a storm! We must wait!" She started toward Captain Brisco, with her hands held out appealingly.

Alice was wildly looking around for a sight of the smaller craft. She had seen it just before the sail fell, but now there was nothing about the schooner but a bare waste of waters.

She knew enough about the technical side of moving pictures to realize that for some time, it had been too dark to take any film. Russ must have known that, too, and would have started back for the schooner. But if he had, where was he now?

Alice asked herself that question as she looked around.

"You must wait for him!" cried Ruth.

"Who? What's this?" demanded Mr. Pertell, for he had been hurrying to and fro, making sure none of the members of his company had been injured in the slight accident.

"Russ hasn't come back," volunteered Alice, who almost always spoke ahead of her sister.

"He's out there!" Ruth found voice to say, "and Captain Brisco isn't going to wait for him."

"You can't hold a ship still on the ocean, and a storm coming up!" the commander cried, as though to justify himself. "We've got to run for it. It would be madness now to lay to."

"But we can't desert Russ and Mr. Sneed!" cried the manager. "I thought he was coming in. What shall we do? We must do something! I shouldn't have asked him to risk it!"

The schooner was rapidly forging ahead, even under reefed sails, so powerful was the wind.

"We could work around," said Jack Jepson, who had come up on deck after seeing the first mate comfortably bestowed in his berth. "We could work around and----"

"Who's in charge of this ship; you or me?" snapped Captain Brisco.

"You are, of course," was the quiet answer.

"Well then, have the goodness to keep still and let me manage matters. I'm giving orders--not you!"

Poor Jack slunk back, smarting under the undeserved rebuke.

"I don't care who is in command!" cried Mr. Pertell. "This is my ship and you're under my orders, Captain Brisco. I order you to pick up that motorboat!"

"And I tell you we can't do it! They've got to come to us, we can't go to them. They're not dependent on the wind as we are. They can travel any direction they like, and they'll have to head for us."

"But we must make some effort to find them!" cried the manager. "It would be wicked--criminal not to."

"Look here!" cried Captain Brisco. "You are the owner of this schooner, it is true, and as such you are my superior, but the law gives me supreme command of this craft at sea, unless I'm dead, or otherwise deposed. And I tell you I won't risk all these lives by trying to beat back in the teeth of this wind, to pick up a motorboat. It would be worse than criminal--worse than wicked to do it. It would endanger all on board!"

There was some logic in that. Even Mr. Pertell, exercised as he was by the threatened danger to Russ, could appreciate that.

"But we must do something," the manager repeated.

"I'm doing all I can," Captain Brisco replied. "I'll shorten sail down to the minimum; that will keep us before the wind, and out of the trough of the sea! More I can't do. We must depend on them to pick us up. They ought to be able to do it. You told me Dalwood could manage a boat."

"So he can--but--"

There was ominous meaning in the broken-off sentence.

"Well, we'll do the best we can," concluded Captain Brisco. "They will have to take chances, as we're doing."

He went forward to give some orders.

Those aboard the schooner peered anxiously over the storm swept waters for a sight of the motor craft, but they saw nothing. They shouted and called, but only the wind howled back at them.

Then, with a suddenness that was appalling, they seemed to be flung into the midst of a hurricane. The wind lashed the sea to fury, and the *Mary Ellen* spun around like some gigantic top.

"We're in the vortex!" cried Jack Jepson. "We're in the vortex of a cyclone! All hands look to themselves!"

CHAPTER XXI

WRECKED

Confusion on board a ship in a storm may be real confusion and riot, or it may only seem so to those not used to the sea. Often what is a hopelessly tangled mass of sails, ropes, spars and gears to the landsman, is as clear to a sailor as a skein of yarn is to an experienced knitter, who can ply her needles in the dark.

It was so on the *Mary Ellen* when the storm, that had been so long threatening, and half-performing, broke in all its fury.

There was a tangle of ropes, a banging and slamming of canvas, which, stretched taut and to its utmost, was as stiff as a board. There was a rattling of blocks and the creaking of the boom-crotches against the masts. The squeak of the gaffs higher up added to the din.

The shouting of Captain Brisco, and the answering calls of his men did not lessen the confusion.

"Lower away! Lower away!" the commander cried, ordering even the already doubly-reefed sails gotten down, so the powerful wind would have less resistance. Even with the small area of canvas shown, the craft was being heeled over until the scuppers--or the holes by which water runs off the deck--dipped under the waves, and there was plenty of sea aboard.

"Set that storm jib!" came the next order, when the main sails had been furled, and that was no easy task with the sharp pitching and tossing of the schooner. Not a very seamanlike job was made of it, but there was no time for the finer touches. The sails were just clewed up to prevent them from blowing away, until more time could be devoted to them.

The storm jib, which is the sail furthest front on a vessel, unless it be a flying jib, was set to give her enough way so she would respond to the helm, for it was necessary to keep the craft before the wind, and head on to the seas--that is, the big waves must be cut and broken by the sharp prow, or bow, for had they come at the schooner sideways, she would have been swamped instantly.

Even the small area of the storm jib was hardly necessary. The *Mary Ellen*, in that blow, would have scudded along fairly well "under bare poles," that is with no sails set at all. Even Captain Brisco had his doubts about the storm jib resisting. It might pull away from the holding ropes at any moment. But its loss would do no harm, for it would only be blown out to sea, and there were enough spare sails.

So, as I have said, order came out of confusion, but even the order was somewhat confused, at least to the members of the moving picture company. They had been ordered below, and had managed, somehow, to get there, though more than one received bumps and bruises on the pitching, tossing companionway.

"Oh, what an awful storm!" complained Miss Dixon, when they were huddled in the cabin.

"Isn't it awful--terrible!" agreed her companion. "I am frightened to death. We may sink at any minute."

"Oh, not so much danger of that in a wooden ship," said Paul consolingly. He wished the two former vaudeville actresses would try to have a little courage.

"I am so frightened," murmured Miss Pennington. "I wish Captain Brisco would come down here."

"What for?" asked Alice, hardly able to keep the contempt out of her voice.

"So he could tell us if we are in any danger, and what we ought to do," was the selfish answer. "He *must* save us!"

"He's trying to save the ship!" said Alice, "and you two ought to be ashamed of yourselves at a time like this. Think of poor Russ and Mr. Sneed out in that motorboat all alone!"

"Oh, but they--they're men," faltered Miss Dixon.

"Then why don't you try to be women!" snapped Alice.

"Hush, my dear," said her sister gently.

"I can't!" was the answer. "When I think of poor Russ----"

"I'm going to put on a life preserver," exclaimed Miss Pennington, favoring Alice with a frosty stare.

"Perhaps that would be a good plan for us, my dears," said Mr. DeVère to his daughters. "It can do no harm, at all events."

"No," admitted Alice. "But we appear to be all right--for the time being, at least."

It seemed quieter up on deck now, for the sailors had ceased rushing about adjusting the canvas, though there was still plenty of noise. There was the rattle and bang of blocks, the whipping about of ends of ropes, the slap, now and then, of the storm-jib, as it was whipped back and forth. Now and then a heavy sea would fall on deck with a crash.

At such times the *Mary Ellen*, stout as she was, would tremble from stem to stern, and those in the cabin would shiver and look at one another apprehensively.

"Come on, Laura," called Miss Pennington to her companion. "Let's take all the precautions we can. We'll put on life preservers. But oh, I daren't think of being in the water with all those sharks."

"Don't talk that way!" said Paul in a sharp whisper, as he saw Ruth shrink back at the word "shark."

Miss Pennington did not deign to answer, but she and her friend were soon struggling with the straps of a life preserver. At this moment Captain Brisco came down into the cabin.

"What does this mean?" he asked, and his voice was stern.

"We--we are getting ready for an--an emergency," faltered Miss Pennington.

"Well, there won't be any emergency--at least not for a while," the commander said grimly "We are doing very well. If you want to be uncomfortable do so, and put on those cork jackets. But there is no need of it. I'll give you plenty of warning if the ship is likely to founder, and we'll lower the boats."

"Is there any real danger, Captain?" asked Mr. DeVère.

"Well, of course there always is, in a storm at sea. But we are in no more danger than hundreds of others. This is a wooden ship, and it will be a long time sinking, even if it gets to that point, which is far off. We haven't leaked a drop yet, and we're running before the storm nicely. You need have no fears."

"That's what I thought!" exclaimed Alice, with a look at the two former stage actresses.

"Humph!" sniffed Miss Dixon. "Any one would think you were a sailor."

"She's a good deal better 'n some," said Jack Jepson coming into the cabin then to report something to Captain Brisco.

"Then you would not advise us to put on life preservers?" asked Mr. DeVère.

"Not now, at least," the captain replied. "I have done everything possible, and the only thing now is to run before the storm. We are in good shape. The *Mary Ellen* is a better craft than I gave her credit for being. The only thing to do is to wait, and hope for the best."

"Have you plenty of lifeboats?" the old actor wanted to know.

"Yes, enough for all hands. They are provisioned and watered, and are staunch craft. My men have orders to stand by in case of any real danger, and put the small boats over. But we will stick to the ship until the last, though that is not saying, mind you, that we will have to desert her."

"Oh! I couldn't think of going in one of those small boats!" cried Miss Dixon. "They are so low in the water. I should faint every time I looked over the side."

"Well if she looked once, and fainted and stayed so, it would be a good thing for all hands," murmured Paul Ardite.

"Oh, don't say that," Alice reproached him.

"That's how I feel about her," he answered.

"What can be done about picking up the motorboat?" asked Mr. DeVère. They all looked anxiously toward Captain Brisco.

"I have a man on the lookout," answered the commander. "It may seem to some of you heartless to go away and leave her."

"It was," murmured gentle Ruth. But she only whispered the words. There were tears in her eyes.

"But I could do nothing else," resumed Captain Brisco. "As I told you, a vessel can't remain stationary on the sea. We had to move on before the gale. And, as I also said, the motorboat has a better chance of going where she wants to than have we, who must depend on our sails. I have no doubt but that the two in the *Ajax* are safe."

But if Captain Brisco, or any of those then huddled in the cabin of the *Mary Ellen*, could have seen Russ and Mr. Sneed just then they would not have envied them.

With the racing of the engine, indicating to Russ that the propeller had dropped off into the sea, he at once shut off the power. Without the resistance of the screw the machine would soon have racked itself to pieces.

"Well, what's to be done?" asked Mr. Sneed.

"That's the way to talk," was the response. "We've got to do something, that's sure."

The storm which at that moment was enveloping the *Mary Ellen* was, at the same time, buffeting about the smaller motorboat. When she lost headway by the stopping of her engine she no longer took the seas head, or bow, on. She fell into the trough, and was in imminent danger of being swamped.

"We've got to bring her up, the first thing we do," Russ decided. "What we need is a drag anchor. That will bring her head on to the waves, and we can ride them better until help comes."

"Will help ever come?" asked the actor, despondently.

"Of course it will. Or else we'll find the schooner, or they us!" responded Russ.

While he was talking, he was looking about for something to use as a drag anchor.

"That will do!" Russ decided as he saw a heavy wooden box. "I'll use that." Quickly he tied a rope to it, and tossed the box out.

"This is better!" exclaimed Russ. "Now let's take an account of stock, and see what else we can do. We may be here for some time."

"We can't live very long in this awful weather!" groaned, rather than spoke, Mr. Sneed.

"Oh, don't give up so easily," said Russ.

But when the storm grew worse, and the tiny craft was buffeted about, shipping considerable water, even stout-hearted Russ was not as hopeful as he had been. He had stowed the camera in a safe place, and put the films in a water-tight box well forward. Then the only thing to do was to wait. In vain he scanned the sea through the storm for a sight of the schooner. He could catch no glimpse of her.

Meanwhile the lookout on the *Mary Ellen* was eagerly watching for any signs of the *Ajax*, but he had even less chance of seeing her than Russ and Mr. Sneed did of sighting the larger vessel.

The storm was constantly growing worse. As old Jack had said, the schooner had actually been caught in the very vortex of it, but the whirling motion, imparted by the meeting of two different wind currents, had been the saving of the craft. She had been shunted to the outer edge, as a cork, going around in a whirlpool, is sometimes tossed to safety by the very violence of the motion.

Then she had scudded before the gale.

All that night they scudded before the storm, not knowing where they were, and when morning came there was a wild and tumultuous waste of waters all about them. Alice ventured up on deck, against the advice of her father and sister.

She saw Jack Jepson and some sailors amidships. They seemed to be in earnest consultation. Alice drew near them, intending to ask if there were any news.

As she came near the mainmast, there was a sudden veer to the craft, a snapping, splintering sound, and the mast, with its gear of sail, boom and gaff crashed over the side, smashing the stout bulwarks.

"Look out, gal!" hoarsely cried Old Jack, and he snatched Alice back only just in time, for the mast splintered down right in front of her.

With the crash and splintering of the wood, and the breaking of the side of the schooner, there arose the cry of:

"We're wrecked! We're wrecked!"



CHAPTER XXII

"MUTINY!"

Jack Jepson's first thought was to get Alice to a place of safety.

"You shouldn't have come up!" he shouted in her ear, as he fairly carried her along the sloping deck. He had to shout to be heard above the roar of the wind, the pounding of the broken mast against the side of the schooner, and the swish of the salt water whipped into spray by the powerful gale.

Jack set Alice down at the head of the companionway, and indicated by gestures, rather than words, that she was to go below. As she descended the sloping stairs, holding to the rope rail to prevent stumbling, she saw Captain Brisco spring forward. Whatever else he was, the commander did not shrink from any emergency.

"Cut away that mast!" he cried. "She'll have us stove in if we don't cut her loose!"

"Aye, aye, sir!" answered Jack.

He and several other sailors had seized axes as soon as the result of the crash was seen, and now sprang to the broken bulwarks, over which the mainmast lay, the jagged end of it in the water, pounding against the side of the schooner at every roll, and threatening to punch a hole in her as a battering ram punctures a wall.

"Strike hard, men!" called Jack, and the sound of their axes followed. Ropes were severed with a blow, but the wire shrouds were tougher, and it was not until several minutes had passed that the mast, with its tangle of sails and ropes, was chopped free to float away on the crest of a billow.

"Get up the mizzen storm sail!" ordered Captain Brisco. "She's falling off!"

The schooner was indeed in danger of wallowing in the trough of the big waves.

Pausing only for a moment, the sailors who had labored so valiantly at cutting loose the broken mast, sprang to get more sail on the craft. She was deprived of the reefed, or shortened, one that had been on the stick which was now overboard, and the jib was not enough to hold her head to the waves.

"What is it? Oh what is it?" gasped Miss Pennington as Alice fell, rather than walked down the companionway into the cabin.

"Are we sinking?" demanded Miss Dixon.

"Not at all!" answered Alice, catching her breath, and, with a shake of her head freeing her face from the salty spray that had drenched her. "It isn't anything at all."

She determined to make light of it, even though her own heart was beating like a hammer at the thought of her narrow escape from possible death.

Alice really did not know whether there was any danger or not from the fall of the mast. She had often read of such things happening, and she remembered that the masts were always "cut away." So she supposed, as long as this was being done, that the proper course was being followed.

"There's no danger at all," she said, speaking more calmly now.

"No danger!" cried Miss Pennington. "Listen to that!"

It was the noise of sailors on deck chopping away the mast-gear.

"Oh, one of those upright sticks, that they hang the sails on, fell over. Not enough glue on it, I guess," said Alice, calmly.

"Not enough glue!" gasped Paul. "Well, I never--"

"Can't you take a joke?" Alice whispered to him, as she saw that her minimizing of the accident was having its effect.

"Oh, yes, of course!" Paul exclaimed. "Not enough glue on it--Oh yes!" and he had to turn away to keep from smiling at the idea of a mast,--that is the most firmly set of anything on a ship, (being indeed almost an integral part of it)--the idea of that being stayed with glue was enough to make almost anyone smile, even in the midst of danger.

The sounds on the deck gradually became more quiet. The danger seemed to be over for the time being. The moving picture actors and actresses crowded around Alice to hear her story of the accident. She carefully avoided mentioning her own peril, but she resolved to properly thank old Jack later. Just now Alice did not want her father to worry. His throat was troubling him, because of the amount of salt spray in the air.

On deck Captain Brisco and Jack Jepson took charge of matters until the wreckage had been cleared away. And a lot of wreckage there was. The *Mary Ellen* looked little like the trim, schooner that had left New York a few weeks before.

Jack Jepson stepped close to the stump of the mainmast. He gave one look at it, and uttered a single word.

"Rotten!" he exclaimed.

"What's that?" cried Captain Brisco sharply.

"Rotten!" repeated the mate. "That mast had dry rot to the very core. Only the varnish held her together."

"What's that to you?" cried the captain in angry tones. "You keep your opinions to yourself! When I want 'em, I'll ask for 'em! Now get below and see if we're taking in any water."

"Very well, sir," was the answer, but Jack gave the captain a queer look.

He found some water coming in, but not more, he thought, than the pumps could take care of, so he reported the matter only to Captain Brisco.

"That's good," the commander said, seemingly well pleased. "I guess they can have their fake shipwreck after all, if the weather clears."

As the day advanced, the storm lulled slightly, but it was still rough. Those of the moving picture company who ventured up on deck went below again with white, scared faces at the sight of the wreckage of the mainmast. For it did look doleful.

"This shipwreck comes pretty near being real," said Mr. Pertell. "If we could only photograph it now, it would make a fine film."

"Can't you?" asked Alice.

"Yes, I suppose I could make some views."

A few hundred feet of film were exposed by one of the operators, but the pretended shipwreck would need to be taken from a small boat, and the sea was too rough to admit of that.

Then the storm, that had given them a brief respite, began again, worse than before. The schooner was tossed about like a toy, and the mizzenmast was sprung so that no sail could be rigged on it.

Then when a great wave struck the craft, washing over her from stem to stern, the work of the ocean and the storm elements seemed completed. The *Mary Ellen* staggered under the blow like some living thing, and she did not rise to it as buoyantly as she had before.

Jack Jepson came rushing up from below.

"We're leaking fast!" he cried. "We'd better take to the boats, Captain Brisco! The pumps won't work!"

"The boats! Nonsense!" the captain cried. "We'll ride it out here. The schooner is all right!"

"I tell you she's sinking!" yelled Jack. "We must take to the boats."

"What? Do you dare give orders in my face!" stormed Captain Brisco. "This is mutiny, sir! This is mutiny! I'll put you in irons!" and with raised fist he started toward the old sailor.

CHAPTER XXIII

HELP AT LAST

Jack Jepson was a brave man. He proved it then by standing unflinchingly in front of the angry captain, when shrinking back might have meant a blow that would have brought about a general fight. Seeing him standing there fearlessly, made Captain Brisco pause. And that gave the others time for action.

"What does this mean?" cried Mr. Pertell.

"He is trying to start a mutiny as he did once before!" fairly yelled Captain Brisco.

"I never started a mutiny before, and I'm not trying to do so now!" retorted Jack, and he seemed to have lost much of his timid simplicity. "I tell you the ship is sinking, and we had best take to the boats while there is time."

"And I tell you that you are wrong!" snarled Captain Brisco. "I order you below!"

"And I won't go, until I have told these people what is going on here!" retorted Jack Jepson.

"If that isn't mutiny, I'd like to know what is," cried the captain.

"Well, if that's mutiny, then I'm glad to be a mutineer!" shouted the old salt, "and any court in the land would uphold me, for I am trying to save lives, and you're trying to throw 'em away."

"Throw 'em away! What do you mean?"

"You know what I mean," replied Jack, and there was significance in his voice. "I won't say anything about putting to sea in a ship that wasn't fit--with masts that were nothin' but dry rot, and with pumps that only half work at best. And I won't say anything about your plot--there isn't time now. But I will say----"

"A plot!" cried Alice, who, with Ruth, stood near her father.

"Yes, a plot, Miss!" Jack Jepson cried. "I'll tell you about it later. But now we've got to do something. The water's comin' in fast, and if we can't stop it, we'll have to take to the boats."

"Look here!" stormed Captain Brisco, and his voice was almost in keeping with the howl of the gale all about them, and almost as raucous as the salty spray that flew over everything. "Look here! Who is captain of this ship?"

"You are," replied Jack quietly enough. He looked the angry man full in the eye, and the half-raised fist of the commander fell again.

"Then if I'm captain, I'm going to be obeyed!" came next. "I order you below, Jepson. You're no longer mate of this craft. You're deposed! Hen Lacombe, I hereby appoint you first mate until my regular one recovers, and you, Hankinson, you're second mate. Lively now. Jepson, go below, and if he makes any more trouble, Hen, clap him in irons," he added significantly.

For a moment there was silence following this announcement--that is, as much quiet as the storm permitted. Then Alice cried out:

"Father, won't you say something! Mr. Pertell, you're not going to permit this, are you? I'm sure Jack Jepson is honest and that he is faithfully warning us. Don't let him be put down this way. Ask him what he means by a plot!"

"Oh, Alice!" protested her sister. "At a time like this--when we may all be drowned!"

"We'll all be drowned worse, maybe, if Jack's advice isn't taken. What is it?" she asked, appealing to the old sailor. "What is the plot you spoke of?"

"Ask him?" cried the old salt, pointing an accusing finger at the captain. "Ask him, and if he doesn't tell you, I will. Talk about a mutiny! It wouldn't be half as bad as his plot for getting possession of this vessel."

"What's that!" cried Captain Brisco, starting forward. "You dare accuse me----"

"Yes, you and Hen Lacombe!" cried Jack, who seemed to have acquired a new boldness. "I charge you with plotting to make a fizzle of the shipwreck these picture people planned. You were going to pretend the vessel was sinking, before the time set for the pictures, and you were going to get them to abandon the schooner. Then you and Lacombe were going to come back to the ship later, take her to some secret port, fit her out again and use her for your own purposes.

"That's the plot! That's what I overheard you and Lacombe plannin', and when you suspected I knew, you thought I'd be better off in the sea. That's how I happened to go overboard. I was thrown! That's what I charge you with. Deny it if ye dare!" and he pointed an accusing finger at the two men. "You threw me overboard, Hen Lacombe! And Captain Brisco planned to have you do it!"

Captain Brisco appeared to struggle with some emotion. His face went red and white by turns. He seemed unable to speak. But at last he choked out:

"What! You dare say that to me. You accuse me----!"

"Yes, and I have the proof!" cried Jack. "Here's the agreement you made Lacombe sign. You were afraid to trust to him unless he made a promise in writing, and here it is. I found it in the secret compartment in your cabin. Your cabin that used to be mine in the old *Mary Ellen*. That's how I made sure this ship was the old one I used to serve on, made over. I found this agreement! It's the proof of what I say. Deny it if you can."

"Why--why--" stammered the captain. "Do you dare--" but it seemed he could not get any farther. He glanced at Hen Lacombe who stood near him. A meaning look passed between the two men, and Hen started edging around toward Jack Jepson.

"Father! Mr. Pertell!" cried Alice. "Let us have this settled! Jack has made charges. They may be true or they may not be. But our lives surely are in danger if this vessel is sinking."

"And I say she isn't sinking! She's as sound as a bell below the water line!" cried the captain.

"And I say she has a hole stove in her, an' unless it's stopped we'll be at the bottom in a few hours!" cried Jack. "The mast knocked a hole in her and she's takin' water fast. The pumps are no good, but they can be fixed with a little work on 'em."

"Keep still!" the captain shouted. "You're under arrest as a mutineer."

"No he isn't!" exclaimed Mr. Pertell. "This is my vessel. I'm the chief owner of it, and I here and now depose you as captain, Mr. Brisco, and appoint Jack Jepson in your place!"

There was a gasp of baffled rage from the former commander.

"Jack, take charge," said Mr. Pertell. "Select as mates whoever you want. We'll go into this matter of the plot later. Just now we must save the ship if we can. Everything must give way to that. Do you accept?"

"What! Him captain?" cried Hen Lacombe, who was edging nearer and nearer to Jack all this while.

"Why not?" asked Mr. Pertell.

"He doesn't know how to navigate. He'll run us aground."

"I wish he *would* run us on der ground!" murmured Mr. Switzer. "I haf hat enough of der ocean. Der ground is goot enough for me."

"I can navigate!" cried Jack. "I hold a master's certificate, though I've only filled mates' berths of late."

"I--I refuse to serve under him," stormed Captain Brisco. "And when we reach port, I shall lay this matter before the authorities. You can't depose a captain this way!"

"Can't I?" asked Mr. Pertell coolly. "I rather think I can. I looked up the law on the rights of owners before I started on this voyage. Jack Jepson is captain."

"And I refuse to serve under him."

"Very well. Then you can either work your passage, or pay for your passage, I don't care which. But I'm going to save this ship, and the lives of those aboard her, if I can."

There was a sudden little scuffle near Jack Jepson, and Hen Lacombe went sprawling on the deck.

"No you don't!" drawled Mr. Switzer in his most German comedian voice. "I think you haf fallen. Dit you hurt yourself?" he asked of the prostrate Hen.

The latter, with a growl, got to his feet, an angry look on his face.

"What happened?" asked Mr. Pertell.

"Oh, noddings dit happenen," was the reply. "It iss only vat might haf happenet. He vas getting so close by Jack dot Jack might fall ofer board again, und ve don't vant to lose our new captain so soon yet," explained Mr. Switzer cheerfully.

He thus made light of the affair, but later it came out that Hen Lacombe had evidently had the intention of at least trying to pitch Jack overboard, as the easiest solution of the trouble of Captain Brisco and his crony.

"This is enough!" cried Mr. Pertell. "Jack, you're captain. Do what you like to insure the safety of us and the ship. Captain Brisco is no longer in command of this vessel," the manager went on to a wondering group of sailors. "I call for three cheers for Captain Jack Jepson!"

They were given with a will, for evidently Jack was a favorite, and the deposed captain was not. The latter slunk below followed by Hen Lacombe.

"We've got to try to stop that leak first of all!" said Jack, as he carefully put in his pocket the paper he had claimed was an agreement between Brisco and his crony. "I appoint Jim West as first mate and Frank Snyder as second!" the new captain went on. "Come below, you two, and we'll see what we can do. We've got to mend the pumps. Keep her about as she is," he ordered the steersman.

"Aye, aye, sir!" was the respectful answer. Jack was already developing new qualities as a commander.

"This is a distressing state of affairs," said Mr. DeVere.

"Not as bad as it might be," Mr. Pertell answered. "There is a chance for us now. I never dreamed that Brisco was such a scoundrel."

"Oh, I'm so glad Captain Jack is in charge!" cried Alice. "And I'm so glad he found out about the plot. Maybe this will help to clear him of the other unjust charge," she went on.

"Perhaps," agreed Ruth. "But oh, Alice! If we should sink!"

"Nonsense! We're not going to sink!"

And so it proved--at least the *Mary Ellen* was not doomed to go to the bottom at once. The storm still raged with seemingly unabated violence, but the sailors, under the direction of Captain Jepson, got a heavy piece of canvas over the worst leak, and then the repaired pumps kept the water in the hold down to a normal level.

The failure of the pumps to work, until Jack and the men fixed them was due to criminal negligence on the part of Brisco. He put to sea with this necessary part of a ship in poor condition, not thinking they would be needed.

Brisco was a desperate man, and so was Lacombe. They had been involved in more than one shady transaction, and though both may have been aboard with Jack, during the mutiny, they successfully covered their tracks.

Brisco and Lacombe sulked below, and, for the time being, no effort was made to bring them up and set them to work, though every hand was needed. Some of the members of the film company turned in and helped. It was thought better not to incite a fight.

So the *Mary Ellen* lurched on through the storm, a mere semblance of the gallant craft she had appeared to be on leaving port. And those aboard labored desperately to keep her afloat.

"Talk about a shipwreck!" gasped Mr. Pertell, as a wave drenched him, "this is the most realistic I ever saw. If I could only picture this!"

But it was impossible. How the planned drama of the sea would end, no one could tell.

"And oh! to think of poor Russ and Mr. Sneed out in this--if they *are* still out in it," murmured Alice, as she and Ruth clung to one another in their cabin.

"The *Ajax* may have survived," Ruth said, hopefully.

And indeed, at that moment, the motorboat was making the best of the bad weather.

The sea anchor which Russ had rigged provided the necessary drag and steerage way, and the boat's head was kept to the waves. Her high bow, and covered fore-part, enabled her to ride seas that would have swamped another craft of like size. And her dory-build added to her safety. The bank fishermen know well how to shape a boat to meet heavy seas.

"Well, we seem to be doing fairly well," said Russ, as he and his companion settled down in the shelter, to nibble at a bit of hard tack and drink some of the water Jack had put on board.

"Yes, I suppose it might be worse," agreed Mr. Sneed. And that, for him, was saying a great deal.

So the *Ajax* drifted on, as the *Mary Ellen* was driving, before the gale, the occupants of neither craft knowing aught of the others. And the storm still raged.

After a while Russ, for want of something better to do, began looking over the motor. Presently he discovered something that made him shout for joy.

"What is it?" asked his companion. "Do you see the schooner?"

"No, but I can make this boat run. Look, the propeller hasn't dropped off at all! The set screws of the sleeve have become loose and the propeller shaft didn't turn, that was all."

If any of you know anything about motor-boats, you know that the shaft which passes through the stuffing box, and to which shaft the propeller is fastened, is joined to the shaft of the engine by a coupling, or sleeve. If you take two lead pencils, and thrust an end of each into each end of a hollow, brass pencil holder, you will get an idea of what I mean. One pencil will represent the shaft to which the propeller is fastened, and the other the engine shaft. The brass holder is the coupling, or sleeve. In order that the shafts will be held rigidly together, turning at the same time, set screws in the sleeve are tightly turned down on the shaft, binding both in the sleeve.

It was the set screws on the propeller shaft that had loosed, allowing the sleeve to slip uselessly around, that had caused all the trouble. With a wrench Russ tightened the screws. He tested them, and, finding them firm, started the engine. A moment later the *Ajax* was moving over the waves under her own power.

"Hurray!" cried Mr. Sneed. "This is great!"

"And we don't need this any longer," Russ said, hauling in the drag anchor. Then, able to mount the waves, the motorboat was in much better condition for fighting the storm.

On and on she rushed. Hour after hour passed, but the gale showed no signs of abating. The two young men were weary and disheartened, when, as there came a little rift in the clouds Russ, who stood up to look about, gave a yell.

"What is it now?" asked Mr. Sneed. "More trouble?"

"No!" cried Russ. "I see a steamer. Help at last! I'm going straight for her!"

CHAPTER XXIV

A SIGNAL OF DISTRESS

Russ had been running the motor at moderate speed, for he did not know just how long the supply of gasoline would last, and he did not know as yet what might be before him and his companion in distress. But the sight of the steamer gave him hope, and he turned on full speed.

The *Ajax* was a powerful craft, though even a mighty steamer would not have found it easy to make headway in that sea and in that gale. The motor craft responded gallantly, and shot up on the crest of each wave, sliding down the opposite side as though she were going to investigate the uttermost depths of Father Neptune's caverns.

"Steamer! I don't see any steamer!" exclaimed Mr. Sneed, as he looked in the direction toward which the face of Russ was turned.

"You will when we both come on top of a wave at the same time," was the answer. "You see we lie so low in the water she can't see us, and we can't glimpse her until we're both on a crest together. She's off to the east there. Watch and you'll see her. Look now!"

At that moment the *Ajax* rose on a mighty wave, which lifted her high toward the sky, in which were now rifted clouds. Mr. Sneed glanced to where Russ pointed, and saw the long, black hull of a steamer, from whose stacks belched forth clouds of smoke, showing that her engines were being driven at top speed to overcome the storm.

"There she is!" cried Russ. "Now if we can only reach her, we'll be all right, and we can help the others."

"The others," murmured the actor.

"Yes, those on the *Mary Ellen*. She must be in trouble in this storm, for she isn't built for this sort of thing. It's a wonder she lasted as long as she did."

"Maybe she's at the bottom now," suggested Mr. Sneed.

"Cheerful, aren't you?" remarked Russ. "I thought you'd given that sort of thing up."

"I meant to. I really did. I'm sorry!" the other exclaimed, contritely enough. Really he was a different sort of Mr. Sneed from the "human grouch" who often made matters so unpleasant for members of the Comet Film Company. Since he and Russ had so nearly faced death, Mr. Sneed was much braver and more cheerful.

"I think she'll keep afloat for some time," Russ went on, "as she is all wood, you know. She may be pretty well battered, though."

If he could only have seen the hapless *Mary Ellen* then, he would have believed her quite battered indeed. For another rotten mast had fallen.

"Do you mean you're going to ask those on the steamer to look for the schooner," asked Mr. Sneed.

"That's what I'm going to do, if we can get to her," Russ said. "It's going to be nip and tuck, for she's going fast and she won't see us, as we're so low in the water. She's not heading in our direction, either, but I'll go after her on a long slant, and maybe I can reach her, or get near enough to make her see us. This is a pretty fast boat."

They were speeding over the waves, now down in a hollow, and again on the crest. Sometimes they would lose sight of the steamer altogether, and again they would catch a fleeting glimpse of her. And, when they did, she seemed farther off than ever.

"Oh, we'll never reach her!" said Mr. Sneed, despondently enough. "She'll never give us any aid."

"There you go!" cried Russ. "I thought you'd given up that sort of thing!"

"Well, I didn't mean just that," the actor said. "Perhaps we will make her see us after all."

"That's better!" exclaimed Russ. "We'll get her—or crack a cylinder!" and he tried to get a few more revolutions out of the fly wheel.

In spite of their brave front, Russ and his companion were sufficiently miserable. Their boat constantly shipped water, and they had to use the hand force pump, which, fortunately, was in the craft. A pump was connected with the cylinder cooling apparatus, designed to free the cockpit of bilge water, but the pump would not work.

Russ and Mr. Sneed were wet through, for the cabin could not be entirely closed against the spray. And they had nothing to eat except cold victuals. There was a gasoline stove aboard, but there was nothing to cook, for only an emergency ration had been put in the craft, and that was more because of a whim on the part of Jack Jepson, than because he really thought it would be needed.

But more than once as they drank of the water, and nibbled the hard biscuits, or crackers, in the water-tight box, Russ and his companion blessed the forethought of honest Jack Jepson--I beg his pardon, Captain Jepson it was now, though neither Russ nor Mr. Sneed knew that.

"I think I'll hoist a signal," said the actor, as they drove on, now seeing the steamer, and again losing her.

"Good idea," Russ agreed, as he busied himself with an oil can.

Mr. Sneed managed to lash an oar upright, and on it he fastened a bit of canvas. It stood out straight, like a board, so strong was the wind that whipped it.

"I hope they see that," commented the actor.

"I hope so, too," added Russ. "It doesn't do any good to yell, for the wind is blowing from them to us."

More than once, as they urged their craft on a long slant toward the steamer, they almost gave up hope. But it sprang up again, and finally, as a break in the clouds let out a little rift of light, someone on the watch aboard the steamer saw the fluttering signal.

"She's seen us! She's seen us!" cried Russ in delight.

"How can you tell?" demanded his companion.

"She whistled. I saw the steam. You'll hear the blast in a second."

And they did. Light travels faster than sound. They saw the steam from the powerful whistle before they heard the hoarse blast; even as one sees the flash of a gun before hearing the report.

The steamer changed her course, and came on toward the motorboat.

"Suppose it's the English one, that wants to capture poor Jack," suggested Mr. Sneed.

"That doesn't make any difference," Russ said. "She'll save us, and then look for the schooner. We can take up Jack's case later."

It did not prove to be the English steamer. Instead it was a powerful frigate, hailing from New York, and Russ and Mr. Sneed were soon aboard, the *Ajax* being hoisted to her deck. Then she resumed her course, but it was a different one.

For, on the earnest plea of Russ and Mr. Sneed, the steamer's captain consented to turn back and search for the *Mary Ellen*.

"I don't know as I'll find her," he said, "but we can't let all those poor souls perish."

So the search began. It lasted three days, during which the storm nearly blew itself out. And on the morning of the fourth day, when the sullen sea was trying to calm itself, and when the wind had died down to a moderate gale, the lookout of the *Sirius* called out:

"Sail ho!"

"Where away?" came the demand.

"Dead ahead. She's a schooner, low in the water, and she's flying a signal of distress!"

CHAPTER XXV

CLEAR SKIES

Instantly there was commotion and excitement on board the *Sirius*, for Russ and Mr. Sneed had told their story of the starting out to make a pictured shipwreck, which shipwreck had evidently, now, become real.

"That's the *Mary Ellen*, I'm sure of it!" Russ cried as he caught a glimpse of the sighted schooner. "But what has happened to her?"

"Masts are gone, and she's sinking," one of the steamer's officers told him. "I guess we can't get to her any too quickly."

And it was high time a rescue was made, for Captain Jepson, and Mr. Pertell had decided to take to the boats with all on board.

The *Mary Ellen* was sinking; there was no doubt of that. All that could be done had been done, but to no avail.

But hope revived when the steamer was sighted.

A little later, the *Sirius* stood by. And high time, too. As a last resort, when it was found that the repaired pumps could not keep the water down in the hold, so big was the leak, the signal of distress had been hoisted. And, after many anxious hours, it had been thus providentially answered.

Then a thought came to Mr. Pertell. The weather had cleared. The schooner would keep afloat a few hours more. Why not make the pictures of the shipwreck now? It would be his only chance. True, they would not be just as planned, but they would be better than losing all the efforts that had been made.

There was a brief talk with the captain of the *Sirius*. He consented to stand by until the sea drama, quickly revised, was acted out—at least, until shipwreck scenes were portrayed.

It was rather an exciting time, the passengers dropping overboard from the sinking schooner, and being rescued in boats. Russ, on board the *Ajax*, which was again put into the sea, worked the camera. The *Mary Ellen* made a more realistic wreck than had been hoped for. Former Captain Brisco and Hen Lacombe, alone, refused to take any part in the drama.

At last the final film was run off, the last rescue was made by the motor craft and small boats, and all, passengers and crew, from the sinking schooner, were taken aboard the *Sirius*.

"There she goes!" said Alice softly, as, with a final lurch, and a blowing up of her decks, from the compressed air under them, the old craft, bow first went beneath the waves. Russ took the final pictures.

"Game to the last!" said Captain Jepson. "She went down bow on, to show she wasn't afraid of Davy Jones! That's the last of her, and the last of Brisco's schemes to get her for his own use."

"Tell me about that now," suggested Mr. Pertell. "I have time to listen now, for we aren't trying to save a sinking ship."

They were all now safely aboard the steamer, which had resumed her course. The moving pictures had all been taken, save some that needed a shore background, and these could be done later.

"Did Brisco really plot to get the *Mary Ellen*?" asked the manager.

"He did," said Jack Jepson. "I'll tell you the whole story." And he did. Briefly it was this:

On his first trip to the schooner, Jack had recognized Brisco as an unscrupulous man who had been engaged in several shady ship transactions. But Brisco denied his identity, and Jack pretended to have been mistaken, in order to throw him off his guard. Brisco was also, Jack said, one of the mutineers of the *Halcyon*, but the plotter denied this, and Jack admitted he may have been mistaken.

Then came the advent of Hen Lacombe, whom Jepson recognized as a fellow plotter with Brisco. The evil men knew him, too, after a bit, but they counted on the charge of mutiny hanging over him to make him keep quiet, and not reveal their plot.

Brisco and Lacombe plotted to get the schooner for themselves. They were not really going to endanger the lives of the passengers or crew, but their game was to only pretend to sink the ship, and to raise such an alarm that she would be

hastily abandoned. Then they would come back to her later, salvage her, and use her for their own ends.

Jack Jepson had overheard this plot, and, as he had said, found the incriminating document signed by Lacombe. This was hidden in a secret compartment in what had formerly been his bunk, when the schooner was the *Halcyon*.

When Brisco and Lacombe discovered that Jepson knew their secret, they tried to get rid of him, by a seeming accident. But Fate interfered with their plans, and the storm made a big change. Then came the deposing of Captain Brisco, and the rest of the story is known to my readers.

"Well, Jack Jepson--or, Captain Jepson, though you haven't now command of any ship," said Mr. Pertell, "we owe much to you."

"It's nothin' at all," Jack said, modestly enough. "When I saw this steamer, though, I thought it was that Britisher coming back for me."

"It's a shame that the charge of mutiny should hang over you!" exclaimed Alice. "I think it should be wiped out."

"I wish it could be," Jack said with a sigh.

A steward, a little later, came to where the rescued ones were talking together--Brisco and Lacombe having gone off by themselves--and the steward said the steamer's captain wanted to talk to the schooner's commander.

"There he is," said Mr. Pertell, pointing to Jack Jepson. "That's our new captain."

The steward looked. A queer change came over his face.

"Jack!" he cried. "Is it really you? I've looked all over the world for you!"

"Tom Buttle!" cried Jepson, leaping to his feet. "My old shipmate. Say, if anyone knows, you do, that I never had a thing to do with that mutiny on the *Halcyon*. Don't you know I didn't?"

"Of course I do!" the steward cried. "I can prove you were as innocent as a babe, and I know others who can, too."

"What's this--more of the mystery?" asked Alice.

"It's the end of it, I hope," said Jack solemnly. "Tell 'em, Tom!"

"There isn't much to tell," the steward said. "I was a shipmate with Jack on the *Halcyon* or the *Mary Ellen*, in the old days. He's probably told you of the mutiny. I was hurt in it, and lay unconscious when they arrested him for it. I didn't recover until he had been put in jail, and when I tried to give my evidence, I could get no one to listen to me. Then I heard Jack had escaped and I rested easy. I never knew the charge was hanging over him all this while.

"I've been all over the world since, sailing in different vessels, and in every port I'd inquire of Jack from those who knew him. But I never found him until now. Clear him--of course I can clear him of the unjust charge!"

"Thank Heaven for that!" said Jack Jepson.

"Everything is cleared up!" cried Alice gaily. "Even the sky--see how blue it is!"

In due time Jack's innocence was proved before the English courts, and the charge against him wiped out. He was then free to come and go as he pleased. But the mystery of the disappearance of Captain Watson, of the *Halcyon*, or old *Mary Ellen*, and his companion, Mike Tullane, was never solved.

The *Mary Ellen*, all that was left of the reconstructed *Halcyon*, was, of course, a total wreck. Brisco's plan failed. Nothing was done to him, as it would have been difficult to prove a case against him.

Arrangements were made for taking the needed land scenes of the sea drama, and when this was done, the whole company returned to New York.

"Well, Alice," remarked Ruth one day, as they were on their way up the coast in a steamer, "did you have enough of sea-life this trip?"

"I certainly did," was the answer. "No more shipwrecks for me!"

"Same here!" put in Russ. "It's taking too many chances!"

"Oh, you'd do it over again--or something like it--and so would you girls, if you knew a good film would come of it," predicted Paul Ardite, with a laugh.

And here we will say good-bye to the Moving Picture Girls.