

FICTION

Oliver Optic

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# Up the River

A PUBLIC DOMAIN BOOK

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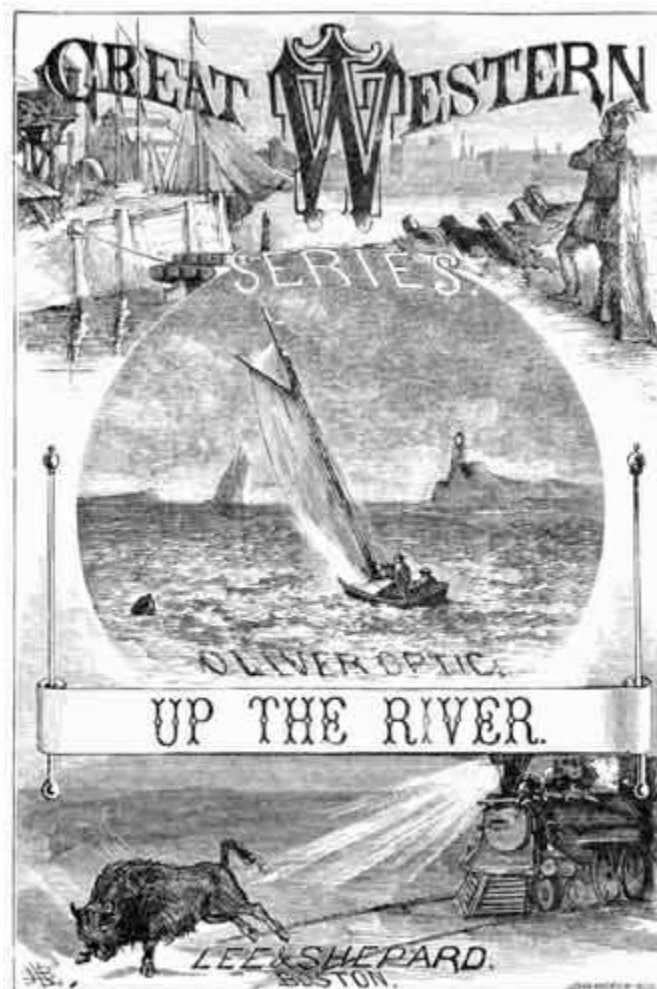


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FICTION



"THE LITTLE STEAMER RUSHED MADLY INTO THE OPENING."  
PAGE 293.



**THE GREAT WESTERN SERIES**

**UP THE RIVER**  
OR  
**YACHTING ON THE MISSISSIPPI**

By  
**OLIVER OPTIC**

AUTHOR OF "YOUNG AMERICA ABROAD" "THE ARMY AND NAVY SERIES" "THE  
WOODVILLE SERIES" "THE STARRY FLAG SERIES" "THE BOAT CLUB  
STORIES" "THE LAKE SHORE SERIES" "THE UPWARD AND  
ONWARD SERIES" "THE YACHT CLUB SERIES"  
"THE RIVERDALE STORIES" ETC.

*WITH EIGHT ILLUSTRATIONS*

BOSTON  
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1881,  
By WILLIAM T. ADAMS.

BOSTON STEREOTYPE FOUNDRY,  
No. 4 PEARL STREET.

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TO MY YOUNG FRIEND  
MINNIE ETHEL ADAMS,

*This Book*

IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED.

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THE GREAT WESTERN SERIES.

OUT WEST; OR, ROUGHING IT ON THE GREAT LAKES.

LAKE BREEZES; OR, THE CRUISE OF THE SYLVANIA.

GOING SOUTH; OR, YACHTING ON THE ATLANTIC COAST.

DOWN SOUTH; OR, YACHT ADVENTURES IN FLORIDA.

UP THE RIVER; OR, YACHTING ON THE MISSISSIPPI.

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LEE AND SHEPARD, Publishers, Boston.

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## PREFACE.

UP THE RIVER is the sixth and last of "The Great Western Series." The events of the story occur on the coast of Florida, in the Gulf of Mexico, and on the Mississippi River. The volume and the series close with the return of the hero, by a route not often taken by tourists, to his home in Michigan. His voyaging on the ocean, the Great Lakes, and the Father of Waters, is finished for the present; but the writer believes that his principal character has grown wiser and better since he was first introduced to the reader. He has made mistakes of judgment, but whatever of example and inspiration he may impart to the reader will be that of a true and noble boy, with no vices to disfigure his character, and no low aims to lead him from "the straight and narrow path" of duty.

The author has a copy of his first book before him as he writes. On the title-page is this line: "A Tale of the Mississippi and the South-West." The preface, dated 1852, contains this passage: "In the summer of 1848, the author of the following tale was a passenger on board of a steamboat from New Orleans to Cincinnati. During the passage--one of the most prolonged and uncomfortable in the annals of western river navigation--the plot of this story was arranged. Many of its incidents, and all of its descriptions of steamboat life will be recognized by the voyager on the Mississippi." Since that time the author has travelled on the upper waters of the great river.

His last book, by a coincidence at the present time, also relates to the Mississippi. Nearly a generation has passed away between the first and the last; and the latter is the writer's seventy-fifth book. The author has endeavored to make his works correct in facts and descriptions, as well as in moral tendency; and in the preparation of them he has travelled over fifty thousand miles by sea and land.

To his young friends,--some of the earlier of whom are now middle-aged men and women, with boys and girls of their own, reading the same books their fathers and mothers read a quarter of a century ago,--to his young friends the author again returns his sincere and hearty thanks for the favor they have bestowed upon his numerous volumes.

DORCHESTER, MASS., June 1, 1881.

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**UP THE RIVER;  
OR,  
YACHTING ON THE MISSISSIPPI.**

## CHAPTER I.

### IN CAPTAIN BOOMSBY'S SALOON.

"I don't think it's quite the thing, Alick," said my cousin, Owen Garningham, as we were walking through Bay Street after our return to Jacksonville from the interior of Florida.

"What is not quite the thing, Owen?" I inquired, for he had given me no clue to what he was thinking about.

"After I chartered your steamer for a year to come here, and go up the Mississippi River--by the way, this river is called 'The Father of Waters,' isn't it?" asked Owen, flying off from the subject in his mind, as he was in the habit of doing.

"Every schoolboy in this country learns that from his geography," I replied.

"Happily, I was never a schoolboy in this country, and I didn't find it out from the geography. If the Mississippi is the Father of Waters, can you tell me who is the mother of them?"

"The Miss'ouri."

"O, ah! Don't you feel faint, Captain Alick?" added Owen, stopping short on the sidewalk, and gazing into my face with a look of mock anxiety.

"Not at all; I think I could swallow a burly Briton or two, if the occasion required."

"Don't do it! It would ruin your digestion. But it strikes me those two rivers are but one."

"I think so, too, and they ought to be. Father and mother--man and wife--ought to be one," I answered, as indifferently as I could. "But something was not quite the thing; and if there is anything in this country that is not quite the thing, I want to know what it is."

"When I chartered the Sylvania to come down here, and then go up the 'Father of Waters,' it isn't quite the thing for your father to declare the whole thing off at this point of the cruise," replied Owen. "I was going to have a jolly good time going up the river."

"You may have it yet, for I have given you a cordial invitation to go 'up the river' with me; and I mean every word I said about the matter," I added, in soothing tones.

"But your father says the charter arrangement is ended, and you may go where you like in your steamer."

"And I concluded at once to carry out all the arrangements for this trip, just as we made them at Detroit," I replied. "I have invited the Shepards and the Tiffanys to join us, and everything will go on just as it did before, except that you will not pay the bills."

"Which means that, if I join you at all, I shall not be myself," returned Owen, with a look of disgust. "In other words, I shall not be my own master, and I must go where my uncle and you may choose to take me."

"Not at all; we are going up the Mississippi simply because that is the route you selected, and because I desire to carry out your plan of travel to the letter," I replied, rather warmly. "I don't think I could do anything more to meet your views than I have done."

"You are as noble, grand, magnanimous, as it is possible for any fellow to be, Alick; but that don't make me any more willing to be under obligations to you every day of my life."

"You need feel under no obligations to me."

"Ah, but I do, you see; and I still think it was not just the thing to break away from the written agreement we made," continued Owen, unable to conceal his vexation.

"I think you ought not to say another word in that line of remark, Owen. A contract to do anything fraudulent is void from the beginning. Do you remember for what purpose you chartered the Sylvania?"

"If you won't say another word about it, Alick, I won't!" exclaimed my cousin, extending his hand to me, which I immediately grasped.

"I won't, unless you drive me to it," I replied. "I have not reminded you of what occurred while we were coming South,

and I never will, for I think Carrington was the villain of the drama, and not you."

"You are right, Alick; and you are the best fellow that ever lived!" protested Owen. "But I would like to pay my share of the expenses of the cruise from this day, as I have done before. I shall feel better about it if I do."

"I will speak to my father about that. I am sure I don't object to your paying your share," I answered. "I am willing to carry out the agreement just as we made it; but my father takes a different view of the subject."

"I know he does, and I can't blame him," replied Owen. "He means simply to say that his son shall be under no obligations to me, after what has happened."

"Let us say nothing more about this matter, Owen," I added; "it is not a pleasant topic to me, any more than it was to him."

"When do we sail, if I sail with you, Alick?" he asked.

"To-morrow morning; and we should be on board to-night, ready for an early start, for we have to conform to the tide on the bar at the mouth of the river. The Tiffanys will go with us, but the Shepards have not yet accepted the invitation I gave them."

"I am going to Colonel Shepard's house now, and I will find out whether they are going or not," said Owen, as we came to a street leading to St. James's Square, where Colonel Shepard's house was located.

"And I will drop into Captain Boomsby's saloon," I added.

"The beast Boomsby! Why do you go there, Alick?" demanded Owen, with a look of disgust and astonishment in his face.

"I lived with him for years, and I will just say good-by to him, for I may never see him again. I hope I never shall, at any rate. He has abused and wronged me, but I am willing to forgive him if he will only keep out of my way."

"Pon my word, I believe you would forgive a man if he blew your brains out, Alick?"

"If it were a matter of brains, I couldn't do it; but if I had heart enough left, I would try to forgive him if he was sorry for what he had done."

"You forgave me, and it is easy enough for you to do the same with Beast Boomsby," added Owen, as he turned up the street to his destination.

I had been made the victim of a plot, and taught to believe that my father, Sir Bent Garningham, was dead. The little steamer Sylvania was my own property, for I had earned it by saving the lives of her original owner and his family. Pike Carrington, my father's solicitor in England, had induced the son of my father's younger brother to make an attempt to get me "out of the way."

The villain had acted more for his own interest than for that of my cousin. They had called in my old enemy Captain Parker Boomsby, and sent him to Florida in one steamer, while Owen went with me in the Sylvania. My friend Robert Washburn, the mate of the steam-yacht, had discovered the plot, and we had been on our guard night and day to meet any treachery.

Captain Boomsby claimed me and all that I had, when he learned that my father was dead. He had done his best to obtain the steam-yacht, but his unfortunate habit of drinking too much whiskey had defeated his plan. In his attempt to destroy me he had taken the life of the solicitor.

On our voyage, "going South," we had encountered a heavy gale in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Owen Garningham, my cousin, had been swept from the hurricane-deck of the Sylvania by the raging sea. At the risk of my own, I had saved his life. This act had conquered him, and he no longer took any interest in the plan to destroy me, if he had ever thought of anything so bad as this. He became my strong friend, and had no further desire to rob me of my father's estate, or to obtain the title, for which he cared more than I did.

The Shepards were a family we first met at a regatta in Portland Harbor. Owen had become deeply interested in Miss Edith, the daughter, and, at his invitation, the family had come most of the way to Florida in the steamer. We had been up the Ocklawaha River to Lake Griffin, and up the St. Johns as far as any steamer could go. My father, who had left me at college in Montomercy, to attend to his affairs in England, had been called to India on business. His absence was the opportunity for the conspirators, and they destroyed our letters.

When I learned that my father was not dead, I had written to him. He had followed me up the St. Johns, and appeared in time to save me from the bullet of one of Captain Boomsby's agents. He learned the whole truth from me, and at once cancelled the charter by which my cousin Owen was to have the use of the steamer for a year, one half of which had now expired.



The Tiffanys were father and daughter, whom the crew of the Sylvania had saved from a fire at St. Augustine. The gentleman was an intimate friend of my father, who requested him to see me when he visited this country. His daughter Margie, if not as pretty as Edith Shepard, interested me more. As arranged before we left Detroit, we were to go up the Mississippi River. The Tiffanys had accepted the invitation to join us, for they were tourists for pleasure and observation.

My father was an English baronet, succeeding to the title and estates by the death of an elder brother. He had served in the army for many years, and had attained the rank of major. He was better pleased to be called by his military than by his family title, in this republican land. But he was too proud to allow me to continue in the employ of my cousin, though he did not object to his nephew as a passenger when I desired it. He left everything to me to manage as I pleased after he had cancelled the charter agreement. With this abstract of previous events my readers will be prepared to understand what is to follow.

Captain Boomsby's saloon was on Bay Street. He had a bar for the white and respectable customers on that street, and another in the rear for negroes. I was never even tempted to drink any intoxicating beverages; and when he became a runseller, I thought my tyrant had found his proper level. His son Nick tended the front bar, while he waited upon the negroes, who imbibed the cheapest corn-whiskey and apple-brandy by the tumbler-full at a dram.

When I went into the saloon Captain Boomsby was seated in the rear of the room, where he had a view of both bars. He was at least half "full" himself. He was badly bloated, and his face was red and almost honeycombed with toddy-blossoms.

"Well, Sandy, what do you want now?" demanded the saloon-keeper, when I came into his presence. He did not call me "Alick," as others did, but still used the name by which I had been known when he took me from the poor-house in the State of Maine.

"Nothing, Captain Boomsby; only we sail to-morrow, and I thought I would say good-by to you, for I may never see you again," I replied.

"I never want to see you no more," growled he. "You've always behaved bad ever since I fust knowed you, and you will come to some bad end yet."

"I hope not," I said, seating myself.

"You sartin will. I took care on you when you was little, and done everything I could for you; but you have worked agin me from the fust."

As I seated myself I saw a customer come up to the front bar. He had a package, which he laid upon the counter while he poured out his dram.

"I don't think it's any use for you and me to talk over these things," I added, turning my eyes from the counter to the bloated face of my former tyrant. "We shall not be likely to agree in regard to matters in the past."

"You know just as well as I do that the steam-yacht you sail in rightfully belongs to me," he added.

"I think not. If she belongs to anybody besides myself, it must be to my father."

"That man ain't your father any more'n I am."

At that moment a rather rough-looking man came into the saloon, walked far enough back to look into the negro bar, and then retreated.

"I think it has been fully proved that Major Garningham is my father," I replied.

I had scarcely spoken the words, as the rough-looking visitor was retreating without any dram, when Nick made a flying leap over the counter, and rushed out at the street door. The gentleman with the package had his eyes upturned to the ceiling, in the act of draining the tumbler in which he had elaborately stirred up the fiery mixture.



"NICK RUSHED OUT AT THE STREET DOOR."  
*PAGE 22.*

When Nick went over the counter the customer was startled. He saw, at the same moment I discovered the fact, that the package he had laid upon the counter was missing. He rushed out of the saloon like a crazy man.

## CHAPTER II.

### FOUR THOUSAND DOLLARS.

"What on airth does all that mean?" said Captain Boomsby, rising with difficulty from his chair, and walking towards the front door.

"I'm sure I don't know," I replied. "I saw Nick leap over the counter as though he had found a mocassin-snake behind it."

"Don't say nothin' about mocassins here, for you scart my wife out of her seven senses once afore," said the captain, savagely, as he stopped and looked at me.

He had set a trap to have such a snake bite me in his house; but I was not thinking of that when I named the venomous reptile. This event, and the quantity of his own vile fluids he consumed, made him sensitive on the subject of snakes. I was afraid he would soon see more of them than he could manage.

"What made Nick run out so quick, and what did Peverell follow him for, without payin' for his liquor?" continued Captain Boomsby, when he had properly admonished me in regard to the snakes.

"I don't know, sir," I replied. "Who was the man that followed Nick?"

"That was Peverell."

"Who is Peverell?" I asked. "What does he do?"

"He is the messenger, I believe they call him, of the First National Bank of Florida."

"That explains it all, then," I added, beginning to understand the situation.

"I don't see nothin'. What explains it all?" demanded the captain, testily.

"Peverell had a package when he came in. He put it on the counter before he poured out his dram," I explained. "When Nick went over the counter the package was gone. If Peverell is the messenger of a bank, I have no doubt the bundle contained money in bank notes."

"Creation! You don't! But what made Nick go over the bar so like a hoppergrass?" exclaimed the saloon-keeper.

"I don't know. I can only understand what I saw."

"If Nick's got that bundle of money, he's smart," added Captain Boomsby.

"Do you think it was smart to steal it, captain?" I asked, mildly.

"How big a package was it, Sandy?" replied my tyrant, turning away from the moral question.

"It was at least two inches thick."

"Creation! Then there ain't less than a thousand dollars in it!"

"Let us hope that Nick did not take it," I added.

"Well, you go out, Sandy, and see where Nick's gone. I can't leave both bars without anybody to look out for 'em, for them niggers will come in and steal the liquor as quick as they will chickens."

I was interested to know the meaning of what I had seen in the saloon, and I went out into Bay Street. A crowd of men were rushing towards a narrow street leading down to the river. I followed them, and, near the landing-place of the Charleston steamers, I saw a colored policeman lay violent hands on the rough-looking person who had walked into the saloon, looked into the negro bar, and then retreated.

Nick was on the spot, hatless and coatless, almost as soon as the policeman had grabbed his victim. Mr. Peverell was only a moment behind. By this time I had framed an explanation of what had transpired in the saloon which satisfied me for the moment, whether it was correct or not. While Peverell was concocting his beverage--and he had seemed to me to be very dainty and particular in the preparation of it--he had almost turned his back upon the package on the counter.

I was not bestowing any particular attention upon the rough-looking visitor; but I had seen him pass close by the bank messenger. I concluded that he had snatched up the package on the counter, and retreated with it from the saloon. Nick had either seen the man take the bundle, or had discovered that it was missing. No one could have taken it but the person who was passing out of the door. On the impulse of the moment the young bar-tender had leaped over the counter to pursue the thief.

Of course a crowd quickly collected around the robber and the policeman, with Nick and the messenger in the inner circle. The bank official was very much excited, and I judged that the package contained a considerable sum of money. Nick was hardly less disturbed. I was interested enough to run all the way to the pier, and work myself into the centre of the crowd before it had become very compact.

"Dat's jes like you, Buckner," said the policeman, as soon as he could obtain breath enough to speak,--and he had not quite enough when he did speak. "I done cotch you doin' dat same ting before."

"Doing what thing, you black spider?" demanded Buckner, who appeared to be greatly astonished at his arrest.

"You done stole someting," protested the guardian of the peace. "What did you run for if you don't steal someting?"

"I didn't steal anything! I run because the rest of you did, to find out what the matter was," replied Buckner, stoutly. "What did I steal, you black Lazarus?"

"Donno what you 'tole. I 'pose dis gemman can told what you 'tole," replied the policeman, turning to Peverell.

"He stole a package of bank bills I laid on the counter; that is what he stole! And there was four thousand dollars in the package, too," gasped the messenger.

"Did you see me take the package?" demanded Buckner, indignantly.

"I did not; but you were the only person that came into the saloon and left it while I was there," replied Peverell, sharply; and it was evident that he had no doubt at all in regard to the guilty person.

"I didn't touch your package! I didn't see any package! I didn't go near you, or even know you were in the saloon!" protested Buckner, vehemently. "I'm a poor man, I know, and it is hard enough for me to get a living; but I never stole the value of a penny in my life."

"But I saw him take it!" broke in Nick, with almost as much earnestness as Buckner or Peverell, though he had no special interest in the animated discussion. "The moment he tried to get out of the saloon, I jumped over the counter and went for him."

"That's so!" added Peverell, with increasing energy. "But we are wasting time. Why don't you search your prisoner, and get the package? If he stole it, he has the package now."

"Search me as much as you like!" replied Buckner, warmly.

"Search him!" "Overhaul him!" "Clean him out!" shouted the crowd, who were working themselves up to a fever-heat over the case.

"He's thrown it away before this time," suggested Nick.

"He couldn't have thrown it away without some one seeing him do it," replied Peverell. "Did any one see him throw it away?"

"No! no!" shouted the bystanders.

I had seen Buckner running down the middle of the narrow street, with the officer, Nick, Peverell, and others, within a few feet of him. It would have been almost impossible for him to get rid of the bundle in any way without being observed.

"He might have thrown it into the river," again suggested Nick.

"He done don't go widin twenty yards ob de riber; and he done don't frow no package in de riber when I don't see him. Dis chile hab his four eyes open all de time," added the policeman.

"Search him!" "Turn him inside out!" shouted the crowd again.

"Search me all you like!" cried Buckner, pulling out both the pockets of his pants, and throwing up his arms in readiness to submit to the operation. "I haven't got the package, and I never saw it."

"How big was de package, Mr. Peverell?" asked the officer, as he proceeded to examine the clothing of the prisoner.

"It was the size of a bank-bill, and about two inches thick," replied the messenger, very anxiously.

"I don't find noffin like dat on dis yere prisoner," said the officer, when he had felt his man all over.

"You won't find nothing if you search me all day and all night," protested Buckner; and there was something like a proud dignity in his manner, though he was not a good-looking man.

But it is possible to be honest without being handsome; and rogues assume virtues they do not possess. Certainly, the valuable package was not concealed upon the person of Buckner. The only alternative was, that he had thrown it away,—cast it into some hole, or pitched it into the river.

"There can be no doubt this is the man that took the package from the counter, for no one else came near me while I was in the saloon," reasoned Peverell, whose vehemence had calmed down, and given place to a deep anxiety.

"I've said all I have to say, and you can do what you like with me; but I will make it hot for some of you before you see the end of this business," said Buckner, doggedly. "I'm a poor man, but I'm not to be trodden on, any more than a nigger is!"

By this time the crowd had scattered to make a search in the holes and in the water for the missing package.

"What were you doing in the saloon?" asked the messenger, in a mild tone.

"I went in there to see if I could find a man to help me take up a couple of trunks to the St. James," replied Buckner. "I looked into the nigger bar, and then came out. I saw there was a man at the front bar; but I took no notice of him, and didn't see any package."

"Before you had reached the door, this young man had jumped over the counter, and was chasing you. He was sure you had taken the package; and no one else could have taken it," added Peverell, warming up again.

"But I didn't take it, and that's all I have to say about it," answered Buckner, decidedly.

"I saw him take it!" repeated Nick, with emphasis. "He must have thrown it into the river."

The policeman led his prisoner away to the lockup, while all the rest of us followed up the search for half an hour. The messenger said the bills were done up between two tin slabs of the size of the notes, and inclosed in brown paper. Some searched on the pier, and some went out in boats,—but no package could be found. The search was given up, and I went back to the saloon with Nick and Peverell.

Captain Boomsby's son told his father all about the affair from beginning to end. He was putting the whiskey-bottle back into its place under the counter, when he heard Buckner's step as he approached the front door. He looked up, saw that the package was gone, and that the departing visitor had it. "That was all he knew about it."

"But you said you saw Buckner take it," said Peverell.

"I saw him take it out of the saloon," replied Nick.

The circumstances pointed very strongly, to say the least, to Buckner as the guilty one. I had learned all I wanted to know, and was trying to say good-by to Captain Boomsby, when Peeks, the steward of the Sylvania, came into the saloon with a telegraphic dispatch in his hand.

## CHAPTER III.

### ADIEU TO THE BOOMSBYS.

Mr. Peverell, the bank messenger, called at the saloon on his way back. Doubtless he was not a little concerned about meeting the officers of the bank, after the loss of so large a sum of money. By this time they had heard the news, for it was flying all over the city. He looked very much troubled, as well he might.

"It seems very strange to me," said Peverell, after he had discussed the robbery for a while. "Nobody came into the saloon while I was there but Buckner. I saw him come in, but I took no further notice of him; and I hadn't the least idea that anything was wrong till I saw Nick leap over the counter. I can't see how anybody else could have taken the package; and it is just as hard to tell what became of it."

"I haven't the least doubt but what he threw it into the river," added Nick Boomsby.

"I don't see how he could have done it without anybody seeing him," replied the messenger. "There were plenty of men standing about the pier."

"There seems to be something the matter here," interposed Peeks, coming up to me at this moment with the telegraphic despatch in his hand. "I am sorry to disturb you, Captain Alick."

"It is none of my affairs," I added, hoping the despatch contained no bad news from home.

"I have a message from Detroit informing me that my father is very sick," added Peeks, opening the despatch. "My mother wants me to come home as quick as I can."

"I am sorry your news is so bad, Mr. Peeks; but there is only one thing for a son to do in such a case," I replied, full of sympathy for our steward. "I hardly know how I shall get along without you; but I cannot ask you to remain under such circumstances."

"I am sorry to leave, Captain Alick, especially for such a reason. My health has been entirely restored by this cruise, and I would not leave you if I didn't get a cent for my work, though I have been well and promptly paid. My father has considerable property, and my mother is old and feeble. I am afraid I shall not be able to join you again, for if my father dies, as the doctors say he must, I shall have to look out for his affairs at home. But I have no time to lose, for I must take the train for the North this afternoon."

I paid him the balance of wages due him, and we parted with a hearty shake of hands. His going disturbed me not a little, for he was both skilful and faithful, and his services had been invaluable, when I had so many passengers on board the Sylvania. He left the saloon, and for some minutes I forgot the exciting events of the day.

If we were to sail on our next cruise, as had been arranged, the next morning, I must look up a competent steward. But the Florida season was over, and I anticipated no trouble in finding one.

By this time there was quite a crowd collected in the saloon, and for half an hour longer the robbery was talked over. Nothing new was brought out. Buckner had taken the package from the counter, Nick had pursued him, and the money was not found. They could not get beyond these facts, or beyond these apparent facts, for things are not always as they seem.

Peverell left when he found he could get no further in his investigation, and then for a time there was a lively business done at both bars of the saloon. The negroes had come into the front room to hear what was said, and they could not leave till each of them had imbibed all the cheap whiskey he could get into one of Captain Boomsby's thick-bottomed tumblers. Nick was just as busy at the front bar. I could not help looking at him as he dealt out the dangerous fluids--doubly dangerous after passing through Captain Boomsby's hands. I doubted whether he had any ambition to become anything better than a bartender. He was about my age, but not half so robust, for, being an only son, his father and mother humored him, and never compelled him to do anything like hard work, as they had me.

Nick was dressed in rather cheap, but flashy, clothes, and wore an enormous glass diamond in his shirt front. At the present time he seemed to be doing his dirty work in a very mechanical manner, as though he were thinking of something else. He had to ask every customer twice over what he wanted, and even then gave him the wrong bottle.

But the rush of business was soon over. Captain Boomsby came out of the negro bar, and Nick joined him in the rear of the front saloon. The father looked at the son, and the son looked at the father, and then both of them looked at me, as though they did not care to say anything in my presence.

"I suppose I shall have to go to court, father," said Nick, "and I guess I had better go up stairs and slick up a little."

"You look well enough as you be," replied the elder Boomsby.

"If I am going into the court, I want my best clothes on. Besides, father, you said I might go out this afternoon," replied Nick, who evidently had other views in his head than the court. "Mother had just as lief tend bar this afternoon as not."

"I s'pose she had, but I don't want her in the bar when I can help it," added the captain, whose marital relations had become decidedly unpleasant, as I had learned from observation.

"Well, Captain Boomsby, I must say good-bye to you again," I interposed, not caring to wait for the father and son to settle the question between them.

I offered my hand and he took it; but I don't think he was inclined to weep at my departure. I thought that Nick looked at me with more than usual interest, and when I took him by the hand to say good-bye to him, he pressed my hand warmly. Before, when I had met him, he was hardly disposed to speak to me at all. He and his mother kept the old sores open.

"I have never been on board of your steamer yet, Captain Alick," said he, with a sort of ghastly grin, which I could not understand. "I wanted to get out this afternoon to make a visit to her."

"She can be seen by everybody who chooses to visit her, and I shall be glad to see you on board of her," I replied. "All hands are on shore now, except Cobbington, who is acting as ship-keeper. He will show you all over the Sylvania, if I am not on board."

"Where are you going from here in her?" asked Nick.

"We shall run down the coast of Florida, then across the Gulf of Mexico, and then up the Mississippi," I replied.

"I wish I was going with you," added Nick.

I did not wish he was going with me, and so I said nothing. I had taken leave of the captain and his son, and was about to depart when Mrs. Boomsby came into the saloon from the front entry.

"You here, Sandy," said she, bestowing a look of disgust upon me.

"I leave early to-morrow morning, and I dropped in to say good-bye. I will say the same to you, Mrs. Boomsby," I added, moving towards the door.

"You needn't trouble yourself to say good-bye to me, for sakes knows I don't keer whether I ever see you again or not," replied the amiable lady, with a frown on her countenance which was enough to prevent me from saying anything more. I bowed and moved towards the door.

"I s'pose you think you are mighty grand, sailin' about in a steam yacht; but you'll come to a bad end yet," continued Mrs. Boomsby.

That was just what her husband had said to me, and I concluded they had talked the matter over again. I did not wait to hear any more. I entered the saloon on a friendly mission; I had forgiven my worst enemies,--I could conceive of none worse than the Boomsbys,--and I was not willing to have any words with the most virulent one of the family. I walked out of the saloon. I heard some further uncomplimentary allusions to myself as I closed the door behind me; but I believed that was the last I should ever see of any of the Boomsby family.

I walked up to Colonel Shepard's house, and found all the family, as well as Owen there. They were evidently engaged in the discussion of some topic of interest when I entered. I had come up to press their acceptance of the invitation I had given them to continue the yachting excursion with me up the Mississippi; but before I had time to say anything about it, Owen told me the Shepards had concluded to decline the invitation. I was rather taken aback by this announcement, for the party were exceedingly pleasant company, and I knew that Margie Tiffany would enjoy being with her friend, Edith Shepard.

"You have treated us exceedingly well, Captain Alick, on board of the Sylvania, and we shall all be grateful to you as long as we live, for all the pleasure you have afforded us," said Colonel Shepard.

"I shall be greatly disappointed, sir, if your family do not go with us," I answered, wondering at his decision. "We can accommodate you very well, and the more the merrier, you know."

"You forget that I am the owner of a steam yacht like the Sylvania," continued Colonel Shepard, smiling. "I expected to send her to New York, but I concluded not to do so until we were ready to go ourselves."

"I knew that the Islander was still here, and she can take you anywhere you wish to go as comfortably as the Sylvania;

but I should be very glad to have you continue to be our passengers."

"As you have your father with you now, I think you will get along very well without us," laughed the colonel. "I only wish I had you and your crew to run the *Islander* for me."

"Thank you; you are very kind, sir. I am afraid we shall not be able to leave the *Sylvania*. But where are you going?"

"It is still an open question whether we proceed directly to New York, cruise awhile in the vicinity of Florida, or go with you. I am not quite willing to leave the State until I have pulled in a few more red-fish, black bass, and other fish such as we caught in Indian River."

"I suppose you don't propose to take Captain Boomsby with you as captain of the *Islander*. You remember that he came to Florida in command of her," I added.

"I don't propose to take any such person. I retain the captain and crew I engaged to take the *Islander* to New York," replied Colonel Shepard. "Captain Blastblow has seen service in a yacht, and has commanded a steamer."

"I have no doubt he is entirely competent."

"I think he is, or I would not trust my family to his care. While we were up the St. Johns, he put the *Islander* in first-rate condition. He has had her boiler and machinery overhauled, and declares she has the best engine he ever saw in a steamer. I went down to see her as soon as we arrived. He has engaged a steward, waiters, and others, and I think we shall be ready to sail as soon as you are," continued the colonel.

"We are off early to-morrow morning," I added.

"Captain Blastblow told me at noon he should be ready to sail to-night. I expect a letter to-day from New York, and that will enable me to decide where we go."

I soon took my leave, for I had to engage a steward before night. I was amazed at the decision of Colonel Shepard, and I could not help thinking he had some motive for his course which did not appear on the surface. I decided to call upon my father on my way to the wharf, for he was staying at the Carlton with the Tiffanys. I had gone but a few steps before Owen caught up with me.

"I want you to understand, Alick, that I am not concerned in this business," said he, in a deprecatory tone. "I had no idea what the colonel intended to do until I went to his house this afternoon."

"O, I don't blame you for it, Owen," I replied.

"But I think they would have gone with us if I had held the charter of the vessel as before," he added.

"I think that need make no difference. I suppose you will go in the *Islander* now," I continued, laughing, for I did not think he would be able to break away from Miss Edith.

"I don't know, Alick. To tell the truth, I have had no invitation to go in the *Islander*; and without one I surely shall not go in her."

This seemed to me to be a little odd, and I was thinking of it when we came to the Carlton, where I found my father on the piazza. We told him the whole story. To my astonishment, he said he was glad to hear it. I told him Owen had no invitation to go in the *Islander*.

"And he will have none," added my father, bluntly. "Owen, if you accept any such invitation, should one be given, the *Sylvania* will part company with the *Islander* as soon as we get out of the river."

"That is very odd, uncle Bent," answered Owen.

"I have a very great respect for Colonel and Mrs. Shepard; and what he has done, probably by the counsel of his wife, removes the only doubt I had of him. Owen, you are a perfect spoon! It is not quite proper that you and Miss Edith should be spooning all the time, night and day; and to my mind, Colonel Shepard has decided to go in his own yacht to prevent this thing, as well as to retain his own self-respect. I dare say he is no longer willing to be the guests, with his whole family, of Alick or yourself. That's the whole of it. It is better for you to visit the young lady occasionally than to spend weeks or months with her in a little steam-yacht."

I thought my father was rather severe upon my cousin, and I determined to speak to him about the matter when we were alone. I told my father that Peeks had been obliged to leave, and that I must look up a steward at once.

He told me I need not go far to find one, and recommended me to give the place to Cobbington. I had not thought of such a thing, and I hastened on board to consider the matter.



## CHAPTER IV.

### NICK BOOMSBY HAS ASPIRATIONS.

When I reached Market Wharf I found that the *Islander* had hauled out into the stream from the wharf where she had been undergoing repairs. Captain Blastblow had certainly done his work well. The twin sister of the *Sylvania* had been painted, and she looked as though she had just come out of the ship-yard for the first time. She was moored off the yacht-club house, and the American flag was flying at her peak, as though she had just gone into commission.

I earnestly hoped that Colonel Shepard would conclude to make the trip up the Mississippi, for I was very confident we should enjoy yachting on the great river much more in company with the *Islander*, and the pleasant party on board of her, than we could alone.

I took a shore boat to board the *Sylvania*, for as this was our last chance on shore for the present, all hands had been allowed to spend the day in the city. Cobbington declared that he did not care to see any more of the city, where he had passed so many miserable days, and had volunteered to remain on board as ship-keeper.

Miles Cobbington had come to the south as an invalid, and having no means, he had picked up a precarious living by hunting, fishing, and doing such odd jobs of work as he could find. When I came across him he was hungry, and without a place to lay his head. With good living on board the *Sylvania*, and with his mind relieved of all anxiety about his daily food and shelter, he had picked up wonderfully during the month of our trip up the river.

"Well, Miles, how do you get on?" I asked as I ascended the gangway.

"First-rate, Captain Garningham. I haven't been so happy for years as I am now," he replied with a cheerful smile. "I begin to think I may live for some years yet."

"I hope you will live for many years yet," I replied. "Mr. Peeks has been on board this afternoon, has he not?"

"Yes, sir; and I am very sorry to have him leave for such a reason," said Cobbington, with a look of genuine sympathy.

"I believe he attended to putting all our provisions and stores on board."

"Yes, captain; we stowed away everything last night, and we are ready to leave as soon as you give the word."

"We can't go without a steward," I added, glancing at Cobbington to see if I could find any suggestion in his face. But he looked entirely blank.

"The steamers here are hauling off, now, and I should say you would have no difficulty in finding one," he replied.

"Do you think you can readily find another good waiter?" I asked.

"I could find a hundred of them in half an hour," he replied.

"Then I wish you to find one as soon as the crew come on board. I want one to take your place in the fore-cabin."

"To take my place!" exclaimed Cobbington, looking aghast at me. "Then you are going to discharge me. What have I done?"

"You have done lots of things, and done them well. You will take Mr. Peeks's place as steward, at the same wages he received," I replied, unwilling to hurt his feeling a moment longer.

"Thank you, Captain Garningham," added Cobbington, his thin face suddenly wreathed in smiles. "I suppose you understand what you are doing, captain."

"I think I do; but I will add that it was my father who suggested your name for the position."

"I am very grateful to him for doing so, and to you for giving me the place. I think I can do the work to your satisfaction, for I have had considerable experience in this sort of business."

I gave him such directions as he needed, and then called a shore boat. As the *Islander* was likely to be our consort during the whole, or a part, of the cruise up the Mississippi, I thought I would pay her a visit, and become better acquainted with her officers. My uniform procured me a ready recognition on her deck. Captain Blastblow was a man of forty, with a bald head and red whiskers. He treated me very politely, though I thought I could see something like contempt in his manner, possibly at the idea of a young fellow like me presuming to hold a position equal to his own.

The captain took considerable pains to bring it into the conversation that he had been a seaman all his life, that he had come on board through the hawse hole, and had not crawled in at the cabin window. He made a slurring remark about fresh-water sailors, and informed me that he had been around Cape Horn and the Cape of Good Hope. He had been an ensign in the navy during "the late unpleasantness," and had served in the Gulf of Mexico in the blockade fleet.

"When do you sail, Captain Blastblow?" I inquired.

"I don't know: but I have my orders to be ready to go at a moment's warning at any time after daylight to-morrow morning," replied the captain of the *Islander*.

These instructions seemed to be entirely consistent with what Colonel Shepard had said, that his departure and destination depended upon the letters he expected to receive by the afternoon mail. I looked over the steamer, and found her as neat as a new pin in every part. The officers and crew had put on a new uniform, and I found that they had steam up on board.

I found no one that I knew on her deck, and the captain introduced me to the mate, the engineers, and the steward. I thought there was a little irony in his words as he did so; but I took no notice of this circumstance. I could see that he believed he was a thoroughly competent captain, and that he had some doubts in regard to my ability to fill the position I occupied on board of the *Sylvania*. I was willing that the future should settle all such questions; but I had the vanity to believe, though I did not say so, that I could handle the *Sylvania* as well as he could the *Islander*.

We parted as the best of friends should part, and when I had seated myself in the boat, I could not help thinking I should like to see him handle his vessel in such a storm as I had seen on Lake Superior. In a few moments I was landed on Market Wharf, and walked up to the post-office to inquire if there were any letters for me. I learned that the northern mail had not arrived. It was often several hours behind time, for the railroads in Florida were in very bad condition.

Colonel Shepard was there, very impatient at the non-arrival of his letters. He told me, if he had to go to New York, he should sail in the *Islander* on the next tide. If his business did not call him north at once, he should sail with us the next morning.

The colonel went over to the Carlton, and I was about to go with him, when Nick Boomsby came up to me. He was dressed in his best clothes, and he was as good a representative of the idiotic swell as I had ever met.

"When do you sail, Captain Alick?" he asked, as though the question was one of vital importance to him personally.

"To-morrow morning, about seven o'clock, unless some change is made in the arrangements," I replied, wondering what possible interest he could have in the sailing of the steamer.

"Alick, you and I were always good friends," he continued.

"Not always, though I don't mind that now," I added, not willing that the exact truth should be sacrificed, even by my silence.

"I am getting a little tired of this place, and I want to be out of it. I know we didn't always agree when we were little children; but I don't believe you think of these things now."

"I have not the least ill-will towards you, Nick."

"I am right glad to hear you say so. The old man never will let up on you, I suppose. But I told him he was a fool, and that he had better let you alone."

Perhaps it was good advice, but I did not believe he ever gave it to his father, though he was capable of any disrespect. I waited to learn what he was driving at, though the fact that he had said he wished he was going with me on the cruise came to my mind in this connection.

"I am tired of the sort of life I am leading," continued Nick.

"I don't blame you," I added, with the utmost sincerity, though I had not supposed he had any soarings above the sphere of a bar-tender.

"What can I do? The old man won't let me do anything else beside tend bar. It is mean business, and I'm bound to get out of it."

I thought Nick's view of the situation was very commendable, though I did not see how he was to break away from his father, if the latter was not willing he should do so.

"The only way I can do it is to run away," added Nick.

"I can't advise you to do that," I replied.

"I am eighteen years old, and I am able to take care of myself. The old man don't give me any wages, and it's hard work for me to get a suit of clothes out of him when I need it. Which would you rather do if you were in my place,—sell whiskey, and very likely become a drunkard yourself, or run away, and become an honest and respectable man?"

It was a hard question, and I declined to answer it, for I was unwilling to be responsible to any degree for anything that Nick Boomsby might do. I knew him too well.

"If you will take me to New Orleans on your steamer, I will work my passage, and be everlastingly obliged to you besides," persisted Nick, coming all at once to the point.

"No, Nick, I shall not do anything to provoke your father, or give him just cause to complain of me. So far as your leaving your present business is concerned, you must settle that for yourself," I replied, firmly.

I refused all his entreaties to be allowed to go in the Sylvania. I told him that the relation between his father and myself would not permit me to do anything to assist him. He seemed to be reconciled to my decision, and was as pleasant as possible. He asked me about the Islander, and I told him all I knew about her. I inquired what had been done about the robbery. Nothing more had been done, but everybody was satisfied that Buckner was the guilty person, and the police were still searching for the missing package. Nick was going on board of the Sylvania next, and I wrote on a card a request to Cobbington to show him over the vessel.

While we were talking the mail arrived. Colonel Shepard rushed to the post-office, and I was talking to him while the mail was in process of sorting and distribution. Nick stood by me all the time, and listened to all that we were saying. At last Colonel Shepard received his letters. He opened one of them with feverish haste.

"All right! I go with you, Captain Alick!" exclaimed the colonel, evidently as much delighted as a child would have been. "I will follow you up the Mississippi. What time do you sail, Captain Alick?"

"At seven; that will bring us to the bar at about the right time," I replied.

"I must send word on board to Captain Blastblow to be ready at that time."

The colonel appeared to be searching his pockets for a piece of paper, and I handed him one of my blank cards. He wrote something on it, and intimated that he wanted to find some one by whom he could send it on board of the Islander.

"I am just going on board of the Sylvania, and I will leave it on board of the Islander as I pass her," interposed Nick.

Colonel Shepard asked me if I knew the young man, and I told him I did. He gave him the card, and Nick hastened off in the direction of the boat-club building. I wondered if he was not intending to look for a passage to New Orleans in the Islander. It was not impossible, and I determined that my late passengers should not be burdened with his company.

I went to the Carlton, and found that my passengers had decided not to go on board of the Sylvania till the next morning, and had ordered an early breakfast. There was to be some sort of a social occasion in the parlors that evening, and my father and his friends wished to be present. I went on board of the steamer. On my way I looked in at the window of Captain Boomsby's saloon, and saw that Nick was there peddling out whiskey to thirsty customers. He had not concealed himself on board of the Islander; and I had told Colonel Shepard to be on the lookout in the morning, to assure himself that he had no more passengers than he wanted. I was quite sure I had blocked Nick's wheels, so far as running away in either of the steam-yachts was concerned.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE STRANGE MOVEMENT OF THE ISLANDER.

Cobbington had engaged the additional waiter. His name was Reel Bendick, as he spelled it out to me; and he seemed to be an intelligent and docile man. He was to wait on the table in the fore-cabin, while Tom Sands was to continue in the after-cabin, where he had always been assisted by the steward, and on great occasions by Washington Gopher, the accomplished cook who had come all the way from Detroit.

With these exceptions our crew remained the same as before.

Since our return from up the St. Johns, everything about the Sylvania had been put in perfect order for sea. Moses Brickland, the engineer, had overhauled the machinery and the boiler, and we had a full supply of coal in the bunkers. I went all over the vessel, and assured myself that everything was in order.

"I suppose there is no doubt about our leaving in the morning, is there, Captain Alick?" asked Bob Washburn, the mate, as we seated ourselves in the captain's cabin, after we had both been all over the deck and the cabins.

"Of course I don't know anything more about that than you do, but I think there cannot be much doubt of it," I replied. "We shall have no passengers but my father, the Tiffanys, and my cousin."

"Does Owen Garningham go with us, Alick?" asked Washburn, with astonishment.

"He told me this afternoon he had no invitation to go in the Islander, and my father said he would have none," I replied.

"Then your father thinks there has been too much spooning on board," added Washburn, laughing.

"Probably Colonel Shepard thinks so too, and that may be the reason why he decided to go in the Islander instead of in the Sylvania."

"I should think it would be better to separate Owen and Miss Edith until each shall have a chance to make up his mind."

"Owen seems to be very much attached to Miss Edith, and their being together all the time may result in something very serious. He is a young fellow of twenty, and I doubt if he knows his own mind; he is fascinated by a pretty face."

"There is no doubt of that; and the face is as pretty a one as I ever saw," added Washburn, with emphasis.

"My father says Owen's mother is very rich, and that she is more afraid he will fall into some entangling alliance of this sort, than she is of his becoming a drunkard, or becoming a bad man," I continued, recalling some of the conversations my father had had with me.

"They say Colonel Shepard is rich enough to satisfy even an English nabob," suggested the mate.

"I suppose Owen's mother expects him to marry a duchess," I replied. "I saw her when I was in England; but she had no love for me, and I have no doubt she wished I had never turned up."

"I should say that Edith Shepard was good enough for any fellow, even if he were an earl or a duke," said Washburn, shrugging his shoulders.

"Luckily it is none of our affair, though my sympathies are all with Owen," I added. "I wonder if Nick Boomsby came on board this afternoon," I continued, willing to change the subject.

I called Cobbington into our room, and was informed that Nick had been on board, and had been treated with distinguished consideration.

"Did he say anything about going with us, Cobbington?" I asked.

"He only said he should like to go with us, but you would not allow him to do so, and he had given up all thought about it," replied the new steward. "Besides, he said he was the important witness in a law-case that would come up to-morrow morning."

"I don't believe he would stay for the law-case if I would give him a berth on board," I added.

I related the particulars of the robbery of the messenger, and Cobbington commented on them at some length. I found

that he knew the messenger, and had not a very high respect for him. He had his doubts whether there was any four thousand dollars in the transaction. It looked more to him as though the messenger had arranged the affair so that he could appropriate the money to his own use. Cobbington had worked with Buckner, who was a poor man, and had come to Florida, like himself, to save his life.

"Why did Nick jump over the counter, and chase Buckner, then? Nick says he saw Buckner take the package from the counter, and run out at the front door," I added.

"I don't know anything about the matter, except that I would trust Buckner farther than I would Peverell," persisted the steward. "A bank messenger that means to be honest don't go into a bar-room and put four thousand dollars down on the counter; not every day in the week, at least. I don't believe Buckner took the package; if he had it would have been found on him when the policeman caught him."

We could not get ahead any further than those on shore had in solving the mysterious disappearance of the treasure. At an early hour I turned in, and Washburn soon followed me. After dark I cautioned the anchor-watch not to let any person come on board. I was afraid that Nick Boomsby would try to become a stowaway on board of the steamer, and thus give his father an additional grudge against me. But I soon went to sleep and forgot all about Nick.

I was up at five in the morning. Before I washed my face and made my toilet, I went on deck to take a look at the weather, as I generally did at sea, or when we were on the point of sailing. It was cloudy and thick; but I thought it probable that it would clear off as the day advanced. The smoke was pouring out of the smoke-stack of the *Islander*, as well as of the *Sylvania*. If the weather was not bad enough to make me think of delaying our departure, it was still not so pleasant as I desired for a start.

I dressed myself, and looked the vessel over again. Our party would breakfast before they came on board, and we had nothing to do yet but look after ourselves. At six o'clock we took our morning meal. As soon as it was cleared away, I ordered the anchor up, and we ran in to Market Wharf to take on board our passengers.

Before we reached the wharf I saw a boat board the *Islander*; but she was too far off for me to determine who was in the craft. It was still only half-past-six, and I did not expect our passengers for half an hour or more. I went on shore to walk through the market. It seemed very odd to me to find all sorts of green things, such as green peas, cucumbers, spinach, new turnips, carrots, and most other vegetables, which I had not been in the habit of seeing till July and August. But we had been eating such things, including strawberries, for a month, and many of them all winter in the West Indies.

"The *Islander* is under way," said Washburn, as I sauntered along the wharf.

"Probably she is going to run in for her passengers, as we have done," I replied.

"She don't seem to be headed for the wharf, but down the river," added the mate.

I went on board, and then to the hurricane deck, where I could obtain a good view of her. I was confident that her passengers had not gone on board of her; for we had seen nothing but a boat with two persons in it go alongside the *Islander*. The party consisted of four persons, and two of them were ladies. They could not have gone on board of her without our seeing them.

"It don't look as though she was running in to a wharf," said Washburn, joining me on the hurricane deck.

"Very likely she is taking a little run down the river so that her new captain can see how she works," I added, without a suspicion that anything was wrong about our twin sister. "It isn't seven yet, and she is taking a little turn before she goes up to the wharf."

"Of course it is all right," replied Washburn. "Her captain is as salt as a barrel of brine, and knows all about steamers."

We waited fifteen minutes longer, till I heard a clock strike seven, but the *Islander* continued on her course down the river. I knew she had been ordered to be ready to sail at seven, and I did not suppose Captain Blastblow would willingly fail to be on time. While I was watching the movements of our consort, the baggage of our party arrived at the end of the wharf, and, a few minutes later, a carriage came bringing our passengers.

I had no more time to study the affairs of the *Islander*. My father, Mr. Tiffany and Miss Margie were in the carriage, and I was permitted to help the young lady out, and escort her to the deck. I was a little afraid of my father calling me a "spoon," and I was careful not to overdo myself in politeness.

"How long before you sail, Captain Alick?" asked my fair companion.

"Immediately," I replied. "The *Islander* has already gone, but I think she must return."

"May I go into the pilot-house, captain?"

"Certainly; I shall be delighted to have you there."

"How much I shall miss Edith!" exclaimed Miss Margie, as I gave her the best seat in the pilot-house. "I think it is a great pity that we could not all go together in the same steamer."

"I should have been very glad to have the Shepards on board," I replied. "I suppose Colonel Shepard prefers to sail in his own yacht, as I think I should if I were in his place. But we shall be within hail of each other most of the time, and you can visit Miss Edith about every day after we get into the Mississippi River."

"I am told the Mississippi is a very large river," mused Miss Margie. "Can you see across it, Captain Alick?"

"No doubt of it," I answered, laughing. "It is not more than a mile wide, as a rule. You must be thinking of the Amazon, which is a hundred and fifty miles wide near its mouth. Vessels must get out of sight of land in crossing it, near the ocean."

"We are all on board, Alick, except Owen," said my father, coming into the pilot-house. "He should not keep us waiting."

"Perhaps he has decided to go in the other steamer," I suggested.

But I had hardly spoken the words before Owen came on board. He did not seem to be in despair at his separation from his "bright particular star," and was in excellent humor when he joined us in the pilot-house.

"Where are the rest of your party, Owen?" I asked.

"Merciful hotandsplosh! Haven't you found out yet that they are going on the Islander?" demanded Owen.

"I haven't seen them go on board of her yet," I added.

"They took a carriage to the wharf near the boat-house, and I took one to come here," replied Owen. "They must be on board of her by this time."

"I think not. The Islander has gone down the river," I answered, as I ordered the fasts to be cast off.

I backed the Sylvania on the stern line to clear her from the wharf, and then rang to go ahead. Our voyage around Florida had actually begun, and I was duly exhilarated by the fact. The Islander had gone around the bend of the river, and I could see only her masts and rigging. The wind was blowing fresh from the southwest, and I was not a little astonished to see that her crew were shaking out her fore-topsail. This did not indicate that her captain intended to return to the wharf for his passengers.

"Colonel Shepard and his family must have gone on board of her at least a quarter of an hour before seven, Owen," I said, unable to account for the movements of the Islander in any other way.

"But they did not leave the colonel's house till five minutes of seven--at the same time I started to come here," replied Owen. "What has happened? What is the matter?"

"I don't know that anything is the matter," I replied. "The Islander got under way about half-past six, and I supposed she was going to take a turn on the river before she went up to the wharf. Instead of that she has been moving steadily down the river since she got up her anchor; and there she is, three or four miles on her way to the ocean."

"Sylvania, ahoy!" shouted some one on the shore.

On the pier, near the club-house, were the Shepard party; and it was the colonel who had hailed us. They seemed to be quite as much astonished as we were. I ran the steamer up to the wharf.

## CHAPTER VI.

### A LIVELY CHASE.

In a few minutes our bow and stern lines were fast to the wharf where the Shepards were waiting for their steam-yacht. Owen leaped ashore before the vessel was fairly alongside, though he had not yet come to a full comprehension of what had happened. He knew something was the matter, but he could not tell what it was.

As soon as the Sylvania was made fast I went on shore. Colonel Shepard seemed to be bewildered, for Owen had just told him the Islander had gone down the river. The rest of the family were quite as much astonished as the husband and father. Chloe, the colored servant, was actually wringing her hands, as though she feared another conspiracy was about to be developed.

"Where is the Islander, Captain Alick?" asked the colonel, as I presented myself before him.

"She has gone down the river; and the last I saw of her, she was shaking out her fore-topsail," I replied.

"But what does that mean?" added Colonel Shepard, with a frown.

"I'm sure I don't know, sir. She got under way about half-past six. I supposed Captain Blastblow was about to take a turn or two in her before he ran up to the wharf. It is now quarter-past seven, and the Islander is still making her way down the river. You can see her across the land, though only her spars are in sight."

I pointed out the tapering masts of our consort--if she was to be our consort--in the distance. Presently she disappeared behind a forest of pine.

"I don't understand it at all," said the perplexed owner of the stray yacht. "What does Captain Blastblow mean by treating me in this manner, when I ordered him to be at this wharf precisely at seven?"

"I can't explain it, sir," I replied. "There is clearly some misunderstanding about the matter."

"You saw me write the card at the post-office last night, Captain Alick; and I sent it off by the young man who was with you."

"Yes, sir; Nick Boomsby took the card; and I have no doubt he delivered it, for he came on board of the Sylvania towards night.

"I think Captain Blastblow intends to return soon," I added, for I could not think of any explanation of his singular conduct. I certainly could not reason out any plausible occasion for such a violation of his orders as that in which he seemed to be engaged.

"Perhaps he has run off with the yacht, and intends to become a pirate, or something of that sort," suggested Gus Shepard.

"Nonsense, my son! The Islander is not an armed vessel, and Captain Blastblow is not a pirate," replied Colonel Shepard. "Do you suppose anything was out of order on board of the steamer, Captain Alick?"

"It is possible; but if such was the case, the captain would hardly have gone so far down the river," I replied. "If the Islander had needed any more repairs, Captain Blastblow would have remained in Jacksonville and attended to them."

"Perhaps he wishes to become better acquainted with the vessel before he takes her to sea," added the colonel.

"He might have done that yesterday. He would not have waited until you were ready to sail, and then gone off on an experimental cruise," I answered.

"An experimental cruise!" exclaimed Owen. "What a terrible expression. I hope Captain Blastblow don't use such expressions. If he does, he has gone out to sea where he can have room enough to unsnarl his tongue."

"Captain Blastblow is an American, and he is used to such little trials," I replied.

"What shall be done?" asked Colonel Shepard.

"I think you had better go on board of the Sylvania, with your baggage, and we will stand down the river," I replied, promptly, for I had kept this idea in my mind for some time. "We can at least follow the Islander, and when we come up with her you can go on board of her."

"Are you sure you can overtake her, Captain Alick?" asked Colonel Shepard, with a smile, as though he had some doubts in regard to the relative speed of the two steam-yachts. "Captain Blastblow is confident that he can outsail the Sylvania."

"I don't say that he cannot; but if he does, he has learned a new trick in handling her," I answered, with energy. "I have sailed the Sylvania against the Islander on the Great Lakes more than once, and have not found the time when I could not beat her."

"Her new captain claims to be a very skilful man in handling steamers," added the colonel.

"If you and your family will come on board, sir, I will do the best I can to overtake the Islander, and ascertain what the conduct of her captain means. If we have anything like fair play, we shall overhaul the Islander sometime to-day," I continued, confidently. "We are both well down in the water, with our coal-bunkers and water-tanks full. She is nearly an hour ahead of us now, and her captain was hurrying her all he could."

Owen was delighted with the decision of Colonel Shepard when he accepted my invitation. He had regained his divinity, and he conducted her on board of the Sylvania, while the colonel assisted Mrs. Shepard. Owen escorted Miss Edith to the pilot-house, and her mother went down into the cabin, for the morning was rather raw and chilly. Margie took her dear friend to her heart, and hoped the Sylvania would never overtake the Islander.

"You must let the other steamer keep ahead, Captain Alick," said Margie, as I took my place at the wheel, when the baggage had been put on board.

"That would be treason to the Sylvania and treason to Colonel Shepard," I replied, as I rang the bell to start the steamer.

I knew the river well enough to go ahead confidently, and I had given the chief-engineer a hint as to what I expected of him. In a few minutes, the little steamer was buzzing along at the rate of eleven miles an hour. The only thing I feared was fog, and there seemed to be great banks of it off in the direction of the mouth of the river.

"Mr. Washburn," I called through the windows in front of me.

"On deck, sir," replied the mate.

"Call all hands, and set the fore-topsail."

"Ay, ay, sir," responded Washburn; and I knew there would be no lack of zeal on his part when we came to an out-and-out race.

All hands usually consisted of the two deck hands; but Ben Bowman, the second fireman, and the cabin-waiter were available when there was any extra work to be done. Buck Lingley and Hop Tossford, the deck hands, were sent aloft by the mate to loose sails, while the others manned the halyard and the braces. In a very short time the topsail was drawing full, and the speed of the vessel was sensibly increased.

"Mr. Washburn!" I called again.

"On deck, sir," responded the mate.

"Set the foresail."

The crew made quick work of it.

"Now the mainsail, Mr. Washburn," I continued.

The wind was quite fresh, and the fore and aft sails caused the steamer to heel over considerably when the puffs came, as they generally do in a south-westerly breeze.

"You will tip us over, Captain Alick!" cried Miss Margie, who had not been at sea in the Sylvania.

"I won't do anything of the kind, Miss Tiffany," I replied, with a laugh. "I shall not drown myself for the sake of drowning you, I am very sure. Mr. Washburn!"

"On deck, sir."

"Set the fore to'gallant sail."

"Ay, ay, sir," chuckled the mate, who understood that I meant business by this time.

"Pray, which is the fore top-gallant sail, Captain Alick?" asked Miss Margie.

"It is the highest sail we set on the foremast, though larger vessels have a royal above that, then a skysail," I replied.

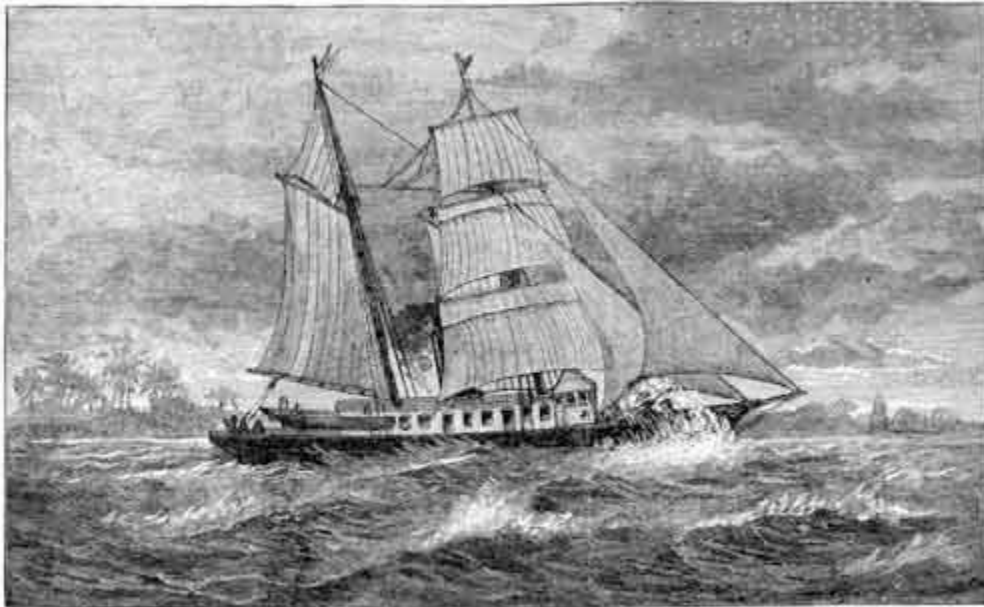


"Mr. Washburn!"

"On deck, sir."

"Now give us the fore squaresail, and run up the jib."

The last order was to set the main gaff-topsail; and then we had all sail on. We turned the bend of the river just after the last sail had been set, which gave us the wind over the starboard quarter. I was confident we were making twelve knots an hour, and the skilful firing of Philander Perkins soon made her do even better than this. The water fairly roared at the bow as the vessel cut through it. The young ladies in the pilot-house ceased to talk, and Miss Margie held on at the wheel with both hands. It was lively sailing, but there was no danger, and I told the fair maiden so many times.



"THEN WE HAD ALL SAIL ON."  
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We all kept a sharp lookout for the *Islander*, but as yet we saw nothing of her. She had, at least, ten miles the start of us, and it was likely to be a long chase, if she continued on her course. I wanted very much to get a sight of her when we reached the bar at the mouth of the St. Johns, so as to determine what course she took.

No progress whatever had been made in solving the problem of the *Islander's* sudden departure without her owner and passengers. We could not imagine any motive on the part of her captain for his singular conduct. My father and Colonel Shepard talked about the matter all the time; but in the absence of any data they could not get ahead a particle.

In an hour and a half by the watch we were in sight of the bar. The weather looked thick and nasty outside, and there was not the slightest sign of the *Islander*. But we were still in the river, and our view to the north and south was obstructed by the trees and shrubs on the shores. It was plain enough to me by this time that Captain Blastblow had no intention of returning to Jacksonville for his passengers.

I kept the *Sylvania* on her course over the bar, and, as it was full tide, I had no fear of taking the bottom. We kept on our course till we had made a good offing. Though the fog had not settled down near the bar, vast piles of it were floating in the air. The question now was whether the *Islander* had gone to the north or the south. I had given the wheel to Hop Tossford, and I was using the glass very industriously in all quarters of the horizon.

"Sail, ho!" shouted Buck Lingley, who had taken his station on the cap of the foremast.

"Where away?" I shouted, sticking my head out the side window of the pilot-house.

"Right on the starboard beam," replied Buck.

As the fog lifted a minute later I got a glimpse of the sail.

"It is the *Islander*!" I shouted, not a little excited. "She is going to the southward."

"I can't understand it," said Colonel Shepard, shaking his head. "Does Captain Blastblow mean to run away with the vessel?"

No one could tell what he meant.

## CHAPTER VII.

### A FOG OFF THE FLORIDA COAST.

The Sylvania was close-hauled, and I gave out the course south south-east. This was the navigation to take the steamer around the peninsula into the Gulf of Mexico, though we intended to put in at Key West, in order to see the place. Washburn noted the departure on the log slate in the pilot-house, and, as it was necessary for us to run by our dead reckoning, the log was heaved every hour. In a short time we were buried in the fog, and kept our steam-whistle going at the proper intervals.

The young ladies soon deserted the pilot-house, for we were obliged to keep the front windows open, and the air was cold and moist. Owen left with them, and my father and Colonel Shepard soon took their places. The owner of the Islander was still too much excited to keep still. He tried to see through the fog; but he might as well have attempted to look through a rocky hill.

"How far ahead do you think the Islander is now, Captain Alick?" asked the Colonel.

"About eight miles, I should judge, unless Captain Blastblow has succeeded in getting more speed out of the Islander than any one else ever could," I replied at once, for I had estimated the distance before.

"Do you really think you are gaining on her?"

"I have no doubt of it," I replied, confidently. "They hurried the Islander down the river; and when both vessels are doing their best the Sylvania gains about a knot an hour on the Islander. I have tried this with her when she had a sailing-master on board who knew all about her, and had sailed her hundreds of miles. I don't believe Captain Blastblow can do any better with her than Captain Braceback; and I used to beat him every time."

"I dare say you are quite right, Captain Alick," added Colonel Shepard. "It is reasonable to suppose that a man who is used to a vessel can do better with her than a stranger."

"I got only a glimpse of the Islander when the fog lifted for a moment, and saw only her spars and sails," I continued. "I have had considerable experience in judging of distances on the water. I should like to have you ask the others on board how far off they think the other steamer was when we saw her."

The colonel liked the suggestion, and he was so much interested in the question that he wished to have the best information he could obtain. I called Washburn first. No one but Hop Tossford at the wheel had heard the conversation, and they could not be influenced by my opinion of the matter. The mate said seven miles. Buck Lingley made it nine miles, and then Ben Bowman was summoned.

"Just about eight miles, I should say," replied Ben, when the question was put to him.

"No two of them agree, though they do not differ widely," said the Colonel, when all who had seen the Islander had answered.

"Ben Bowman has had more experience than all the rest of us put together," I added. "But, Colonel, if you will average all the answers, you will find the result is just eight miles. We may be all wrong. Captain Blastblow talks louder than the rest of us, but when he beats the Sylvania in a fair stand-up run, I wish you would let me know it, if I don't find it out before you do."

I felt almost absolutely certain of the ground I stood on, for I had tried this same issue when the result was almost a case of life and death with me. The Sylvania had been built after the Islander, and her constructor had an opportunity to improve on her model. Our engine was a little more powerful than that of the other yacht, and a defect in the lines of the latter had been corrected in building ours. But the fact of our superior speed had been several times demonstrated by actual trial, and the improvements in our model and machinery only explained what had been proved. It was of course possible that Captain Blastblow had some "knack" of getting more speed out of a steamer than I had; but I was willing to believe, in this case, only what was fairly proved.

"We may miss the Islander in this fog," continued Colonel Shepard, peering anxiously through the fog.

"We may, sir," I replied. "There is nothing to prevent her from coming about and running back to Jacksonville."

"What if she should do that?" asked the owner of the stray yacht.

"We are in the dark as to the intentions of her captain; and everything depends upon them," I answered.

"What can his intentions possibly be?" inquired the colonel, knitting his brow, as he recurred once more to the well-worn topic for at least the twentieth time.

"It is quite impossible to conjecture his motives. He has either made a mistake in regard to his instructions, or he means to run away with the Islander."

"What mistake could he have made in regard to his instructions?" demanded the colonel, who had not admitted the possibility for an instant of any mistake. "Last night I wrote his instructions to be ready to sail at seven, and sent them off to him by the young man who was with you."

"Did you write seven this morning, sir?" I asked.

"I think I did, though I should not be willing to swear to it," replied the colonel, looking a little blank at the idea of such a mistake.

"If you simply said seven, he may have taken it to mean seven this evening," I suggested.

"He could not have thought we intended to go down the river and cross the bar in the night."

"I should say not; but Captain Blastblow is a very brilliant man, and has been around Cape Horn and the Cape of Good Hope so many times that he ought to know what he is about," I replied, letting out a little of my pique at the commander of the Islander for his implications against me.

"Allowing that I wrote 'seven P.M.,' or that I did not write either morning or evening, what is Captain Blastblow doing down here?" demanded Colonel Shepard, warmly.

"If he understood that you were not to sail till this evening, he may have brought the Islander out here to try her, and enable him to get accustomed to her ways before he took on board his passengers. That is all the explanation I can suggest, but I don't think it will hold water. He knows very well, for he has been around Cape Horn several times, that if he comes out here in a fog, he may not be able to get back to Jacksonville in time to take you on board to-night, or even to-morrow or next day."

"If Captain Blastblow had any doubt in regard to my orders, he could have sent one of his men up to my house, and ascertained just what I intended," said the owner, rather wrathfully.

"That is what I should have done; but Captain Blastblow has had more experience than I have," I replied, with a smile.

"Did you notice anything unusual about the Islander, or the conduct of those on board of her, when you saw her this morning, Captain Alick?" continued the colonel.

"Nothing at all, sir. A boat went off to her a few moments before she weighed her anchor," I answered. "There were two persons in the boat when it went alongside the Islander, but only one returned to the shore in it. I concluded some one of her officers or crew had remained ashore over night, and came off in a shore boat. I did not think of the boat till you asked the question."

"I don't see that the boat throws any light on the transaction," mused the owner. "We don't know who was in the boat, though if we were in Jacksonville, we could easily ascertain."

"I don't have any idea that we shall know anything about this matter until we overhaul the Islander," I added. "We can guess for the next week, but we are as likely to guess wrong as right."

"I can't help being considerably disturbed about this mysterious conduct of Captain Blastblow; but I do not see that we are likely to be any wiser in regard to it, as Captain Alick says, till we see the captain," replied the colonel. "We have got to make the best of it, and be patient till we learn more. What do you think of it, Major Garningham?"

"I don't think it is possible to form an intelligent opinion without further information in regard to the facts," replied my father. "I am more inclined to believe that Captain Blastblow has made a mistake of some kind, than that he means anything wrong. It would be worse than folly for him to attempt to run away with the steam-yacht, for he is sure to be discovered and punished."

"If it is a mistake or a misunderstanding, it is a very queer one. But I am not disposed to worry about the matter, and I shall try to reconcile myself to the situation," replied Colonel Shepard, struggling to laugh off his anxiety for the safety of his yacht.

I think it was the want of her, more than the value of the craft, that troubled and vexed him. He was a very wealthy man, and if she was lost entirely to him, it would hardly impair his fortune.

"We shall do the best we can to solve the problem, and overhaul the Islander," I continued; "but, after all, we may miss her. If Captain Blastblow has made a blunder, or there is any misunderstanding, he must soon discover it. If he has only come out here for a trial trip, and should happen to pass us in the fog without our seeing him, he knows the Sylvania

will put into Key West. If he gets back to Jacksonville, and finds that you have left in our steamer, he will return at once, and find us at our anchorage in port."

"When shall you reach Key West, Captain Alick?" asked the colonel.

"If we have good weather, it is a run of from forty-two to forty-five hours. If this fog continues, it will take longer than that, for the navigation is not all plain sailing," I replied.

"And you think you can overtake the Islander in about eight hours?"

"I think so, sir; but I can't say that we shall come near enough to see or hear her in this fog," I answered. "I think you had better make your party comfortable on board of the Sylvania, and leave the rest of the matter to me and my officers."

"I am confident that is the better way for you; and I am sure Alick will do all he can both to make you and your family comfortable in the cabin, and to find your runaway vessel," added my father.

Colonel Shepard yielded to this advice, and I went down into the after-cabin with all the passengers to arrange about the staterooms and berths. Our involuntary guests declared that they were very sorry to make so much trouble, and especially to disturb our arrangements on board. Both my father and I assured them they made no trouble, and that we were not at all disturbed by their presence, inasmuch as we had invited them to take the cruise in the Sylvania, and were glad to have them on board.

I had made a diagram of the cabin, and assigned rooms and berths to all the passengers, when I supposed they were to sail with us. I proceeded to arrange our guests in accordance with this plan.

"Let me have a berth in the fore-cabin, Alick," said Owen to me in a whisper.

"There is no need of that, Owen," I replied. "There is room enough for all of you in this cabin, and some to spare. Colonel and Mrs. Shepard will occupy the port stateroom, as before, when they have sailed with us," I continued, consulting my diagram.

The colonel protested that he would not occupy the best stateroom; but I insisted, and went on giving out the apartments.

"Miss Edith and Miss Margie will take the starboard stateroom."

Both of them screamed with delight at this disposition of them, and Margie declared that I was a "dear, good little Captain Alick," though I was bigger in stature than her father. I had given the two larger rooms to those who were to double-up in them; and of the two remaining rooms, I gave one to my father and the other to Mr. Tiffany. Owen and Gus were assigned to the two berths next to the rooms, which left two others for Chloe and the steward. The curtains drew out in front of the berths, so that the spaces within them were almost the same as staterooms. All were satisfied. I gave orders to Cobbington to provide tables for all. Leaving the passengers to arrange their baggage in their new quarters, I returned to the deck.

The fog was as dense as ever, and we could not see more than a ship's length ahead. Ben Bowman was on the top-gallant forecastle, and Buck Lingley on the fore-yard, keeping the lookout. We were driving the steamer in spite of the fog, and I had some hope that we might soon get a sight of the chase, or at least hear the sound of her whistle.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### A PORT IN A STORM.

"Washburn, you have a long head; can you make anything of the situation, for I suppose you know all about it?" I asked, as I joined the mate on the fore-castle.

"I know what I have heard about the pilot-house and on the fore-castle," replied Washburn.

"I have not been able to make anything out of it, so far," I continued.

"I can't believe that the captain of the *Islander* means to run away with her. I don't believe this is a trial trip, as you suggested, for the captain would not have come out into this fog on such an errand," added Washburn. "On the whole, I must believe it is a blunder on the part of the captain of the consort. But I think we are not likely to find out anything definite about the case until we overhaul the *Islander*. All we have to do is to keep moving to the southward, and keep a sharp lookout for the chase. It is useless to bother one's brains over questions that cannot be answered."

"When I saw the *Islander*, she was well in shore," I added. "If she takes a notion to come about, and run back to the *St. Johns*, we may miss her."

"And she may drop into *St. Augustine*," said the mate.

"I don't see any reason why she should," I replied. "Captain Blastblow knows that the party are bound up the *Mississippi River*. He knows the *Sylvania* is, at any rate; and he would not have headed to the southward if he had not intended to make the same trip, always supposing he has misunderstood his instructions."

"By six o'clock to-night, if everything holds as it is, we ought to overhaul the *Islander*, if we don't miss her in the fog, and Captain Blastblow don't do any better in her than any one else has ever done," continued Washburn. "But the wind is freshening, Captain Alick."

"Yes; and the barometer indicates that we are to have a bad day of it," I replied, looking at the white caps that rolled up to windward of the steamer.

The wind was gusty and savage. The steamer heeled well over to port under the heavy press of sail we were carrying. But I did not care much how hard it blew, if it would only carry off the fog, as I believed it would do soon.

By half-past ten I found it necessary to take in the fore square-sail and the fore top-gallant sail, for I was afraid the heavy weight of canvas would strain the foremast. This relieved the steamer for a time; but the wind had increased to a gale, and had hauled more to the southward. Half an hour later we took in the fore topsail and the main gaff-topsail, so that nothing but our fore and aft sails remained. The log at eleven indicated that we were making twelve knots, and it was about time for us to be up with *St. Augustine* light, but we could not see it in the fog. Suddenly we heard a fog-horn on our starboard bow.

I rushed into the pilot-house and rang the gong. The engineer immediately stopped the engine, and the roar of escaping steam followed. I was afraid we might run down some of the small craft that go in and out of *St. Augustine*.

"Sail, ho!" shouted Ben Bowman, on the top-gallant fore-castle. "I see her; she is a pilot-boat."

A moment later I saw a sail-boat, in which were three men. There was a number on her sail, which indicated that she was a pilot-boat. She had evidently heard our whistle, and had come out in the rough sea to take us into *St. Augustine*, if we were bound into that port. I directed the wheel man to port the helm, so as to throw the *Sylvania* up into the wind under the stern of the pilot-boat.

"How came you up there, captain?" demanded one of the men in the boat, and all of them looked amazed.

"We are bound to the southward, coming down from *St. Johns* bar," I replied. "How does *St. Augustine* bear from here?"

"Due east," answered the spokesman of the trio.

"Look out for your reckoning, Washburn," I added, turning to the mate.

"Twenty minutes of twelve," added Washburn, consulting the chronometer. "This is exactly where we ought to be at this time," and he made the entry on the log-slate.

"Haven't you been over this course before to-day?" asked the spokesman of the pilot.

"Not to-day," I answered, perceiving what it was that bewildered the pilots. They had evidently seen the Islander, and supposed the Sylvania was the same steamer.

"We came out here after a steamer we heard whistling in the fog," continued the speaker. "We got near enough to hail her; and if this is not the same steamer, she is as near like the other as one pea is like another."

"She is the twin sister of this vessel. Did you see who was on board of her?" I inquired.

"I saw no one but the captain, and he said he was bound south, and was not going into St. Augustine."

"Did he tell you where he was bound?"

"He didn't say a word about it, but kept on his course."

"Good-day," I added, as I told Hop to ring the speed-bell.

We filled away again, and were soon going through the water at our former speed. The pilot-boat was almost swamped in the heavy sea, and I have no doubt her crew were a little out of sorts after coming out for a vessel and getting nothing for their pains.

"That's good as far as it goes," said Washburn, when we were on our course again. "We are sure now that the Islander has not gone into port."

"And we are sure the Islander is not a great way ahead of us," I added.

"Just seven miles," replied the mate, glancing at the log-slate. "I could stick a pin in the chart at exactly the point where she is."

"But it may be that Captain Blastblow has not blown his blast entirely in vain, and may have been able to get more speed out of the Islander than anybody else has," I suggested.

"But the pilots said she was only half an hour or so ahead of us. She got off at least an hour ahead of us; and if we have not been gaining on her, she ought to be about ten miles ahead," argued Washburn. I was willing to accept his logic, for we had been over the reasoning times enough to understand the case in precisely the same way.

"The fog is lifting, sir," reported the second engineer, who was doing voluntary duty on the top-gallant forecastle.

This was agreeable news, and all hands directed their gaze to the point where the Islander was believed to be. The gale was increasing in force every moment. Though I had no fears for the safety of the vessel, I knew how fearfully so small a steamer as the Sylvania leaped and rolled in a heavy gale, and I was not a little concerned about the comfort of my passengers. We had had a very thorough trial of her pitching and rolling in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and I did not like to subject the Shepards and the Tiffanys to any unnecessary discomfort.

"We are going to have a regular muzzler, Washburn," I said, after glancing at the barometer again.

"There isn't any doubt about that," he replied, laughing. "I wish we had no ladies on board."

"I was thinking of that myself, and I will go down into the cabin, and talk the matter over with our passengers," I replied. "Of course if we give up the chase of the Islander, we are not likely to come near her again. But Colonel Shepard and his family may decide that question."

I left the pilot-house and went aft. Though we were but a few miles from the land, there was a tremendous sea raging, and the Sylvania was pitching violently. I went down into the cabin and found the passengers trying to keep their places on the transoms. They were all exceedingly good-natured about the situation. Owen was making jokes, and the young ladies were laughing at them. Cobbington and Tom Sands had put the guards on the table, and were doing what they could to prepare for dinner.

"Why do you shake up the Sylvania so fiercely, Alick?" asked Owen.

"She is behaving very prettily just now; but I came down to tell you that it is likely to blow, and kick up an uncomfortable sea," I replied, looking at Mrs. Shepard, who seemed to be the most tried by the situation.

"But I had an idea that it was blowing already," added Owen.

"So it is, in a mild way," I answered.

"If this is only in a mild way, what will it be when it blows harder?" asked Mrs. Shepard, nervously.

"It will be worse than it is now," I replied.

"Do you think we are in any danger, Captain Alick," inquired the lady, looking very anxiously into my face.

"I do not think we are in any danger," I added. "But it is going to blow a great deal harder than it does now."

"What will it do then, Captain Alick?" asked Miss Edith.

"The Sylvania is small, and she will pitch and roll a great deal more than she does now. Mr. Garningham has been in her during a very heavy gale, and he can tell you something about it."

"She stands up straight, and rolls quite over, so that we shall all be pitched against the ceiling of the cabin," added Owen, maliciously. "Then she goes down under the brine, quite out of sight of any one supposed to be on the top of the waves. The water may come down into this cabin like a young Niagara."

"Then there must be very great danger," said Mrs. Shepard.

"No great danger, madam, but I fear you will be very uncomfortable," I answered.

"But can't we stop till the weather is better?"

"We shall find no port it will be safe to enter in this weather, madam," I replied. "If it were fine weather, we might run into Mosquito Inlet; but that is seven hours' run from here."

"We shall all have our brains knocked out if we go on in this way," groaned Mrs. Shepard. "Can't you do something to make us more comfortable, Captain Alick?"

"I can make you all quite comfortable in less than an hour," I answered. "But our business just now is to overtake the Islander; and if we delay the voyage we may never see her again."

"Plague on the Islander!" exclaimed the lady.

"I don't think there is any particular danger, ladies," interposed my father. "It is altogether a matter of comfort."

"I don't want to have my brains knocked out," added Miss Edith.

"If we keep on we may know who has brains and who has not," laughed Owen.

"I'm sure those who want to be thumped about in this manner haven't any brains," continued Mrs. Shepard. "What can you do, Captain Alick?"

"We have just passed the entrance to St. Augustine harbor. We could run back, and make a port there," I replied.

"Then do it, for mercy's sake," said the lady, as a heavy sea rolled the steamer down to her gunwale.

"I should certainly have suggested doing so, if we had not been in chase of the Islander."

"That need not make any difference, Captain Alick."

"The gale may last all night as well as all day, Alick," added my father. "We are sailing for pleasure, and there is no pleasure in being beaten about in this manner. I think you had better put about and get us into smooth water."

I went on deck rather disappointed at the result of the conference, for I was interested in the chase. I ordered the jib and mainsail to be taken in, and the helm to be put down. The fog had lifted to the northward and westward of us, so that I could see St. Augustine light and the pilot-boat. We took up one of the pilots, and in less than half an hour we were anchored under the lee of the town, where the water was as smooth as that of a mill-pond.

Our party were not inclined to land, and we spent a pleasant afternoon on board, in spite of the storm. We could see that it was blowing almost a hurricane outside, and were quite contented to be at anchor.



## CHAPTER IX.

### A VISIT FROM AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE.

I could not help thinking of the *Islander* as we lay at anchor off the pier in St. Augustine. As I looked at the angry billows outside, I understood what kind of a time Captain Blastblow was having. But if he handled his vessel well, and kept out of the breakers, I had no doubt he would come out of the trial all right. The wind had hauled still more to the southward, and even to the east of south. I was confident that the *Islander*, having the wind nearly dead ahead, would not make much headway against such a fierce wind.

About two o'clock in the afternoon, when we had finished our dinners, both in the after and the forward cabin, I saw a boat put off from the shore. The person in the stern sheets had a familiar look, though I did not recognize him till he came on deck.

"I hope you are quite well, Captain Garmingham," said he, advancing towards me with extended hand.

It was Comwood, who had been with us up the St. Johns in the double capacity of guide and pilot, to say nothing of a third capacity as conspirator. While I could not prove it, I was satisfied that he was employed by Captain Boomsby to get me out of the way in some mild manner. He had caused a drunken mulatto to be employed as a waiter in the fore-cabin, who was another of the conspirators. But both of them had been foiled; though, if my father had not arrived at the scene of action when he did, I might not have been privileged to tell my story. The waiter had been sentenced to a term as a convict, though Comwood had been his counsel.

I thought it was rather impudent of Comwood to come on board of the *Sylvania* after what had happened; but brass and impudence were the principal elements of his stock-in-trade. He seemed to have as much assurance as though his relations had been entirely pleasant with me. He was a man of decided ability, though not as a lawyer. He knew more about Florida than any other man I had met; and I had never known him, in the month of my intimacy with him, to be ignorant of any subject, from the navigation of an interior lake or river to the scientific name of a plant or animal. In spite of the harm he had intended to do me, through his agent, I had a great respect for his ability.

"You found it rough outside, Captain Garmingham," said Comwood, when he had disposed of the commonplace introductions.

"Too rough for the ladies; and I came in here to find a smoother sea," I replied.

"The storm won't last long, as it comes from the southward," he added.

"When did you leave Jacksonville, Mr. Comwood?" I asked, for I thought I had seen him in the street the day before.

"I came up in the morning boat," he replied. "It is getting to be very dull in Jacksonville, and I thought I might find something to do here, for fishing and hunting parties often come to St. Augustine without stopping at the city."

"We had some thought of trying the fish at Indian River as we went along; but circumstances do not allow us to stop, and we shall run direct for Key West. Was there anything new in regard to the robbery of the bank messenger this morning?"

"I heard nothing. But your friend, Captain Boomsby, is in great trouble," said Comwood, smiling, as though the saloon-keeper's trouble, whatever it was, could not produce a deep impression on his late employe.

"What is the matter with the captain?" I asked, with interest.

"His son Nick has disappeared."

"Nick disappeared!" I exclaimed, not a little astonished.

"He cannot be found, though his father searched from six o'clock this morning till the time I left."

"When did his father first miss him?"

"It appears that Nick tended bar till after midnight. The old man was too full to sit up any longer, and he left Nick to close the bar. The captain says his son did not sleep in the house last night, and he has no idea when or where he went."

"Very likely he left in the first train this morning," I suggested, recalling all that had passed between Nick and me the

day before.

"No, he didn't, for his father went to the station, and passed through the train just before it started. He did not leave by railroad, or come up the river in the Hampton, or I should have seen him."

"Nick has something like sharpness, and he knew he could not get off on the morning train. But he could have walked to Baldwin between the time he closed the bar and nine o'clock, and taken the train there," I added.

"I don't believe Nick walked twenty miles: he is too lazy to do anything of the kind," added Cornwood, with a smile of incredulity. "But he is not a great loss to his father; and he may make his way when he is thrown on his own resources. There was another piece of news in Jacksonville this morning."

"What was that?" I inquired.

"But I suppose you know more about this matter than any one in the city. It was said that Colonel Shepard's yacht, in which he was going to New Orleans, left without him or his family. Is that a fact?"

"It is true, to the letter," I replied. "I took the colonel and his family on board of the Sylvania, and they are in the cabin now."

"That's very odd--that Captain Blastblow should leave without his passengers," added Cornwood. "What does it mean?"

"That is more than any one on board of the Sylvania can explain."

"Was there any money on board of the yacht--I forget her name, though I have heard you mention it several times?"

"The Islander: she is the twin-sister of the Sylvania, and as near like her as one pin is like another," I answered. "I am not aware that there was any money on board of her; and I should say there was not, for the passengers had not sent their baggage on board."

"Does any one know where she is gone?"

"She is bound to the south, for we saw her off St. Johns' bar headed in that direction. The pilots off the St. Augustine light saw her to-day noon. We were chasing her when our passengers desired to get out of the heavy sea."

"I should think Colonel Shepard would have some idea of the motives of Captain Blastblow."

"He has no more idea than I have, and I have none. We are inclined to believe that the captain misunderstood his orders, for Colonel Shepard was in doubt whether or not he should be able to go up the Mississippi with us. When the mail got in yesterday afternoon, he wrote a card with his instructions to Captain Blastblow on it, and sent it off to the Islander by Nick Boomsby, who happened to be talking to me in the post-office at the time."

"Sent it off by Nick Boomsby," repeated Cornwood; but he did not appear to be astonished. "How came Nick to be about at that time?"

I told my late guide and pilot all that passed between me and the son of my ancient enemy, to which he listened with deep interest. He seemed to be engaged in earnest thought all the time, as though Nick's movements had some meaning to him, though not a particle to me. I told him I was in Captain Boomsby's saloon to say good-by to him at the time the robbery of the messenger occurred. He questioned me very minutely in regard to the affair, and I told him all I knew about it.

"Buckner sent for me to act as his counsel; but I thought I could make more by coming down here," added Cornwood. "I lost one case a few days ago, and I don't care to lose another yet awhile."

Cornwood laughed as he alluded to his defence of Griffin Leeds, the mulatto employed by him to do his bidding on our excursion to the interior.

"Have you any doubt that Buckner is the man who robbed the messenger of the four thousand dollars?" I asked, rather to bring him out than because I valued his opinion in a detective case.

"Not the slightest in the world; but I should not be surprised to learn that he gave Nick a hundred dollars, or something of that sort, to clear out at just this time," replied Cornwood, easily.

"I don't see how that could have been," I protested. "Nick could not have seen Buckner after the money was stolen, unless he visited him in the lock-up."

"That was easily enough done."

"But some officer would have heard what passed between them. Besides, Buckner had no money, for none was found upon him when he was arrested."

"Buckner hid the money, but he stowed away enough to see him through the trial. As the case now stands, they can't convict the man, for Nick was the most important witness. He saw Buckner take the money. I have no doubt Buckner will be discharged to-day," said Cornwood, confidently.

"Was that the reason you would not act as his counsel?" I asked, for the late pilot's statements seemed to be contradictory.

"What you have told me, Captain Garningham, entirely changes my opinion. You were present, and you have told me exactly how the affair happened. I supposed Peverell saw Buckner take the package. That makes all the difference in the world in a court of law. No one saw Buckner take the money, according to your evidence, except Nick. The supposed robber was arrested down the wharf; he was searched, all the holes and corners, including the river, were searched for the package, but it could not be found. What evidence is there that Buckner took it?"

"I don't see any, except that of Nick Boomsby; and he don't tell his story twice alike," I replied. "But, if Buckner did not take the money, I can't see who did take it. I saw the messenger lay the package on the counter; and the next thing I saw was Nick leaping over the counter."

"I don't say that Buckner did not take the package; on the contrary, I believe he did take it; only there is not evidence enough to convict him without Nick," argued Cornwood. "If I had known that Nick was to be out of the way, I certainly should have taken the case, for a man who has stolen four thousand dollars can afford to pay the lawyer well who gets him out of the scrape."

I was disgusted with this logic, though it was perfectly consistent with all I knew of the man. I did not care to say anything more about the case.

"After hearing your version of the affair, Captain Garningham, I am inclined to return to Jacksonville this afternoon, and offer my services to the prisoner. When he gets out of jail he will have money enough to pay me handsomely," chuckled the lawyer; "but perhaps I can do something better if I can recover Colonel Shepard's lost steam-yacht."

"Do you think you can recover it?" I asked, curiously.

"I am quite confident I can. I suppose you will sail as soon as the weather will permit?" continued Cornwood.

"We shall. As I said, I am convinced that Captain Blastblow has simply misunderstood his orders. I think he will proceed directly to New Orleans, possibly touching at Key West."

"He will certainly put in at Key West; but he will probably be from ten to twenty hours ahead of the Sylvania, and he will not wait for you. I should like to see Colonel Shepard."

I called the colonel up from the cabin, and as it was raining in torrents, I conducted him and the lawyer to my stateroom.

"For two hundred dollars--I can't work for nothing, and find myself, though I should be glad to do so for Colonel Shepard--I will recover and return your yacht to you at Key West, or at some point this side of there; half down to pay my expenses, and half when the Islander is delivered to you," said Cornwood.

"I haven't much confidence in you, Mr. Cornwood, and I don't care to advance any money to you," replied the owner of the lost steamer.

"Quite natural, colonel. I will do it without any advance. But in half an hour it will be too late to do anything," replied Cornwood, not at all repelled by the colonel's lack of confidence in him. "I must be in Cedar Keys to-morrow night; and I must be in Jacksonville this evening in order to do it. I shall get to Key West Sunday morning, and find the Islander there."

The plan was considered at length, and finally the colonel assented to it, and wrote the instructions for Cornwood. He hastened on shore.

## CHAPTER X.

### INTELLIGENCE OF THE ISLANDER.

It rained very hard all the rest of the day and all night, and it continued to blow heavily until the next morning. It was not till noon that the ocean looked quiet enough to induce us to take ladies to sea again, after the experience of the day before. We had lost twenty-four hours, and if the *Islander* had not put in at some inlet, or made a lee under Cape Canaveral, was half way to Key West. It was useless to think of overtaking her on the passage, unless she had spent a day in Mosquito Inlet.

Colonel Shepard's letter was addressed to Captain Blastblow, though it was an open one, directing him to await the arrival of the *Sylvania* at Key West. I had no faith in Cornwood; but I was willing to believe he thought he could intercept the *Islander* at Key West, or he would not have gone on a "wild-goose chase" at his own expense. If he recovered the steam-yacht he would get two hundred dollars for his services; if he failed, he would get nothing. So far as I could see, no risk was incurred by the colonel in allowing the Floridian to go on this mission.

The weather was delightful after we got outside of the harbor of St. Augustine. The wind was west, and the air was as balmy as summer. We placed easy-chairs on the quarter-deck for the ladies. The long swells of the ocean gave a steady and regular roll to the vessel. The party declared that the sail was "perfectly delightful," and they did not see how the sea could be so angry and savage as it had been the day before.

The mate noted the departure from St. Augustine light at half-past twelve. I had a chart laid out on my table in the stateroom, on which I had marked the route of the vessel to Key West, with the courses and distances, in red ink. It was our rule to heave the lead every hour, though the *Sylvania* made a regular average of ten knots an hour when she was not hurried. When we came to a point of land, or any opening in the coast, we could tell what it was.

According to the Coast Pilot, which was always kept on the shelf, by the side of the binnacle, it was eighty-five miles to Cape Canaveral. In just eight hours and a half, if we made our ordinary speed, we should be abreast of this cape. We kept as close to the coast as the depth of water would permit, for there were no shoals or other dangers to fear. If we went out far enough, we should have the current of the Gulf Stream against us.

As soon as we were fairly on our course I began to think over the mission of Cornwood. I had no doubt that he was a rascal. I considered whether or not it would be possible for him to do me or Colonel Shepard any harm, on the one hand, or any good on the other. He had received no money, and was to receive none until he earned it.

He was to arrive at Key West on Sunday morning. The *Sylvania* would not be likely to reach the same port before Sunday noon. If the *Islander* had kept on her course during the twenty-four hours we had been at anchor, she would be likely to reach Key West on Saturday afternoon. I did not know that she had any occasion to put in there at all; if she had, she was not likely to remain there many hours. If the *Islander* had not put in at any port during the storm, Cornwood would not arrive at his destination until after she had departed.

The interesting question was whether she had or had not made a port in the storm. If I had had no ladies on board, I should not have thought of such a thing as going into St. Augustine on account of the bad weather. Captain Blastblow, according to his own statement, was a thorough seaman, and, judging by my own feelings, it was not probable that he had made a port.

But I was not quite satisfied on this point, and I had not so much confidence in the captain of the *Islander* as he seemed to have in himself. Our chart indicated only one port where he could have gone in, and that was Mosquito Inlet, which had hardly water enough at high tide to allow the *Islander* to run through the narrow passage that leads from Hillsboro River out into the ocean. The inlet is sixty-five miles from St. Augustine light.

The town of New Smyrna is two or three miles up Hillsboro River, between which and St. Augustine and Jacksonville a small steamer plies regularly. I had about made up my mind to run up the inlet as far as the depth of water would permit, and see if I could find any one who could give me any information in regard to the *Islander*. I had hardly reached this conclusion when I was called to dinner. I was to dine in the cabin, and I told the party what I intended to do.

"I don't care to have you delay your voyage for me, Captain Alick," replied Colonel Shepard.

"We started out to catch the *Islander*, and I am as anxious to do it as you are," I added.

"I suppose you wish to get rid of us," interposed Miss Edith.

"Not at all; after I invited you to make the trip with us, and was anxious to have your company, I shall not be in haste to

get rid of you. On the contrary, it must be that you wish to get rid of me, or you would not have chosen to go in the Islander."

"Forgive me, Captain Alick; I did not mean it," replied the fair maiden. "But we are so comfortable and so happy that we shall be in no haste to get out of the Sylvania."

"Isn't there danger in going into such a place, Alick," asked my father.

"I think not, sir," I answered. "I have a chart with the soundings on it, and I am sure I can run into the inlet in the day-time; and it will not be dark at seven, when we get there."

No further objection was raised to my plan. Just before the time set for reaching the point off the inlet, all hands were on the lookout for it. From my chart I learned that the inlet, on account of the shifting sand, had moved to the southward about a quarter of a mile. For a considerable distance on each side of the narrow channel leading into the inlet and river, there were breakers, such as we had seen on the coast of North Carolina, and at various points south of it.

Washburn was the first to discover the opening, and point it out to me. I looked on the shore for a couple of wrecks whose positions were laid down on the chart; but I could not find them. The shoals were caused by the sand brought out of the inlet by the current of the river. The bar changed with every storm; but I could plainly see the channel, for its waters were less disturbed and broken by the rollers from the sea.

"It looks a little risky," said Washburn, shaking his head.

"I think not; the tide will be high in about an hour, and that will give about eight feet and a half on the shoalest places," I replied. "I don't think we are drawing over eight feet now."

"Eight and a half, sure. We might scrape over the bottom an hour from now; but we shall stick as sure as we run into that narrow channel. The worst place is just on the edge of the breakers."

"Sail on the port bow, sir," said Ben Bowman.

It was a small schooner, which I thought might be a fisherman. She was headed directly for the narrow channel. As we were nearly up with the opening, I rang for the engineer to stop and back her. But the little schooner had to beat up, and as she was still about two miles off, I was soon tired of waiting for her. I rang to go ahead again, and headed the Sylvania in a direction to intercept the schooner. A few minutes brought us within hail of her.

"Schooner ahoy!" shouted Washburn.



"'SCHOONER AHOY!' SHOUTED WASHBURN."  
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"On board of the steamer!" replied the skipper of the craft.

"Where are you bound?" demanded the mate.

"Into New Smyrna. We have been out fishing."

"When did you leave the town?"

"This morning, at four o'clock. Be you the steamer that tried to get into the inlet yesterday?" asked the skipper, as we were now within easy talking distance of him.

"Did a steamer try to get in yesterday?"

"Of course, or I wouldn't say so. But it was not full tide by two hours, and she stuck in the sand about as soon as she got in between the shoals."

"What did she do then?"

"She waited till the tide lifted her and then she backed out, and hooked it to the southward as fast as she could. We were at anchor inside of the inlet, and saw the whole of it. She looked just like this craft. Plenty of fresh fish on board?"

At my request Cobbington bought a considerable quantity of sheeps-head and cavallo. The only fish we had on board was shad, and we had eaten that so much during the past month that we were tired of it. These fresh fish were therefore a great treat, as we found next morning.

We started the engine again, satisfied that the Islander had not gone into Mosquito Inlet. I gave the information to Colonel Shepard.

"Then Mr. Cornwood will not be likely to intercept the Islander at Key West," said he.

"Not unless she put in at some other port, though I know of none where she could have made a harbor until after the storm was over. But she may stop over at Key West a day or two," I replied. "It all depends upon what Captain Blastblow understands his instructions to be."

"Cornwood took the train at Jacksonville for Cedar Keys this morning, and will be there this afternoon. He will reach Key West on Sunday morning," added the colonel.

"We shall be there only a few hours later; and if the weather is favorable we may get there as soon as the messenger you sent."

"I do not see that we can help the matter. If Cornwood don't get to Key West in season to intercept the Islander, he will lose his two hundred dollars, and my runaway craft will continue on her way to New Orleans."

This was all that either of us could make of it, and all we could do was to wait till we got to Key West for further information. If the Islander was twenty-four hours ahead of us, it was useless to attempt to overhaul her. The Sylvania was a great deal more comfortable for the passengers when she went along at her ordinary rate than when she was forced up to twelve knots an hour; and I was not disposed to hurry her on a useless mission. My passengers appeared to be enjoying themselves all the time. I could not see how they could help being happy.

Some of them were reading books from the library I had started at Detroit, and replenished in several places on the route to the South. Others were playing various games. Mr. Tiffany and my father could play chess all day long, and most of the night. The meals were served as elaborately as at a first-class hotel, and we had everything from the market that could be supplied in the summer in the northern states. I was decidedly of the opinion that our passengers had nothing to worry about, unless Colonel Shepard could be excused for worrying about his steamer.

At eight o'clock the first watch went on duty, in charge of Washburn, who was as competent to handle the vessel as I was. He had the chart, with the courses and distances marked on it. When I left the pilot-house, Cape Canaveral, or rather the light on it, was in sight. At nine o'clock we were just abreast of it, which proved that our dead reckoning was correct. From this point the course was south by east, one hundred and five miles.

As soon as the Sylvania was on her new course, I left the pilot-house, where I had gone at nine, and turned in. I had slept all the night before, and the laughter of the younger of the passengers on the hurricane-deck above me did not permit me to sleep. But I heard Colonel Shepard call his daughter away at ten, and then I went to sleep. I could not tell how long I had slept when the stopping of the steamer waked me.

"What schooner is that?" shouted Washburn, from the pilot-house.

I was on deck soon enough to hear the reply.

"The Violet, New Orleans to New York," came from the vessel hailed.

"Did you see a small steamer about the size of this one?" asked Washburn.

"We passed one about three hours ago. She looked enough like you to be the same vessel."

"Thanks," shouted Washburn, as he rang the bell to go ahead.

I looked at my watch, and found it wanted but a few minutes of twelve, and I went into the pilot-house.

## CHAPTER XI.

### DIFFICULT NAVIGATION.

"Three hours ago, which means that the Islander is about thirty miles ahead of us," said Washburn, when I went into the pilot-house.

"She must have put in somewhere, and it was not at Mosquito Inlet," I replied. "I don't quite understand it."

"I think I do," added Washburn, as he called in Buck Lingley and gave him the wheel.

He led the way to the chart on the shelf, upon which a light was cast from the binnacle. He pointed out Matanzas Inlet, at the southern point of Anastasia Island, and fifteen miles south of St. Augustine.

"She went into that inlet," said Washburn.

"But there isn't water enough in it to float the Islander," I replied.

"I think she did not go in far, if at all. The wind was off shore yesterday, and under the lee of the land there is no sea of any consequence, except what is caused by the rollers. If the captain of that schooner has given the time correctly, it shows that the Islander went to sea about an hour and half before we did. That will put her thirty miles ahead of us," Washburn explained; and his reasoning seemed to be correct.

"The Islander put in somewhere, or she would have been two hundred and forty miles farther on the way to Key West than we are," I added. "She did not stand off to sea, as there was not the least need of that, for the wind has been off shore since we came out of the St. Johns."

"I am confident we are right. Now the question is, shall we chase her?" asked Washburn. "She is thirty miles ahead of us; and we have nearly three hundred and fifty miles to make to reach Key West."

"There is no wind to-night to help us, and it will take as much coal to get the two extra knots out of the Sylvania as it will to make the ordinary and regular ten knots an hour, to say nothing of the wear and tear of boiler and machinery," I replied, musing.

"But the Islander will get to Key West before Cornwood does, if she puts in there, and we may miss her altogether."

"I should like to get near enough to her to watch her movements," I added. "I think if we crowd the Sylvania for six or seven hours we shall get a sight of her. I am inclined to hurry her."

"I am decidedly in favor of it, for she may escape her owner altogether if we don't follow her up."

"Eight bells! All the port watch!" called Buck Lingley, who had been relieved at the wheel.

I went on deck, and when Ben Bowman came up I told him I wanted him to give the vessel all the steam she would carry. There was a light breeze from the westward, but not enough to help the speed of the steamer, and we did not put on any sail. I took my place at the wheel while Hop Tossford was the lookout on the topgallant forecastle.

In a short time the screw began to buzz, and when Buck and Dyer Perkins went below, after heaving the lead, the Sylvania was making eleven knots. I expected her to do better than this. At four o'clock in the morning, when the starboard watch were called, we were off Indian River Inlet. Nothing had been said about trying the fish since we left Jacksonville. There was not water enough in Indian River to float the steamer, and I gave up all thought of renewing the exciting sport we had had in these waters when we came over from the St. Johns. At four o'clock I turned in and slept till eight.

I found the barometer had been dropping again, and the wind came from the eastward, which was not a good way to have the wind while we were off the coast. While I was eating my breakfast, the Sylvania came up with Jupiter Inlet, where Washburn changed the course to south, three-quarters east. The log-slate showed that we had made eleven and a half knots. I figured up the distances, and concluded that the Islander must be about twelve miles ahead of us. I did not give the other steamer the credit of making more than ten knots an hour.

The wind had freshened considerably since I left the deck early in the morning, and I ordered all sail to be set. Soon after the log showed that we were making twelve knots, which was about the best speed we had ever made. We kept her going at this rate till noon, and I had the wheel during the time. In the course of the forenoon we had visits from all the passengers, but the wind was raw and cold, and they did not remain long on deck.



"Sail, ho!" shouted Hop Tossford, from the topgallant forecastle.

"Where away?" I asked, looking ahead, though as it was not clear I saw nothing distinctly.

"Sharp on the weather bow," replied the lookout.

I looked in the direction indicated, and could just make out a sail. I examined it through the glass, and was satisfied it was the *Islander*. I had calculated that we ought to be up with her by noon; but it was evident to me that her captain had been hurrying her, as I did not anticipate he would do. I soon assured myself that she was not on the same course as the *Sylvania*. She was headed at least a point more to the westward. We had on all the sail it was prudent to carry, and Ben Bowman declared the engine was doing its best.

"We have been gaining on her every hour," I said to the mate. "If we keep on we shall overtake her in a few hours, though she is making her best speed."

"But she is going more to the westward than we are," added Washburn, looking at the chase through the glass.

"I think she is making a mistake, for I should not care to be mixed up among those shoals if it comes on bad weather; and it looks like it now."

"The wind is hauling more to the southward, and I shall look for a fog before night."

We kept on our course as laid down in the *Coast-pilot*, without regard to the *Islander*. I called the passengers at two in the afternoon, when we again changed our course to south, quarter west, to show them the *Islander*. She was still headed a point farther to the westward than we were. As our course from this point to Key West was on the circumference of a quarter-circle, I supposed Captain Blastblow only intended to take the shortest way by keeping inside of us, and I did not alter anything. But I was confident that he would have to run outside again in order to avoid the shoals of Virginia and Biscayne Keys. I had studied the chart carefully every day, and had found places where there was not more than four, or even more than two, feet of water at low tide, as it was at this time.

At four o'clock the *Islander* was not more than a mile to the south of us, though she was two miles nearer shore than we were. We were abreast of the light-house at Cape Florida, and I expected to intercept the *Islander* when she came out from the dangerous shoals, rendered doubly dangerous by the threatening weather. But the other steamer gave no indications of changing her course, and I soon saw her close to the light-house.

"She seems to be behaving very strangely, Captain Alick," said the mate, as we were watching her from the pilot-house.

"It seems to me that she is losing time. There are shoals and rocks just to the southward of her," I replied.

"There she goes about!" exclaimed Washburn, as she pointed her bow to the eastward. "I think we had better take in all the sail we carry, for we have only a mile of southing to make while the other steamer makes two miles of easting."

All hands were called for this duty, for the wind was coming heavier and heavier every minute. The mate and the four men made quick work of it. The *Islander* carried no sail, though her people must have seen the *Sylvania* two hours before.

"I am glad Captain Blastblow has come to his senses, and is standing out from the shore," I added. "About five miles to the eastward of the line of Keys, which form part of a circle, from Cape Florida to Pickle Reef, more than forty miles, is a series of reefs and rocks. There is a passage between the reefs and the Keys, through which vessels of light draught may pass. But I believe in having plenty of sea room when the weather looks as it does now."

When we were abreast of Cape Florida the *Islander* suddenly put up her helm, and stood off to the south-west. This movement indicated that she had no intention of coming any nearer to the *Sylvania*. I was perplexed at this change of course, because I could hardly conceive of such a thing as Captain Blastblow taking the inside route in that threatening weather. There was nothing to protect his vessel from the heavy seas, and in some places he would have hardly water enough to float the *Islander*.

In about another hour Fowey Rocks were between the two vessels. There was no way of getting out of the inside passage except that by which he went in, or at the southerly end of the series of reefs.

"It looks to me just as though the *Islander* wanted to keep out of our way," said Washburn, when we had settled the question as to what the *Islander* intended to do.

"That had not occurred to me before," I replied. "Why should she try to avoid us?"

"That's what bothers me. I can't see the least reason for such conduct on the part of her captain," added the mate.

"It looks to me like very risky business to go into such a place as that with a south-east gale threatening," I continued, as I went to the shelf to find a chart of the Florida reefs, which I had carefully studied. "There is one place where the *Islander* will have only six feet of water at low tide, perhaps seven and a half or eight at this time of tide. I think she will

have to get in behind one of the Keys, and anchor to wait for the tide to rise."

"I hope nothing will happen to the Islander. I suppose Captain Blastblow knows what he is about, and probably has a pilot for the inside of the reefs," said Washburn.

"If it was good weather, it would be another thing, and I should not have hesitated to follow him, for we have the Coast Pilot, and the best charts of the Coast Survey."

"It is getting to be very rough out here," added Washburn, as the Sylvania began to roll heavily in the billows that swept in from the open sea. Our passengers were taking their afternoon naps, but they soon found out that we were in an angry sea. I went into the cabin to comfort them. Mrs. Shepard wanted to know if we could not put in at some port, as we had done on Thursday.

"There is no port we can enter before we reach Key West, madam. With the wind as it is now, and blowing hard, I am afraid to go any nearer the reefs than we are now."

"I hear that a great many vessels are wrecked on the Florida Reefs," added the lady.

"That is quite true, Mrs. Shepard; and for that reason I shall not approach them any nearer than we are now. As long as we have plenty of sea room, I do not apprehend any particular danger."

The rain began to fall about six, and the weather was so thick we could no longer see the Islander. The last time we had seen her she must have been some miles farther to the northward than the Sylvania, and I was satisfied that Captain Blastblow had not gained anything by going inside of the reefs. As I made it out from the chart, he had twice been obliged to go to the eastward over two miles, in order to keep in the deepest water. I suspected that he had been aground, and had to wait for the tide; for at dark, when we saw the steamer for the last time, we were at least five miles farther south.

"We will keep her going as briskly as the heavy sea will permit, until about midnight; and then we will ease off till daylight. Then I think we shall get another sight of the Islander," I said to the mate, as he was about to turn in at eight.

"I don't think there is any danger of her getting ahead faster than we do," replied the mate, with a yawn. "I believe I shall sleep well, if I don't get pitched out of my berth."

He was leaving the pilot-house, when the distant report of a gun came to our ears. I concluded at once that the Islander was in trouble.

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE CALAMITY ON FRENCH REEF.

I jumped to the conclusion that the Islander had struck on one of the shoals I had noticed on the chart, and the heavy sea was pounding her on the bottom. It could be only a question of time when she would knock a hole in her bottom and go to pieces. Washburn was wide awake as soon as he heard the gun, and giving him the wheel, I proceeded to examine the chart.

According to the dead-reckoning we ought to be a little to the southward of French Shoal. While I was satisfying myself in regard to our position, another gun sounded over the troubled sea.

"That can't be the Islander's gun," said Washburn. "She has nothing on board but a little yacht gun, and the piece we heard is a six, if not a twelve pounder."

"I think you are right, Bob. The sound came from the leeward. I have no doubt it is some vessel in distress; and we must do something for her. Call all hands," I continued, as I took the wheel, and headed the Sylvania due west by the compass.

Though it was not foggy, the air was thick, and I could see nothing ahead. We had a very strong wind on our port quarter, and it was extremely dangerous to approach the reefs from the windward. In a moment all hands were on deck, except Moses Brickland, who was required to take the engine whenever all hands were called on an emergency. I directed Hop Tossford to take the wheel, and keep her due west. I asked the mate to fire our little yacht gun, in answer to the signals we had heard. The moment the report sounded through the vessel I heard Mrs. Shepard scream.

I told the chief engineer to give the steamer about half speed, and hastened into the cabin to satisfy the passengers that nothing had happened to us, and explain what we were doing. Mrs. Shepard assured us that we should all be lost; but I told her we would be extremely careful.

I asked my father, Colonel Shepard, and Owen to come on deck, leaving Mr. Tiffany and Gus Shepard to take charge of the ladies. I explained the situation to them, and while we were talking about it another gun was heard to leeward. It sounded heavier and nearer than before, and I was sure the signal was not given by the Islander.

"It is plain enough that a vessel has gone ashore on one of these reefs," I said. "I can see nothing ahead, but the gun sounds in this direction."

Before the words were fairly out of my mouth, a sky rocket flashed up directly over our bow. We had rockets on board, and I directed Ben to discharge one of them. It was followed by another from the vessel in distress. Then some Bengola lights were fired, and they illuminated the sea for a mile at least around her. Buck Lingley was sounding, and reporting no bottom. I told the engineer to give her more steam, for I feared the people on the unfortunate vessel might be drowning, and a minute might save a life, if not more. As long as the bright Bengola light burned, I kept the steamer going at full speed. Most of the dangerous reefs were marked by beacons, or at least the outer range of the reef was so marked.

The sea was very heavy, and Buck Lingley still reported no bottom. He used a hand lead, which measures twenty fathoms of depth. The Bengola light soon burned out, and I rang the speed-bell. This reduced our rate one half. But it seemed to me that we were going altogether too fast, as the strong south-east gale was driving us towards the reefs. I rang the gong, and the vessel stopped.

"And a half seventeen!" shouted Buck.

"The water is shoaling," said the mate.

"By the mark ten!" called the leadsman.

"Get out some rockets and Bengola lights, Washburn," I continued, nervously. "The people on the wreck don't even give us a light to steer by."

"And a half seven!" shouted the leadsman.

I rang to back her, for she shoaled too rapidly for my nerves. I told the mate to light a Bengola on the heel of the bowsprit. When he did so the brilliant light enabled me to see the wreck very distinctly, and less than a hundred yards from the Sylvania. She was a large bark, with all her sails furled. Her captain had probably taken in all sail as soon as the

vessel struck the reef.

The chart informed me there were rocks only a few feet below the surface of the water. The wreck was headed to the south-west, but this could not have been the direction in which she was sailing when she struck the reef. On that course she would have got into trouble before.

"By the deep seven!" said the leadsman, in loud and shrill tones.

I rang to go ahead again, and at the same time told the mate to keep the Bengola lights burning. Ben Bowman was stationed at the end of the bowsprit that the light might not blind his eyes. I had purchased a plentiful supply of fireworks in New York for festive occasions, and we were in no danger of exhausting them, as they had evidently done on the wreck.

"Give her about ten turns a minute, Moses!" I called to the engineer through the speaking-tube.

"Ten turns a minute!" he replied, to make sure that I had been understood.

"Steady, as she is, Hop!" I said to the wheel-man. "If you see anything like a buoy, stop and back her as quick as you can."

"Ay, ay, sir," replied the wheelman.

I went on the hurricane-deck to get a better view of the wreck. It was hard to stand up in that part of the vessel, for she pitched and rolled very badly, while she was making so little headway. By holding on at the railing, I got to a point where I could hug the foremast. The wreck was very low down, and I concluded that she was full of water.

"And a half six!" said Buck.

This was thirty-nine feet of water, and we were in no danger yet. The waves were beating over the deck of the bark. It was clear enough that she must go to pieces before morning. Her bulwarks were stove on the weather side of her; and while I was looking at her the foremast went by the board. I saw that the step of the mast must have been torn away by grinding upon the rocks.

We were within a hundred feet of her stern, and the billows were too savage to permit of going any nearer. I hastened down to the pilothouse, rang to stop her, and then to back her. I intended to be sure that we had full control of the steamer before we went any nearer. I found that the Sylvania backed well against the head sea, and then I stopped her screw.

In an instant I found that the steamer was driving towards the wreck. I rang to back her again, and readily checked her.

I saw that the only way I could approach the unfortunate vessel was to get under her lee. The sea was altogether too rough for our little quarter boats, though both of them were life-boats. By occasionally backing the screw, we ran within fifty feet of the wreck, and I could hear the roar of the gale through the standing rigging of the bark, and the heavy pounding of the billows against her side.

"Steamer ahoy!" shouted a man on the taffrail of the vessel.

"On board the bark!" replied Washburn, on the topgallant forecastle. "What is the condition of the vessel?"

"Our forefoot is gone, and we are stove through forward. She is full of water," replied the man. "She is grinding on the reef, and will go to pieces in a few hours."

"How much water have you under your lee?" I shouted.

"From one to three fathoms," replied the captain of the bark, as we judged that he was.

With the utmost care I ran the Sylvania under the lee of the bark; and I think it must have taken all the tact of Moses Brickland to handle the engine in accordance with the bells I rang. But as soon as the bow of the steamer was under the lee of the bark it was in comparatively smooth water. From the statement of the captain, and the depth of water he reported, I concluded that one of the sharp spurs of rock was sticking through her bottom near where her forefoot had been, and that she was held in this position by the reef. Buck kept on sounding, and reported four fathoms at the stern of the wreck. Cobbington was now in charge of the Bengolas, and Washburn was getting the hawsers ready to make fast to the bark. We put out our fenders, and the mate heaved a line into the waist of the wreck. Ben Bowman did the same, throwing his line over the stern. The lines were caught by the seamen on board, and made fast.

Though the water was fairly still at the leeward of the bark, I found that the vessel was rolling badly, and greatly endangering the safety of the Sylvania. The gale was driving the wreck farther on the reef, and I feared that the mainmast would go by the board and fall on the steamer.

"All aboard that are going!" I shouted at the top of my lungs, as I stood at the wheel, ready to do whatever an

emergency might require. The two vessels were grinding their sides together, and nothing but our fenders saved our planks from being torn off.

The men on board the bark were very slow in seeking safety, and I was about to repeat my former call, when I saw two women appear on the rail by the mizzen rigging. Our hands hastened to their assistance, and as the bark was so low in the water they had no difficulty in getting them on our hurricane-deck. As soon as they were safely on board, the men poured in upon us without further delay. There was not one among them that would leave the wreck until the women were safe. The officers and seamen brought with them whatever they could carry of their personal property. One of them returned and cast off the hawsers.

As soon as the fasts were cast off, I rang to back her; and, bringing the Sylvania's head up to the wind, I wore her gradually around till she was headed to the eastward. The sea was white with foam from the raging billows, and the little steamer leaped like an antelope as she went ahead on her course. It was impossible to stand up in any part of her. I ran out about four miles to the eastward, where the steamer was when we heard the signal-gun from the wreck. We had been absent on our run to the reef about two hours. We laid our course as before, and I gave the wheel to Hop Tossford, that I might attend to the wants of the shipwrecked guests on board.

The Sylvania was rolling on her new course at a frightful rate, and our deck was deluged with water every moment. The gale seemed to be increasing rather than diminishing, and I was not sure how long we could stand such a tumbling about as we were getting. With no little difficulty and exertion we got a reefed foresail up, which steadied her very much. I went down into the cabin, where I had sent the ladies from the wreck. I found our passengers propped up in such ways as they could devise to keep from being hurled across the cabin floor at each roll of the vessel. The strangers seemed to be quite at home, and were relating their adventures to the other ladies, who were listening with so much interest that they appeared to have forgotten the Sylvania was laboring in a very heavy sea. I saw that I was not wanted there. I went on deck, and found that the sailors from the wreck were stowed away in the driest places they could find.

I invited them all down into the forward cabin, and assigned the mate to the spare berth there. The others must sleep on the floor, for we could do nothing better for them.

"Mr. Mate, where is your captain?" I asked.

"I don't think he came below, sir. He is feeling very badly about the loss of his vessel," replied the mate. "I will try to find him."

He went on deck with me, and we found him coiled away under the topgallant forecabin. I invited him to come into the pilot-house, and he followed me thither.

"I am sorry for your misfortune, Captain," I said, when he had seated himself abaft the wheel.

"It is a sorry night for me. My vessel is lost, and I have not the least idea how it happened," he replied, very sadly.

I did my best to comfort him. I saw that he was quite as much exhausted by his mental sufferings as by his physical exertions. I conducted him to my state-room, and gave him my berth. In a short time he was asleep.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### A NIGHT LOST IN THE STORM.

At eleven o'clock we changed the course of the *Sylvania* to south-west half-west, which brought the gale nearly on the beam. The wind was blowing but little, if anything, short of a hurricane. The great billows struck against the side of the vessel and the house on deck with tremendous force. It seemed just as though immense boulders were hurled against the planking that enclosed my state-room, the galley, and the engine-room. The sea swept over the hurricane-deck, and struck heavily upon the planks overhead.

Suddenly I heard a noise over my head, as I stood at the wheel, which sounded like the report of a heavy cannon. I thought the sea had broken a hole through. In another instant the steamer was rolling with double the violence of a few minutes before.

"What was that noise, Hop?" I asked, when I saw that no water was pouring down upon us.

"It was the foresail, sir; it has been blown out of the bolt-ropes," replied Hop, coolly; and he seemed to be incapable of anything like fear. "We have lost the reefed foresail, and that is what makes her roll so much worse than she did five minutes ago."

Undoubtedly he was right. The sail had steadied her more than we could have imagined; and now she rolled like a log in a mill-race. The sea struck the side of my state-room as though a rock weighing a ton had been cast against it by some giant of the sea or the storm. I was afraid our house on deck would be carried away by the tempest.

On board of a large vessel, the loss of a house on deck was a matter of no serious consequences. It was entirely different with the *Sylvania*, for the loss of it would open the hold to the entrance of the sea. The deluge of water would put out the fire in the furnaces, disabling the engine. The result must be the loss of the vessel and all on board of her. I trembled when I thought of it. Another mountain billow struck the house a little farther aft. I was not willing to wait for another sea to strike her in what I regarded as her weakest point, and we put the helm down. We must give up our course for the safety of the vessel.

The steamer made a terrible plunge as we shifted the helm, but we soon got her across the sea. Now she pitched instead of rolling. I called to the engineer, through the speaking-tube, to give her but about half speed, for it made her labor more heavily to drive her into the seas. I calculated that this rate of speed would keep her about stationary on the water. I soon found that she was falling astern. I directed the engineer to give her more steam. I soon gauged it so that she had headway enough to keep her up to the seas without forcing her through them. A sort of equilibrium was established, which gave her an easier position, though it was by no means an easy one. Her bow rose so that the deck must have been at an angle of forty-five degrees, and then she dived down from the top of a big wave at about the same angle.

Our port and starboard, as well as the masthead light were burning, and we had closed in the pilot-house, so that we could see nothing ahead. But I found the steamer was manageable when I had got her head to the sea, and I sent Hop Tossford to call the mate and Buck Lingley. I could not tell what might happen, and I felt that all hands should be on deck. I wondered they had not put in an appearance before. But they were all used to this sort of thing, for we had been through a tempest almost as bad in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and several milder ones at other times.

The water swashed fore and aft, but no longer pounded against the house on deck. It poured over the bow, so that it was not safe to put a man on the lookout there. The only thing we had to fear while we were lying-to in this manner was a collision with some other vessel. The water poured into the pilot-house so that we could not keep the windows open. I sent Buck to the hurricane-deck, with directions to lash himself to the foremast, and keep under the shelter of the dome of the pilot-house. When I had done this, and heard Buck on the deck over me, I felt that I had met the last and most imminent danger of the hour.

Though the steamer was still laboring heavily against the tremendous head seas, she appeared to be holding her position in safety. I gave the helm to Washburn and Ben Bowman, for it required two to move the wheel promptly in that violent sea, and went to pay a visit to the cabin, for I supposed the passengers were enduring torments of suspense and terror.

On the way I looked into my state-room. The captain of the wrecked bark appeared to be still asleep, and I did not disturb him. Following one of the life-lines we always bent on in a gale, I reached the after companion-way. Like everything in the shape of an opening on deck, it was securely fastened. But I had a key, and descended the cabin-

stairs, locking the door behind me. Most of the passengers were still up. Some had retired to their berths, though probably not to sleep.

My father and Mr. Tiffany were playing chess, and did not seem to be at all disturbed by the war of the elements. Colonel Shepard was holding his wife upon a sofa, and Owen and Gus were skylarking in the after-part of the cabin.

"Isn't it terrible, Captain Alick?" asked Mrs. Shepard, in trembling tones.

"I must say it was about as bad as anything I ever was out in, though we had it about as bad once on Lake Superior," I replied, as cheerfully as the occasion required.

"Do you think there is any danger?"

"I don't think there is just now," I answered. "The steamer is working very well at present, much better than she was an hour ago."

"I thought the water would break through upon us at one time," added the nervous lady.

"I was afraid it would. We had our foresail blown out of the bolt-ropes, and she made bad work of it after that. But we have laid her to now, and she is behaving as well as any vessel of this size can in such a sea."

"When do you suppose it will be over?" asked the lady, anxiously.

"It is a south-east gale, or rather hurricane, and probably it will not last long. I shall look for better weather by sunrise, if not before," I replied, as I left the cabin.

On my way back to the pilot-house I stopped in at the engine-room. I found Moses Brickland, seated on his leather-cushioned divan, watching the movements of the engine. Notwithstanding the uneasy movement of the vessel the machinery seemed to be working very regularly.

"How does she go, Moses?" I asked.

"She has done very well since you headed her up to the sea," he answered, without taking his gaze from the engine. "At one time I thought the sea would break in upon us and swamp the fires. It would have been all up with us then."

"I felt so myself, and I headed her up to the sea when I saw that it was no longer safe to keep her on her course. But I suppose you want to turn in, Moses."

"I, no; I am perfectly satisfied to keep my place here till morning," he replied.

"I want Ben Bowman at the wheel, with Washburn. She steers so hard in this sea that we need to change hands every hour. But I hope we shall soon be able to relieve you," I added.

"I don't have very hard work, and I can stand it very well till morning."

I returned to the wheel-house. It was about two bells, or one in the morning. The tempest had not increased in the last hour, and I hoped we had seen the worst of it. We were working the engine just enough to keep the steamer's head up to the sea. The Sylvania behaved so well in her present position that I dismissed the port watch at two in the morning; but I could not think of turning in myself while there was any possibility of trouble ahead. I remained in the pilot-house with Washburn, while Buck Lingley was on the lookout on the hurricane-deck. We held our position till about four in the morning, when it was evident that the gale was breaking, though the sea was still very heavy.

"Light on the port quarter," said Buck, at one of the small windows of the pilot-house in front of his station.

I rushed over to the port side, but the windows were so covered with water that I could see nothing. It was raining hard, as it had been since midnight. I went on deck, grasping a life-line to keep me from being knocked over by the flood of water that flowed down from the forecabin. I reached the ladder and went up to the hurricane-deck.

I supposed the light the lookout had seen was on some vessel. It was at least ten miles distant; and after a time I satisfied myself that it was a revolving light. It also flashed, and I was confident it was eight or ten miles distant. I was rather bewildered, for I had not expected to find a light in that direction. I hastened down to the pilot-house to consult the Coast Pilot. I reviewed the course we had followed after leaving the wrecked bark. By our reckoning we were about twenty miles to the southward of Carysfort Light when we headed the steamer to the eastward.

We had kept the screw turning all the time, and I supposed we had been making some headway during the five hours we had been on this tack. What was the light, then?

We were headed directly into the Bahama Islands, and I knew we had not gone far enough to place any light in those islands on our port quarter. The description in the book of Carysfort Light corresponded with what I had made out by observation.

"We are about ten miles to the south-east of Carysfort Light," I said to Washburn, when I had satisfied myself of the fact.

"Impossible! That would put us about where we were when you called all hands last night!" exclaimed the mate.

"The Light is about where it was when we began to go to the southward at ten last evening," I replied.

"But we have been going to the southward and eastward for the last five hours."

"It does not appear that we have gone at all," I continued, looking over the pages of the book. "We have been drifting all the time. The steamer is in the Gulf Stream, and that, with the fierce wind, has carried her a long distance from where I supposed she was. I find that in a strong easterly wind the Gulf Stream sets to the westward, and runs in among the Keys. I have no doubt now that this is the reason why the bark struck last night on the rocks to the southward of French Reef."

"It appears from what you say that we have not carried steam enough to prevent us from being drifted to the westward as well as to the northward," added Washburn.

"That is the fact: we have been drifting about north-northwest. In a few hours more we should have been on the reef. Ring the speed-bell."

It was plain enough by this time, when it was almost broad daylight, that the force of the gale was spent. In less than an hour the wind subsided entirely, and the wind whirled to the south, then to the west, and finally settled in the north-west. We made our course to the southward. The clouds rolled away, and the sun rose bright and beautiful after one of the hardest nights I had ever known.

The wind began to freshen from the north-west, and at six o'clock we had all sail on her. We all wondered what had become of the Islander. Captain Blastblow was evidently well acquainted with the navigation of the Florida Reefs, or he would not have taken his vessel through the dangerous channel he had chosen. But I was too tired to talk much, and I slept an hour in Washburn's berth until breakfast-time. When I waked, I found the captain of the bark sitting in a chair in the state-room.



## CHAPTER XIV.

### LOOKING FOR THE ISLANDER.

The captain of the bark was a man of about fifty. He was bald, and his hair and whiskers were sprinkled with gray. I had no doubt that the violent storm had made an end of his vessel, for the wreck was exposed to the full fury of the sea, tenfold more violent after we left it than before.

"Good morning, Captain; I hope you are quite well this morning," I began.

"I am well enough, thank you; but I cannot forget that I have lost my ship," he replied. "You had a rough night of it on deck; and I don't think I ever knew a vessel to pitch and roll so badly as this one did."

"It was a terrible blow, and this is a very small vessel, though she is as strong as wood and iron could make her. If she had not been well built, the sea would have taken the house off this deck."

"I thought it was going to do so as it was. I think she was exceedingly well handled, or she would have gone to the bottom," continued the captain. "I have no doubt there are scores of wrecks along the Keys this morning, and many a good fellow may miss his mess after this."

I gave him a full account of the storm, and of our being carried so far out of our course by the wind and the current. I told him that we had been delayed so long by the wreck and the storm that we probably should not reach Key West till three or four in the afternoon.

"I suppose we shall be lucky to get there at all after all that has happened to us," replied the captain. "What you say about drifting so far out of your course strikes me as being a little strange."

"What was the name of your vessel, Captain?--I have not even learned your name," I continued. I intended to point out to him the way in which the bark had been lost; but I wanted to know something more about the voyage of the unfortunate vessel.

"Captain Mayfield; and the bark was the Olive, of New York, from New Orleans, with a cargo of cotton from the latter port," replied the captain. "I owned a third of her myself; but she is well insured, and so is her cargo. My wife and daughter were with me, and are now in the after cabin."

"I think you were fortunate to escape with your lives," I added.

"I know we were, Captain--I don't know your name any better than you did mine; and it strikes me that you are a very young fellow to be in command of a steamer, though she is a very small one."

"My name is Alexander Garningham, and I am generally called Captain Alick. I have been on the water most of the time since I was ten years old, either on the sea or on the great lakes. I have had as rough a time on Lake Superior as we had last night, if not a rougher." I told my story as briefly as I could.

"Your education has not been neglected, Captain Alick," continued Captain Mayfield. "If you had not managed the Sylvania so well last night, most of us must have perished; for I have no doubt that the Olive went to pieces before midnight. She was a well-built vessel, but rather old. The gale kept forcing her up to the sharp coral rocks, and she was grinding off her timbers at a very rapid rate when we left her. If there had been any chance for her I would not have left her. I had reduced sail at dark, when it began to freshen into a gale. We had the wind on the beam, and the bark was behaving very well."

"It began to blow the heaviest about six bells," I added.

"We did not get the worst of it. We had the foretop-mast staysail, fore and main topsails, and the spanker set. The Gulf Stream was with us, and we were making not less than ten knots an hour. I expected soon to see Carysfort Light. Our course was north, a quarter east, and I had no doubt I was making it good."

"I am afraid not."

"Of course I know now that I did not make it good; but I can't see any reason why I did not."

"I can," I interposed. "It was for the same reason that we were drifted so far to the northward and westward. When the wind comes strong from an easterly direction the current of the Gulf Stream is partly turned to the westward."

"I have read that in the Coast Pilot; but I have been through these waters so many times without noticing anything of the kind, that I did not think of it last night. The first hint I had that anything was wrong was when the Olive struck on the rocks. I knew from the sound of the crash that she had stove a hole in her bow. She flew back, and then the wind jammed her on again. I sent hands aloft to furl the topsails, and others to haul down the jib and take in the spanker. But she drove on the rocks all the same; and I knew that would be the end of her."

I invited the captain to visit the cabin, for I thought he would wish to see his wife and daughter. Our passengers were all at breakfast, and engaged in talking over the events of the night. Captain Mayfield was invited to join them, and I advised him to do so, while I went back to the deck to attend to the wants of the rest of the ship's company of the Olive. The sailors were all on deck, and the mate was in the pilot-house with Washburn. Gopher had made provision for feeding the addition to our passengers. I invited the two mates of the Olive down into the fore-cabin to breakfast, while the cook and steward were supplying the sailors on the forecastle. I found that Gopher had been liberal in his supplies, both as to quantity and quality, for the wrecked people.

By eight o'clock breakfast had been served to all on board. I had not slept above four hours in two nights, though my short nap had refreshed me a little. Washburn and all the rest of the crew had been on duty most of the night, and they were very much fatigued. Moses Brickland had served a double watch, and Ben Bowman had worked like a trooper most of the night. I decided, as it was pleasant and plain sailing, to send all hands to their berths, and take the helm myself, with Ben at the engine; for he declared that he could stand it with only two hours' sleep a week. Captain Mayfield and his two mates soon joined me in the pilot-house. I was so sleepy myself that I could not help gaping and yawning.

"You've had a hard night of it, Captain Alick, while I have had a whole night below," said Captain Mayfield. "Myself and my mates have all seen service in a steamer, and we should be very glad to relieve you."

"Thank you, Captain. I acknowledge that I am rather worn out; but a little steamer like the Sylvania has her ways, and is peculiar," I replied.

"Let Beach take the wheel, and you shall see whether he can handle her," persisted Captain Mayfield.

Beach was the second mate, and I assented. I gave him the course, and he kept her steady to it. I lay down on the bench abaft the wheel, and before I knew it I didn't know anything. But I slept only a few minutes, and when I waked I found the first mate at the wheel. He was simply trying his hand at it. A little while after the captain took his turn. We could see the Keys, the spindles and buoys on the reefs, and it was hardly possible for any mishap to occur on board.

I asked one of them to help me heave the log, as I had sent all my ship's company below to make up their sleep, except the second engineer. Captain Mayfield would not permit me to do anything about it. He called a couple of his seamen, and went aft to do it. He soon reported twelve knots, with the remark that he did not suppose the steamer to be capable of such a high rate of speed. He then begged me to turn in. He was perfectly familiar with the coast and the soundings. He sent two of his men on the topgallant forecastle to serve as lookouts, and declared that the mates should keep the wheel all the time. I was too sleepy to resist, and I turned in. I was soon fast asleep. The motion of the vessel was now quite steady, though she rose and fell upon the long seas.

It was two o'clock in the afternoon when I woke, for the new captain would not permit me to be called. Gopher had dined all on board but the crew, who had turned in before I did. Ben Bowman had waked himself, and gone to the engine-room to relieve Moses, at eleven. The attentive cook had a fresh dinner ready for me; and before I had finished it most of the other sleepers appeared.

I went to the pilot-house and looked at the log-slate. It had been faithfully kept during the absence of Washburn and myself. The last entry was American Shoal, with the time of passing it.

"Where are we now, Captain Mayfield?" I asked.

"Do you see that beacon with a big B on the vane?" he said, pointing to the beacon, which was within fifty yards of the steamer's bow. "That is the Eastern Sambo, about a dozen sea miles from Key West."

"You have been making time since I went to sleep."

"We have logged twelve knots every time," he replied. "We shall have a head wind after we have passed the Western Sambo, or soon after, and we must take in sail."

I directed Washburn to call all hands and take in sail, with the assistance at the sheets and halyards of the crew of the Olive.

"Where do you suppose the Islander is about this time?" I asked of Washburn, after he had taken in sail and squared the yards.

"She may be at the bottom," replied the mate.

Captain Mayfield asked me what I meant, and I told him all about the Islander.

"Her captain must have understood the navigation, or he would not have gone inside on such a night as last we had," added Captain Mayfield. "I don't think you will see the other steamer till you get to Key West, in little more than an hour."

"He may have gone to the bottom in the hurricane," I suggested.

"He could make a harbor in several places; at Tavernier, for instance. He may even have run through some opening to the other side of one of the Keys, and been entirely protected from the heavy sea. He had to be pretty well acquainted in there to do this. Do you know where he shipped his crew?"

"At Jacksonville, Florida," I replied.

"Then very likely he had one or more of the Conchs, or natives, who come from the Bahama Islands, on board. They are fishermen and wreckers, and know every inch of bottom all along the reefs. I think you will see the other steamer as soon as you get to Key West, for I have no doubt she has got there first, if she was going there at all. Western Sambo, three, five," continued Captain Mayfield. "Make a note of it, Mr. Dana."

After some further conversation with the captain, I was confident the Islander could not get by Key West without being seen by Cornwood, if the steamer in which he was to come to Cedar Keys had not been detained by the storm. Captain Mayfield did not believe the steamer with Jacksonville passengers on board had been detained, as she had an inside passage during all the worst of the hurricane. It was probable that the agent of Colonel Shepard had arrived in the fore-noon, if not in the morning.

Our pilot ran the Sylvania about two miles beyond the Western Sambo, and then headed the vessel to the north-west. He asked me the draught of the Sylvania, and I gave it to him as nine feet, which was her depth in the water when her coal-bunkers were full of anthracite coal. The course was varied considerably to avoid shoal places and reefs; but Captain Mayfield gave me the sailing directions as we went along, and I compared them with those in the Coast Pilot. All the passengers had come on deck when it was announced that we were close in to Key West. Colonel Shepard was very anxious about the Islander.

The city of Key West is located on the western end of an island of the same name. Near it is Fort Taylor, a vast structure built on an artificial island, and connected with Key West by a long bridge. On a hill is Whitehead Light, and on the north side of the island are several observatories. The town, consisting mostly of cottages, is near these towers.

When we were off Fort Taylor, we had a full view of the harbor, but the Islander was not to be seen.

"There she goes!" exclaimed Washburn, pointing to the north-west.

She carried no sail; but when I looked through the glass I made out her rig, though she was four miles away.

## CHAPTER XV.

### A PARTIAL SOLUTION OF THE MYSTERY.

"What does Captain Blastblow mean? Does he mean to run away with the Islander?" demanded Colonel Shepard, when he realized that his steam-yacht was again trying to elude him.

"He must have seen the Sylvania," I replied, very much perplexed by the conduct of the captain of the Islander. "If he stopped at Key West at all, he must have seen us before he started."

"Is it possible to overtake her, Captain Alick?" asked Colonel Shepard, nervously.

"As the case now stands, Captain Blastblow is running away from us. He has some object in view which we cannot comprehend. I have no doubt we can overtake her, for she can't run in behind any keys, or dodge into any unfamiliar channels."

"But I ought not to ask you to pursue her any farther," continued the owner of the runaway steam-yacht. "I know your party wish to stop here, and I will not compel them to go any farther."

"I think we can see all we want to of Key West from the deck," interposed my father. "At any rate, if we wish to spend any time in Key West, it will be easy enough to come back here, for we have the whole summer before us, and the winter, too, if the summer is not long enough."

"I have no desire to stop here, and Margie would much rather continue with her friend, Miss Edith, than stop at this place," added Mr. Tiffany. "We are all quite interested in solving the problem of the intentions of the captain of the Islander."

"We will leave the whole matter to Alick; and whatever he does we will not complain," said my father.

"You are very considerate and kind, gentlemen, and I am under very great obligations to you and to Captain Alick for all the favors you have extended to me," replied the colonel.

"If it is left to me we will chase the Islander," I added. "But we must land our shipwrecked passengers here, and that will take a little time; and I want a pilot, for I don't like to lose any time in those shoal waters and crooked channels."

"Get your boats all ready, Captain Alick, and it won't take five minutes to land me and my men, and I will put your steamer where you can get a pilot in two minutes," interposed Captain Mayfield. "I have no doubt we should have all perished if you had not come to the wreck at no small peril to your vessel; and I hope the time will come when I shall have a chance to do something for you."

"Oh, that's all right," I replied. "I hope I never shall be in a situation to need such help as we had a chance to give you, Captain Mayfield."

I gave the order to clear away the boats, the davits were swung out, and the falls manned ready to drop them into the water without a moment's delay. The ship's company of the Olive shook hands with me, and thanked me very warmly for what the Sylvania had done for them. I was sorry to part with them so hastily, but the anxiety of the colonel seemed to admit of no other course. Captain Mayfield ran the steamer within a hundred yards of the shore by Tift's observatory. He rang to back her, and as soon as she had lost her headway, the two boats were dropped into the water, with two hands in each. They were then brought up to the gangway steps, which had been rigged out for the use of the ladies, who were all ready to embark.

We assisted Mrs. Mayfield and her daughter into the stern-sheets of one, and the captain joined them. The boat shoved off, when the mate and four of the sailors had stowed themselves away. The captain and the ladies waved their adieus as soon as Dyer and Hop began to pull. Before the port boat was off the second mate and the rest of the seamen had piled into the starboard boat, and both were off at nearly the same time.

I saw the seamen in both boats assisting the oarsmen, and the boats went through the water at a lively rate. Not more than two minutes had elapsed before the party were all on shore. Several men hastened up to Captain Mayfield, and I saw him select one of them, who immediately jumped into the port boat. It was hardly a minute more before the boats were under the falls. They were rapidly hoisted up, and swung inboard. The men leaped out of them, and Washburn rang to back the boat into deeper water. The men secured the boats, and the person sent off went into the pilot-house.

I looked at the clock and found we had lost less than ten minutes in landing the wrecked party, during which time the

Islander had made over a mile. Moses Brickland had been attending to the furnaces while the boats were absent with the two firemen, and I was sure that he had a good head of steam on. The pilot was a swarthy person, with long black hair, and I had no doubt he was a Conch, as Captain Mayfield had described them to me. He was well dressed in seaman's blue clothes. I rather liked the looks of the man, and began to feel confidence in him as soon as I saw him.

"I am glad to see you, Mr. Pilot," I said, giving him my hand, when I went into the pilot-house after assuring myself that the boats were well secured.

"Thank you, Captain Alick," he replied with a smile.

"As you seem to know my name, it is no more than fair that I should know yours," I replied, as good-naturedly as he had spoken.

"I am called Captain Cayo, but my name is Cazador, which is the Spanish for 'Hunter.' But it don't make much difference what you call me. Cayo is Spanish for Key, and people here are so used to the word that they have given it me for a name. Where are you bound, Captain Alick?"

"To New Orleans, or rather we are bound to overhaul the little steamer, just like this one, which left here not more than half an hour before we arrived," I replied.

"I should have thought it was the same steamer if I had seen both of them at the same time," replied Captain Cayo, who had taken the wheel when he first came into the pilot-house, for he had been engaged to take the Sylvania through the North-West Channel, as it is called. "You wish to overhaul the Islander, do you?"

"Her owner is on board of this steamer, and he is very anxious to get on board of her," I answered.

"Very well; if the Sylvania has the speed we will overhaul her, Captain Alick," added the pilot.

"Where did you learn my name, Captain Cayo, for you called me by it before any one had used it on board; and those who came off in the boat with you invariably call me Captain Garningham?" I inquired, taking up one of the points which had attracted my attention from the first.

"I heard you called so by a gentleman who arrived here by the morning steamer from Cedar Keys."

"Who was the gentleman?" I asked, with interest.

"I don't remember his name, if I heard it at all."

"What time did the Islander get to Key West?"

"Not more than two hours before the Sylvania. I went on board of her to offer my services as pilot. The captain did not want a pilot, for he had a Conch on board who used to live in the city."

"Then this man is now piloting the Islander through this channel?"

"I suppose he is; but I don't think he is a pilot, for he is taking the steamer a long way to the eastward of the bar-buoy. She went pretty near a shoal with only five feet of water on it. I shall make one sea-mile in going five compared with the course of the Islander."

"I am very glad to hear it. What sort of a looking-person was it that came in the morning-boat from Cedar Keys?" I asked.

The pilot described Cornwood as though he were a novelist. Of course I had no difficulty in supposing it was he. In order to get the most reliable intelligence from the pilot, I told him all about the abrupt departure of the Islander from Jacksonville without her owner and his family. I stated my belief that Captain Blastblow was avoiding us, and that he had put to sea as soon as he discovered the Sylvania headed in for Key West. I told him the sudden departure of the other steamer was a great mystery to her owner and all the rest of us.

"I am sure I don't know anything about the matter, Captain Alick. I don't believe the Islander intended to stop at the city, for the man from Cedar Keys----"

"His name is Cornwood," I interposed.

"Cornwood went off in a boat and hailed the Islander. She would not stop till he flourished a letter. I was out in my boat looking for any craft that wanted a pilot, and I was close aboard of her. When she stopped I climbed aboard on one side while Cornwood got aboard on the other side. Instead of delivering the letter to the captain, he said it was for a person supposed to be on board. The captain indulged in strong talk; but Cornwood made some statement I did not hear, which seemed to satisfy him. The steamer came to anchor just outside of Fort Taylor. When the captain told me he did not want a pilot, I left the steamer. As I pulled away, I saw that a sharp lookout was kept over the stern of the Islander, which I can understand now, if I could not then."

"You don't know whether or not Cornwood delivered any letter to the captain of the Islander?" I inquired, with deep interest.

"Very likely he did, but not while I was on board. I pulled up the harbor, and landed the other side of the Lazaretto. Before I reached the shore I saw Cornwood and a swellish-looking fellow rowing to the same landing-place. Cornwood was talking very earnestly to the swell, and continued to do so after they got ashore."

"What did the swell look like?" I asked, wondering who he could be, for I had seen all the crew of the Islander, and could remember no one that looked like a swell.

Captain Cayo gave a minute description of the person; but it would have applied as well to one swell as to another.

"Did you see anything more of Cornwood and this swell?" I asked, somewhat excited over the narrative, and hoping to get some clue to the conspiracy for running off the Islander.

"Cornwood and the young fellow took a seat on a bench near the landing-place, and talked for a full hour. Before they got through I had a sight of this steamer coming up by the West Sambo. I passed quite near them, on my way up the hill to the lighthouse, to see if I could make out your steamer. As I did so, I heard Cornwood call the other fellow Nick."

"Nick!" I exclaimed, looking at Washburn.

"That explains it all," added the mate.

"What does it explain?" asked the pilot, who seemed to be quite as much interested in the case as Washburn and myself were.

"It explains another story I have not told, and which I did not suppose had anything to do with this matter of the running off of the Islander."

I related the affair of the robbery of the messenger of the bank, giving all the details of the case, including the unexplained disappearance of Nick Boomsby. The case looked as plain as day to Washburn and myself. Nick had taken possession of the package of money, and concealed it somewhere under the counter; and doubtless there were holes and corners enough there where it could be put without its being seen by his father. He wanted to get out of Jacksonville as soon as possible after the robbery. He had applied to me, with his pathetic story about being compelled to sell whiskey, and wanted to be taken as a passenger in the Sylvania.

"Nick had the card written by Colonel Shepard, which he delivered the night before we sailed," said Washburn.

"I should like to know what was written on that card," I added.

"Probably it was nothing more than an intimation from the colonel that he should be ready to sail the next morning. He had not room enough on a card to go into the particulars," answered Washburn. "You saw him write the card, Alick."

"There was not more than a line or two on it, for it was done in half a minute, signature and all."

"Captain Blastblow had steam up in the morning, as directed," continued Washburn. "Nick observed the writing closely, and wrote a letter such as he wanted for use the next morning. Captain Blastblow is not to blame, unless it is for letting Nick deceive him."

The case looked plain enough now.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### ACROSS THE GULF OF MEXICO.

We had arrived at only a partial solution of the mystery, though we had done enough to relieve Captain Blastblow from any evil intentions in the premises. What Cornwood's connection with the affair was did not yet appear. He could not have known that Nick Boomsby was on board of the *Islander*, for he had gone to St. Augustine, where we had put in on account of stress of weather. He could not have known that we intended to put into St. Augustine, for we had no intention to do so when we left Jacksonville.

Possibly Cornwood had put one thing and another together until he believed Nick had taken the four thousand dollars, and had made his escape in the *Islander*. It looked as though Cornwood had some connection with the robbery, for the *Islander* had hurried on her way to New Orleans, if she was bound there, as soon as the *Sylvania* came in sight. If he had delivered the letter to Captain Blastblow, the latter would have remained in Key West until the arrival of her owner, as instructed by the written message.

"Cornwood and Nick did a good deal of talking, it appears, while the *Islander* was here," said Washburn, "though we don't know what it was all about."

"I have no doubt Cornwood took the management of the case at this point," I replied. "Nick must have forged one letter to induce Captain Blastblow to start the *Islander* without her owner and his family; and I have no doubt Cornwood forged another to make him continue the voyage."

"I hope we shall know all about the matter in a few hours more," said Washburn.

"You understand the entire situation now, Captain Cayo, and see why we want to overhaul the *Islander*," I continued.

"I see the whole of it, and I will do the best I can to outsail the other steamer; but that depends more on your vessel than on me," replied the pilot. "Will you let your men heave the log?"

We had been driving the *Sylvania* to her utmost, and Ben Bowman reported that we were making eleven and a half knots, which was doing exceedingly well in the teeth of a fresh north-west wind. Captain Cayo went to the westward of the bar-buoy, while the *Islander* had gone to the eastward of it more than a mile. I saw that we had gained a mile by this course, and the *Islander* was not more than four miles ahead of us.

I gave the pilot my views of the relative speed of the two vessels, though I told him that Captain Blastblow might get a higher rate of speed out of her than any one had done before.

"We shall soon see which sails fastest," said Captain Cayo. "The *Islander* has laid her course for the South-west Pass of the Mississippi. All you have to do is to follow her. There is our pilot-boat; and this is as far as we usually take vessels."

"But I don't care to have you leave us here, Captain Cayo," I replied. "It is clear enough that the *Islander* intends to keep out of our way. She may run in among the Dry Tortugas, and having a pilot on board, she could easily elude us."

"She might do that when she finds you are gaining on her, as I see you are, for we have made half a knot on her since we came out of the channel. But if we leave the pilot-boat behind, I can't get off the steamer when you don't want me any longer. Besides, it looks like a change of weather, and pilots are in demand when it is foggy or blows, at this season of the year."

"What sort of weather do you expect next?" I asked.

"The wind will work round to the south-west, and then it will be foggy," replied the pilot, scanning the horizon.

"Can't you go to New Orleans, or remain on board till we meet a steamer for Key West?" I suggested.

"I should be very happy to go to New Orleans with you, for there will be no steamer for Key West for several days. But I am not a pilot for the Mississippi River, and you will have to pay another just the same as though I were not on board."

He named his price, besides expenses; and as it was reasonable, I accepted it at once. My experience the night before, when I found the *Sylvania* was ten miles from where I supposed she was, made me extremely cautious. I felt entirely competent to take the steamer to the South-east Pass of the Mississippi; but it was evident that Cornwood had obtained control of the *Islander*, acting as the agent of Colonel Shepard, and that he would not permit the *Sylvania* to

come near her if he could avoid it. Probably the Conch who had acted as her pilot so far would understand the channels of the Tortugas, and could easily take the Islander where I should not care to follow her.

The pilot-boat lay very nearly in our course, and a boat put off from her as we approached. Captain Cayo stopped the steamer when the boat was abreast of her. He jumped upon the rail, and told the oarsmen that he was going to New Orleans.

"Now start her, Mr. Mate," said he to Washburn, as he crawled over the rail to the deck.

"Now Comwood will believe the pilot has left you," said Captain Cayo. "The Islander is still two miles off, and I don't think her people could see me when I crawled back over the rail."

It was a dead calm on the Gulf of Mexico, and the Sylvania was still making eleven and a half knots an hour. I calculated that we had gained two knots on the Islander, one by taking the shorter course, and one by outsailing her.

"I think we had better keep her more to the southward," said Captain Cayo, after he had taken a survey of the horizon, especially in the southwest, where a pile of clouds seemed to be gathering.

"Why to the southward?" I asked.

"I think the captain of the Islander must see by this time that we are gaining on him, and that it is only a question of three or four hours when we shall overhaul her," replied the pilot. "If I were in his place, I should steer for the Tortugas, and leave you five or ten miles behind by dodging into some shallow channel. By keeping to the southward, we shall be in a better position to head her off."

"I see; and we are almost up with the Tortugas. If we keep to the southward, we shall be right in her course if she attempts to run for those islands."

"Right you are, Captain Alick," added the pilot, as he changed the course to due west. "There is a breeze coming up from the southward, which is quite a regular thing towards night. It will blow fresh for some hours, just about a whole sail breeze. I think you had better get your sails set, for the one that uses the wind first will make the most."

I told the mate to call all hands, and put on every rag of canvas we could set. Before he had the foretopsail shaken out, the breeze came, though it was very light. By the time the rest of the sails were set, it was blowing lively. It was five o'clock in the afternoon, and we were fairly up with the Tortugas, and at least a mile to the southward of the Islander. If she attempted to get in among the islands, she must run across our course, and less than a mile ahead of the Sylvania. We could easily cut her off.

"She can't get in among those islands now without running into us," I said, after I had carefully surveyed the situation.

"That is as true as preaching," added Captain Cayo, laughing, when he saw that the other steamer was checkmated if she had intended to resort to any stratagem to avoid us. "We may as well put the steamer on her course for the South-east Pass."

He suited his action to the words. The wind was freshening, and the log indicated that we were making twelve knots strong. Moses was still crowding on all the steam the boiler would bear, and I am sure the yacht never sailed any faster.

At six I estimated that the Islander was not more than a mile ahead of us, and another hour would wipe out all the difference.

"This wind is good for us in one way, and bad in another," said Captain Cayo, shaking his head after a searching gaze to windward.

"You mean that we are likely to have some fog," I added.

"Not only likely to have a fog, but sure of it. It is miles deep to the southward and westward."

"Of course the Islander will be able to keep out of the way in a fog; and we can't help ourselves," I replied, trying to yield as gracefully as possible to the necessity of giving up our point.

I had hardly uttered the words before the fog swept down upon us. It was very dense, and we could not see a ship's length ahead of us; at about the same time the wind suddenly subsided. We could see nothing of the Islander, and I had no doubt she had already shifted her course to the north or the south.

"The game is all up, Captain Cayo," I said, very mournfully.

"Up for the present," replied the pilot, as he called through the speaking-tube for the engineer to stop the steamer.

Captain Cayo put his head out of one of the front windows of the pilot-house, and listened attentively for several minutes. I understood that he had used the speaking-tube instead of ringing the gong, so that those on board of the



Islander should not hear the sound, as they might, it was now so still.

"Go ahead," continued the pilot through the tube. "She has headed to the northward, and we will see what we can do on the same tack."

The pilot headed the Sylvania to the north. I hoped the wind would breeze up again and carry off the fog; but there was no indication of it. Our sails made so much noise, flapping and pounding against the spars, that I was obliged to order all sail taken in. When we had gone an hour on the present course, the pilot ordered the engineer to stop her, as before. Washburn and Ben Bowman were on the top-gallant forecastle, and they listened with all their might. We all did the same, but we could not catch a sound of any kind. If the Islander had been within a mile of us we could have heard the clang of her screw. She had either stopped her engine, or gone off on some other course. We went ahead again, headed to the north-west.

"We might keep this up all night, and not find her," said Captain Cayo, disgusted with the situation.

"What had we better do?" I asked.

"We can't do anything. We can't fight against the fog. Are you sure the Islander will go to New Orleans if we let her alone?"

"I feel reasonably sure of it," I replied. "Captain Blastblow evidently is not engaged in the conspiracy; and I don't believe Cornwood could induce him to disregard the instructions of his owner. His course indicates that he intends to go there, only he seems to be determined to keep out of the way of the Sylvania."

"I have no doubt Cornwood and Nick Boomsby want to go to New Orleans," added the pilot. "I don't see why it won't be just as well to pick them up there as it will be here."

"But they will not allow themselves to be picked up," I answered. "They will get ashore as soon as the Islander reaches New Orleans, whether they get there before or after we do."

"If I wanted to make sure of the rogues, I should get to New Orleans as quickly as I could."

"We should be sure to get there before the Islander," I added.

"So much the better. When you get there, procure a couple of officers, and run back down the river till you meet the other steamer. Throw your officers on board of her, and they will then have no chance to escape. If we wait here all night, the Islander will make the best of her way to her destination, while we are waiting for the fog to clear off, and of course the rogues will put themselves out of sight," said Captain Cayo.

"I think it is the surer way to run for New Orleans. I don't know that we need any officers," I replied. "We can run into the Mississippi, find some place of concealment, and pounce on the Islander when they least suspect our presence."

"I like that plan still better," replied the pilot.

We agreed upon this course, and the Sylvania was headed for the South-east Pass of the Mississippi. We gave her full speed, and on Tuesday afternoon we were off the pass. It was a dull passage. We took a pilot, and as we had no difficulty in crossing the bar, we were soon in the river. The whole region was swamps and lagoons, about as uninteresting as we could expect to find.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE SYLVANIA IN AMBUSH.

As soon as we were in the river, the Mississippi pilot was discharged, and we continued on our voyage up the stream. We did not know by which pass the *Islander* would come in, and we kept on till daylight in the morning. We then ran up to the shore, which was covered with small trees. The place we had chosen was at a bend of the mighty stream, where we could not be seen until the *Islander* was close upon us. We made fast to a tree, and sent Hop Tossford ashore to watch at the bend for the approach of the other steamer.

As the water was deep enough for the *Islander* in whatever part of it she went, I thought she would come within a few yards of our position, as that would lead her up stream by the shortest way. Our passengers had spent their time in the usual manner on the voyage, and one day at sea was very like any other day when the weather was fine. We had passed out of the fog before midnight, and the two days on the Gulf had been as pleasant as possible. Some of them landed on the high bank of the river where we had made fast; but we required them to keep within call.

In the pilot-house we had voted that it was not best to say anything about Cornwood's relations with Nick, and none of the passengers even knew that Nick was on board of the *Islander*. We simply told them that we had lost the other steamer in the fog, and we were afraid we should miss the *Islander* in New Orleans if we delayed to look for her in the fog.

The pilot took the spare berth in the fore cabin, and made himself entirely at home on the steamer, as I desired he should. We had arranged our plan for the capture of the *Islander* when she came up the river; and none of us had any doubts in regard to her coming. Captain Cayo was to have the duty of taking possession of the person of Cornwood, and Buck Lingley was to do the same kindness to Nick. Colonel Shepard was to be close at hand to deal with Captain Blastblow, if he objected to the proceedings.

All the forenoon passed away without a sight of the *Islander*. We dined, and began to inquire if there was any way by which the *Islander* could get to New Orleans without passing the point where we had taken position. We could find none she was likely to take. We were beginning to believe our well-laid plan had miscarried, when Ben Bowman, who was on the lookout for the prize, hastened on board with the intelligence that the *Islander* was within four miles of us.

We had covered our topmasts with green branches to prevent the people on the *Islander* from suspecting our presence before she turned the bend. A little point covered with trees a short distance below us concealed the hull of the *Sylvania*, and I was satisfied that she could not be seen by Cornwood before it would be too late to keep out of our way.

"All hands on deck," I said to Washburn, as soon as Ben Bowman had announced the approach of the runaway steamer.

"All on deck, sir, except Ben Bowman," returned the mate, as soon as he had given the call.

The second engineer had returned to the point to observe and report upon the movements of the *Islander*. He informed me that the steamer seemed to be making the shortest course the bends of the stream would permit, and she was headed for the point behind which the *Sylvania* was concealed.

I had arranged my plan of operations. Our steamer was headed up the stream, and held by a single hawser leading to the bowsprit-bitts. We had passed the rope around the tree, and made the end fast on board, so that we could let go without any one going on shore to do so. The strong current of the river would carry the steamer's head away from the shore, and we had only to dart out alongside the *Islander*, and make fast to her. We had rigged out our fenders, so that neither steamer was likely to be damaged by a collision.

Ben Bowman and Buck Lingley were to carry a line on board of the prize, and make fast the instant we came alongside of her. Colonel Shepard was to get on board of the *Islander* as quick as he could, and give his orders to Captain Blastblow. I did not apprehend any difficulty in carrying out the programme. I was confident that the captain of the runaway vessel would respect the orders of his owner. We had banked our fires in the morning, so that the noise of escaping steam need not warn the *Islander* of the presence of another steamer. As soon as Ben reported the runaway within four miles, Moses Brickland had caused the fires to be replenished, and he calculated upon having a full head of steam when we were ready to run out from our hiding-place.

In about half an hour from the time the *Islander* was discovered, Ben Bowman came on board. We could hear the clang of her screw by this time. I stationed Ben at the hawser, and directed him to let go and haul in the rope as quickly as

possible when I gave the word. Buck Lingley and Landy Perkins were to help him make quick work of it. Captain Cayo was stationed where he could make a sure thing of the capture of Cornwood as soon as he leaped on board.

Nearer and nearer came the Islander to the point. As soon as she showed her bowsprit beyond it, I was to give the word to cast off. I could see nothing to prevent the success of the elaborate plan we had made, and I was satisfied that Colonel Shepard would be in possession of his steam-yacht within five minutes.

"Let go and haul in!" I called to Ben Bowman, at the hawser.

The assistant engineer did not permit an instant to elapse before he and his two helpers were hauling on the rope with all their might.

The moment I saw that the hawser was running free, I rang the gong to go ahead, with the helm hard a-starboard. I heard the screw turn a couple of times, and then it stopped. I did not quite understand this. The next thing I saw was Moses rushing on the forecastle.

"The propeller is fouled in a root or a rope, Alick!" exclaimed he. "Back her a stroke or two, and it may clear itself."

I rang to back her as he rushed aft to the engine-room. By this time the Islander was fairly abreast of us, and I feared that our elaborate scheme had failed. But we were seventy-five miles from New Orleans, and there was time enough for as lively a race as ever was seen on the "Father of Waters."

I rang again to stop the engine, and then to start it. It went hard, and I heard some snapping near the stern. It was evident that the screw had been fouled in a root, and I was afraid it might have been twisted into the propeller. I stopped the engine again. When I found the screw did not move freely I ran aft, and found Hop Tossford had climbed over the stern with a boat-hook in his hand, and was punching in the direction of the propeller.

"It's a crocodile!" he exclaimed. "There it goes!"

I saw the creature rise to the top of the water. Hop was English, and Englishmen are apt to call all saurians by this name. I should not have expected to see the real alligator so near the salt water, for I had heard that only crocodiles proper lived or thrived in salt water. It may have been one washed out from some bayou by the high water, which was prevailing at this time, or it may have been the real crocodile. I did not stop then to reason about this case in natural history; but as soon as I saw the mangled reptile, which was about ten feet long, on the surface of the water, I hastened to the pilot-house, and started the screw again. This time it moved freely, and I concluded that the saurian had been resting on the blades of the propeller when it began to turn.

By this time the Islander had made about a quarter of a mile, as I judged, against the swift current. But there was now no chance for her to dodge us. Our fires were in excellent condition, for the fireman had been forcing them for twenty minutes.

"A miss hit," said Captain Cayo, coming into the pilot-house, when it was clear that the capture would not come off immediately.

"I suppose that alligator went down to drink when we came up to the bank of the river," I replied. "But he has the worst of it, for the screw has smashed him."

I saw the saurian floating motionless down stream, and the screw had evidently made short work of him.

"I am sorry the rascal interfered with our affair," added the pilot.

"The game is not up yet. We shall have an opportunity to learn which is the faster steamer," I replied.

"The current must be running five or six miles an hour here," said Captain Cayo.

"About five miles an hour is the usual rate of the Mississippi," I answered. "But it runs just as fast for the Islander as it does for the Sylvania."

"That's true; and I doubt if either steamer is making more than six or seven knots an hour."

"The Islander is sheering off from us towards the middle of the river, and that is where she is making her mistake."

"Why so?" asked the pilot.

"Because the current is swifter in the middle of the stream than near the banks, for the friction of the shore has some effect on its flow."

"That is bringing it down to a fine point," said Captain Cayo, laughing, for he was entirely unused to river navigation.

I kept the Sylvania as near the shore as I deemed it prudent to go, while the Islander went in the middle of the river, as if her captain desired to avoid falling into any possible trap. The wind was southerly and quite fresh. I directed the mate

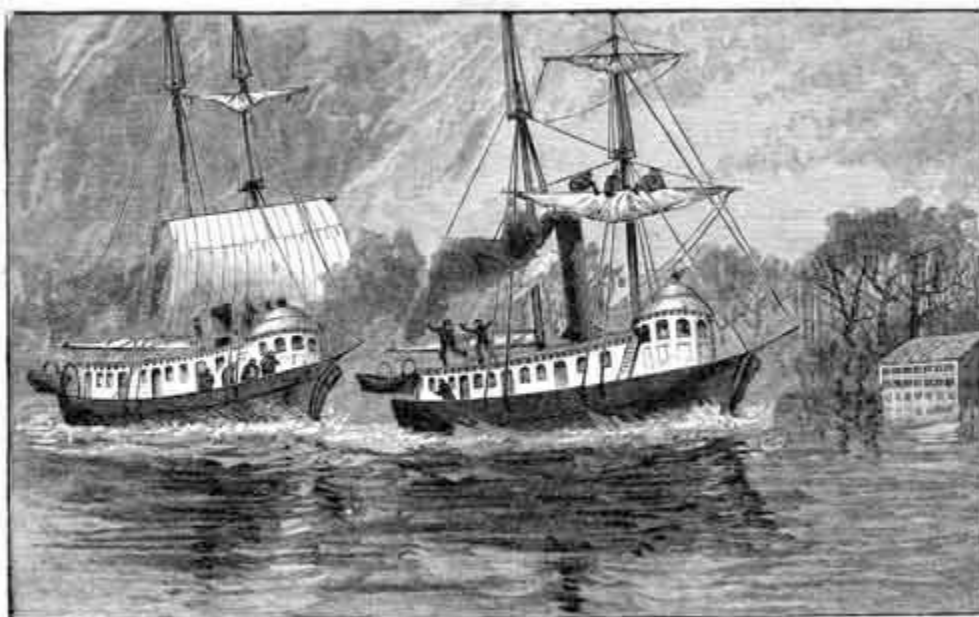
to shake out the fore squaresail and the fore topsail. In twenty minutes, by the clock in the pilot-house, we were abreast of the Islander, but half a mile from her, for she was still in the middle of the river. By this time, Captain Blastblow evidently saw his mistake in not setting his squaresails, for the wind was blowing about half a gale.

I put the helm about a half a point nearer to the course of the other steamer. I immediately noticed that her pilot made a corresponding change in her helm. Moses kept an eye on her, and understood the game perfectly. I did not attempt to run any closer to her, for a turn in the river would soon bring the Sylvania alongside of her. If the vessel attempted to go any nearer the shore, she would have to stand out again in order to pass the bend above. In a word, the Islander was cornered.

Captain Blastblow could not help realizing the situation of the steamer he sailed. Too late he sent his men aloft to loose the squaresail. Before they could get the gasket off, I had to port the helm to prevent striking the other steamer. All our hands were in position to do the parts before assigned to them.

I kept a sharp watch upon the actions of the Islander to meet any change in her course. I saw Captain Blastblow in the pilot-house at the wheel. He looked very nervous and disturbed, and I did not wonder at it.

"Sheer off, or you will be afoul of us!" shouted the captain of the runaway steamer.



"SHEER OFF, OR YOU WILL BE AFOUL OF US!"  
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At the same moment he rang his gong to stop her. I rang mine also the moment I heard the other. Moses was standing by his lever and wheel, and I think the Sylvania was stopped before the Islander. Of course we continued to go ahead under the impulse of the momentum given the two boats.

Very cautiously I put the helm to starboard, and in a moment the two boats touched each other, but without any shock or crash. The two hands assigned to the duty sprang upon the forecastle of the Islander, and made fast the rope they carried to the bowsprit-bitts. At the same instant, Captain Cayo and Buck Lingley leaped into the waist of the steamer. I saw Cornwood and Nick on the hurricane-deck, though they began to make their exit as soon as we came alongside. The pilot knew his men well, and before the Floridian could leave the hurricane-deck, he had taken him rather unceremoniously by the collar.

Buck did not know Nick Boomsby, but the simple fact that he was with Cornwood satisfied him that he was the person he wanted. I saw that Cornwood began to look magnificent, and to show fight, while Nick acted like a sick kitten.

Colonel Shepard hastened to follow the pilot on board, and met Captain Blastblow coming out of the pilot-house to ascertain what the matter was.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### HOW NICK BOOMSBY MANAGED HIS CASE.

We had hardly accomplished our introductory work before I saw that both steamers, which we had secured together with a stern as well as a bow line, had been set back by the rapid current, and had begun to drift down the river. I rang for the Sylvania to go ahead, and then called upon Hop Tossford to take the wheel. I did not care to tow the Islander against the swift current. I satisfied myself that the bow and stern lines were properly made fast, and then went on board of the other steamer.

I found that Colonel Shepard was inclined to let his angry passions rise, as he saw Captain Blastblow approaching him, for which I could not very strongly blame him. I had called to him before I went on board of the Islander, and he had come aft to meet me. I suggested that he should put Washburn in charge of the vessel until matters had been explained. He promptly acquiesced, and I sent the mate to the pilot-house of the prize, with instructions to keep her as near the right bank of the river as it was prudent to go, and to direct the wheelman of the Sylvania at the same time.

"Do I understand you to take the command of the Islander out of my hands, Colonel Shepard?" demanded Captain Blastblow, as he heard me instruct Washburn what to do.

"For the present, yes," replied the colonel, decidedly and stemly, as though he intended no more mistakes should be made.

"This is rather sudden, for I haven't the least idea that I have done anything to displease you," replied the captain, struggling to keep his temper.

"What have you been doing with this steamer? What induced you to run away with her? Why have you taken so great pains to keep away from the Sylvania?" asked Colonel Shepard, in a severe tone.

"I have tried to obey my instructions in every particular," replied Captain Blastblow, apparently more in astonishment than in anger.

"Have you had any instruction to run away with my steam-yacht?"

"I certainly had no instructions to run away with her; and I am not aware that I have done anything of that kind," answered the captain.

"There has been some mistake, Colonel Shepard," I interposed. "I think we had better go into the pilot-house and talk it over."

Without making any reply, both of the belligerents followed me forward. I was quite as anxious to ascertain what had become of Cornwood and Nick Boomsby as I was to have Captain Blastblow explain his singular conduct. I found Captain Cayo on the forecabin, holding his prisoner by the collar of his coat, while Nick was in the care of Buck, on the port side of the house on deck. The former seemed disposed to resist, though he was not willing to risk a conflict with his swarthy captor.

"What do you mean by laying hands upon me, you rascal?" demanded Cornwood.

"Don't use any hard words, Cornwood," added the pilot, coolly. "I obey my orders, and don't answer any questions."

"I don't know anything about your orders; and no one had any right to give you any orders to lay hands on me," foamed Cornwood.

The prisoner began to demonstrate rather violently; he made a spring at the throat of the pilot; but the latter was too quick and too strong for him. They clinched together, and then Cornwood went down upon the deck. Captain Cayo put his foot on the chest of the prostrate Floridian, and held him down.

"I think we had better put a rope around this man's arms," said the pilot, without taking his eyes from his prisoner. "That would keep him quiet and well-behaved."

I picked up a piece of line, and handed it to him. He tipped Cornwood as carelessly as though he had been a shark, and proceeded to bind his arms behind him. The Floridian attempted to resist again; but the foot of the pilot pressed more heavily upon him as he did so, and he found it impossible to get upon his feet again.

Captain Cayo drew the arms of the captive up behind him, and quickly fastened them. Then he took him by the collar,

and stood him up on his feet. Cornwood looked unutterably scornful at me; and I doubt if he would have made any trouble if I had not been present. Judging by his looks, he appeared to regard me with intense hatred. I had interfered with some of his schemes before, and from the particular attention he bestowed upon me, I came to the conclusion that he considered me the author of his present misfortune.

"Why am I treated in this brutal manner?" demanded Cornwood, turning his gaze from me to Captain Blastblow.

"I don't know anything at all about it," replied the captain. "There are several things I don't understand about this business; but I am willing to be informed."

"I suppose I owe all this to you, Captain Garningham," added Cornwood, giving me a savage look.

"On the contrary, I think you owe it all to yourself," I replied. "If I remember rightly, you were to detain the Islander at Key West. Instead of doing this, she runs out of the harbor as soon as the Sylvania comes in sight."

"It's none of your business, Garningham. Do you own the Islander?"

"I think we had better go into the pilot-house and talk the case over," I added. "We shall soon find out what the matter is."

I led the way, and we seated ourselves in the pilot-house. I had indicated this place because I wanted to hear the explanation of the captain of the Islander.

"Captain Blastblow, your conduct has astonished me," said Colonel Shepard, more calmly than he had spoken at first.

"I am sorry for it, sir, for I have tried to do just as I was instructed," answered the captain, meekly, and apparently as much astonished as his owner. "I know my place, and I always expect to do just what my employer expects of me."

"I did not expect you to run away with my steam-yacht, when all my family were waiting to go in her," added the colonel, becoming more indignant as he rehearsed the incidents of the morning we left Jacksonville.

"But your going in the Islander depended on your business; and when I saw you the morning before we sailed, you could not tell what you would do. You instructed me to water and provision the vessel, and wait for further orders. Towards evening, you sent off a card by young Boomsby, directing me to have steam up and be ready to sail early in the morning. I was ready to go by six o'clock," answered the captain, taking from his desk in the pilot-house a package of papers, from which he selected the card sent off by Nick. "Is it all straight so far?"

"Entirely: it was just as you say. I received a letter by the afternoon mail, which assured me a business matter would allow me to be absent from New York a month or six weeks longer; and I decided to go up the river with the Sylvania."

"I didn't ask questions, or inquire into your business. All I had to do was to obey the orders of my owner," added Captain Blastblow. "I made sure that everything on board was ready for the voyage before I turned in that night. By half-past five in the morning we had steam enough on to sail down the river. It was about half-past six when your friend, Mr. Boomsby, came----"

"My friend, Mr. Boomsby!" exclaimed the colonel. "I never even saw my friend, Mr. Boomsby, that I know of."

"I only know that you called him your friend yourself," replied Captain Blastblow.

"I called him so! How could I call him so when I had no acquaintance with him?" demanded the owner, with a smile of incredulity.

"I don't know anything about that," continued the captain, fumbling over the papers he had taken from his desk. "I learned to read writing when I was a boy; and that was what you wrote."

"I never wrote anything of the kind, Captain Blastblow. But never mind that: go on with your story," added the colonel.

"I can prove all that I say, sir. Your friend, Mr. Boomsby, as you called him in your letter, came on board about half-past six, and gave me your instructions to proceed to New Orleans as soon as I got the letter."

"I sent you no such letter, Captain Blastblow," protested Colonel Shepard. "I never wrote any such letter; some one has been playing a trick on you."

"But I have the letter in your own handwriting," pleaded the captain. "I will read it to you. It is dated at the St. James Hotel, with a picture of the house, and the heading printed upon it. Here is what it says:--"

CAPTAIN BLASTBLOW:

I have received a despatch which will prevent me from leaving Jacksonville for a few days. You will proceed to New Orleans as soon as you get this letter; and I will go there by land with my family. For

reasons I will explain to you some other time, I want you to keep out of the way of the Sylvania. I have made a bet that the Islander will get to New Orleans first; and I expect, from what you said, you will win the bet for me. This letter will be delivered to you by my friend, Mr. Boomsby, who will take passage with you; and you will treat him as well as you would me."

Yours truly,

P. G. SHEPARD.

"If those instructions are not as plain talk as any shipmaster could desire, I should like to know what would be plain," continued Captain Blastblow, as he finished the reading of the letter. "I hove up the anchor at once, and rang to go ahead. I was ordered to keep out of the way of the Sylvania, and I have done my best to avoid her."

"But I did not write that letter, Captain Blastblow," repeated the owner; and by this time we were all rather amused at the straightforward earnestness of the captain of the Islander. "Let me see the letter, if you please."

The captain handed him the letter. Colonel Shepard examined it critically. He shook his head as he did so.

"I must acknowledge that the writing looks very much like mine," he said, after he had read it through and examined it in every part. "Who could have written it?"

"Nick Boomsby wrote it, without a doubt," I replied. "I went to school with him, and he was a good penman, though that was about all he was as a scholar."

"Is that my friend, Mr. Boomsby?" asked the colonel, laughing heartily.

"The same person; and he has become a swell of the first magnitude," I replied. "If I had known, or suspected, before we got to Key West, that Nick was on board of her, I could have explained the strange conduct of the Islander, and why she so carefully kept out of our way."

I gave a full account of the robbery of the bank messenger in the saloon of Nick's father, dwelling upon the efforts Nick had made to arrest Buckner. I stated that he had tried to obtain a passage to New Orleans in the Sylvania, that I had refused to let him go in her, and had taken care that he did not become a stowaway on board of her. I added that Nick told me of his intention to run away from his home, and seek his fortune in some other part of the country.

"I have no doubt that Nick stole the four thousand dollars the messenger laid on the counter, and resorted to the trick of forging a letter to Captain Blastblow, so that he could get the Islander off ahead of the Sylvania," I continued.

"But how is it that Cornwood did not stop the Islander at Key West, as it appears he got on board of her there?" asked Colonel Shepard, deeply interested in the narrative.

"I think you will have to ask Cornwood about that," I replied. "I am a Yankee, and I can guess what he meant."

"I don't know that I care about any guessing, Captain Alick; but if you have any theory with a base under it, I should like to hear it," said Colonel Shepard.

"I think Cornwood was well assured that Nick was on board of the Islander when you sent him to intercept the steamer at Key West," I answered. "Cornwood would not have gone on such a wild-goose chase for nothing. According to the testimony of Captain Cayo, Cornwood and Nick had very earnest conversation at Key West."

"I don't think it's any use to speculate over the case," interposed Captain Blastblow. "Let us search for the money."

We all agreed that this was the next thing to do.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### A SEARCH FOR THE LOST TREASURE.

The two steamers had passed the bend of the river, and we had gone by forts Jackson and St. Philip without a word being said of the historical events which were connected with them. We were too busy with the inquiry before us to give any attention to the surroundings, though I could see that our passengers on board the Sylvania were discussing what they saw on the mighty river. But nothing could have been more uninteresting than the banks of the river near its delta.

It was a season of high water, and the low lands beyond the levee on either side were overflowed. Occasionally we passed a vessel going down the stream, or a powerful skeleton-tug dragging a ship against the rapid current. There was little to be seen besides the muddy flow of the stream all around us, and the fringe of trees that grew on the levee.

If the theory we had advanced, and supported by such evidence as we had, was correct, the four thousand dollars the bank messenger had lost were on board the Islander. If Nick had taken the package, he had not left it behind him when he started out on his travels. We went down into the after-cabin. The captain said Nick had occupied the large state-room on the starboard side, while Cornwood had taken possession of the corresponding one on the port side. We found enough of the effects of each in his state-room to settle the question of his occupancy of the room. Four thousand dollars was a large sum of money, and we did not expect to find it lying around loosely in the room of either.

Captain Blastblow volunteered to examine Cornwood's state-room, while I rendered the same service in that of Nick Boomsby. I found a bundle which contained the runaway's clothing. I searched it thoroughly, but there was no package of any kind in it. I opened all the drawers and lockers in the room with no better success. I tore the bed to pieces and removed the berth sack. The latter was a hair mattress of the best quality. I looked to see if it had been ripped open in any place, and then felt of it in every part, but without discovering anything like a foreign substance in it.

Under the berth, or rather bedstead, was a considerable space, where a trunk or other package could be placed. I lighted the lamp in the state-room, and took it from the gimbals, for it was dark under the bed. I looked and felt in every part of the space, but I had no better success. I examined every hole and corner in the state-room, but found no such package as that for which I was looking.

"I find nothing that looks like money," I said to Colonel Shepard, who was watching the operations with deep interest.

"Blastblow has no better luck in the other state-room. Do you conclude from this fact that you have been mistaken?" inquired the owner of the Islander.

"I do not; I feel morally sure that Nick took that money," I replied, confidently.

"You may be mistaken, Captain Alick," added Colonel Shepard, with a smile. "If he took the package we should be likely to find it in his room."

"I grant that I expected to find it here; or a part of the money in this room, and the rest of it in Cornwood's state-room," I added, rather warmly. "There are other places where the package could have been concealed."

"That is true; but Nick's room was the place where he was most likely to put it."

"I think so myself; but Nick has had the advice of Cornwood since the Islander reached Key West."

"Cornwood is a cunning rogue, I know."

"If we had suspected that Nick was on board the Islander, we might have telegraphed to the police at Key West to arrest him and detain the steamer," I continued. "I am satisfied that Cornwood would not have gone to Key West if he had not expected to find Nick on board of the Islander. At least, he would not have gone without the hundred dollars he asked to pay his expenses in advance."

"Your logic seems to be entirely correct, but the facts so far do not seem to bear out the theory," laughed the colonel. "But I have recovered my steam-yacht, and I am entirely happy over the result so far."

"I have no desire to prove that Nick Boomsby is a thief and a rascal; on the contrary, I should be glad to have him relieved of the suspicion that hangs to him just now. Cornwood may have considered that the state-rooms were the most unsafe places on board of the vessel to conceal the money, and even Nick himself may have come to this conclusion before he had seen Cornwood."



"There is some reason in that," said the colonel. "Everybody in Jacksonville knew that both yachts were bound to New Orleans. Nick may have suspected that he would be charged with the robbery. He is old enough to understand all about the telegraph, and he may have put the money where it was not likely to be found, or if found, might not appear to have any connection with him."

Captain Blastblow had made as thorough a search in the port as I had in the starboard state-room, and had joined us in the cabin while we were talking about the matter. He seemed to fall in with our reasoning, and expressed his satisfaction that he had not been boarded by officers, who might have suspected him of being concerned in the robbery of the bank messenger.

"Cornwood has been on board of the Islander three days now," I said. "Have you seen much of him, Captain Blastblow, during this time?"

"Very little indeed. From the time he came on board Sunday, I think I hardly saw him at all until Monday afternoon. He was in close conversation with Mr. Boomsby most of the time, the steward said to me. The first night they sat up till after midnight; and Lonsdale says there was a good deal of strong talk between them," replied the captain.

"Do you know what it was about?" I asked.

"I haven't the least idea. I inquired how the passengers were getting on, and Lonsdale told me he thought they were in some kind of a quarrel."

"You don't spend any of your time in the cabin, do you, Captain Blastblow?" asked the owner.

"I haven't had time even to come into it on this trip, though I intend to go through it every day, to see that everything is in order. I have had all I could do the last week to look out for the vessel, with two heavy gales and plenty of fog," replied the captain. "I had to make a harbor at Matanzas Inlet, and again at Tavernier's, for I was afraid this little craft would roll her engine out of her."

"We kept on through the whole of it Friday night," I added.

"You were outside of the reef, and you could not make a harbor," retorted Captain Blastblow. "But I got to Key West two hours before you did."

"You did not go to the assistance of a wrecked bark as I did, and land her ship's company in Key West," I replied.

The captain of the Islander wanted to know about the wreck; and at another time I told him all about it. We were too much concerned in verifying our theory in relation to the robbery in Jacksonville to agree to any long digression.

"Is the steward the only person who has been a constant visitor to the cabin?" I asked.

"Gibbs, the waiter, did all the work in the cabin; and he must have seen more of the passengers than even the steward," replied the captain.

"Where is Gibbs?"

"Probably on deck, or asleep in some corner."

"Perhaps we had better call the steward and waiter," suggested Colonel Shepard.

The captain went to the head of the companion-way, and called the steward. Mr. Lonsdale had not spent much time in the cabin, though he slept in one of the berths abaft the state-rooms. He confirmed the statement of the captain that there had been a great deal of earnest conversation between the Floridian and the "young swell." He never listened to private conversation, and he had not the remotest idea what they were talking about. Perhaps Gibbs, the waiter, might know more about the matter than he did.

Gibbs was found to be fast asleep on a sofa in the after part of the cabin. He knew nothing at all about what had happened since the Islander came into the river, and appeared to be not a little surprised when he saw the owner and myself. He was a light Mulatto, a very good-looking fellow, and I judged that he was intelligent.

"Where are the passengers, Gibbs?" asked Captain Blastblow.

"I don't know, sir; somewhere about the vessel, I suppose; most likely asleep in the staterooms," replied the waiter.

"Where do they spend their time when they are below?" continued the captain, in an easy and indifferent tone.

Gibbs answered the question in a very indefinite manner. The passengers were mostly in their state-rooms, on the sofa, or sitting in the chairs.

"Have you noticed them in any particular place in the cabin, except in their state-rooms, in the chairs, or on the sofas?" I asked, with considerable energy, for the waiter seemed to be rather stupid and bewildered, and I thought he needed

something to wake him up.

"Yes, sir; I seen them both on the cabin floor this morning," answered Gibbs, with more life in his tones and manner than I had seen before.

"On the floor!" exclaimed Colonel Shepard. "What were they doing on the floor?"

"I don't know, sir. I had cleared away the breakfast-dishes, and went on deck to smoke. I found it a little cool, and I came down again for my coat," replied Gibbs, talking quite glibly now. "As soon as I came down stairs, they got up."

"Where were they at the time?" I inquired.

"Right under the companion-way, sir."

"And you could not tell what they were doing on the floor?"

"No, sir; they were crawling out from under the companion-way when I saw them."

We questioned the steward and the waiter for some time longer, but we got nothing more out of them. We asked the captain to send them on deck, and to direct Captain Cayo and Buck Lingley not to allow any person to communicate with their prisoners.

The companion-way consisted of stairs with steps, but with no risers to obstruct the light from the stern ports. It was not probable that the passengers had secreted the bills forming the package in such a place as this. But we carefully examined every foot of space under the companion-way. We were about to give up the search in this part of the cabin, when I felt something under the carpet, beneath the lower step. I found that a portion of the carpet had been torn up, and I pulled it over. Reaching it again, I felt the package more distinctly; but I was disappointed because it seemed to be too small for the one that had been lost. I drew it out.

"This can't be it," I said. "It is not more than half the size of the one the messenger laid on the counter in the saloon."

"It ought not to be more than half as large," added the colonel. "It appears that there has been some earnest talk among the passengers of the Islander. What could this have been about except the division of the spoils?"

While he was speaking, I had taken off the paper which inclosed the package. It was the same color as that I had seen in the saloon. On removing the covering, I came to the two tin plates, and saw a pile of money, in bills, between them.

"Of course there is only one half of the plunder, and Boomsby divided with Cornwood," said Colonel Shepard.

"Where is the other half?" I asked, blankly.

"I have no doubt this half belongs to my friend Mr. Boomsby; and I have no more doubt Cornwood would have stolen it by the time they got to New Orleans," added the colonel.

We concluded that it would not be as easy to find the second half of the treasure as it had been the first.

## CHAPTER XX.

### THE THEORY AND THE FACTS.

We spent an hour in searching in every nook and corner of the cabin for the other half of the lost treasure. Cornwood had not been stupid enough to put it under the companion-way; and Nick had been stupid enough to let his companion know where he had hidden his own share. As Colonel Shepard had suggested, it was probable that the Floridian meant to take it before he went on shore at New Orleans. Cornwood had not concealed his share of the treasure in the cabin of the *Islander*, and we could think of no other place where he was at all likely to deposit it.

"I think he has too long a head to hide his money anywhere," interposed Captain Blastblow. "I should say that any man was a natural fool to hide his money in a vessel, under such circumstances as these fellows came on board of the steamer. In my opinion, he has concealed the money on his person, for you seem to have no doubt that he divided with the young swell."

"That looks very reasonable," added Colonel Shepard. "I think if I had a large sum on board of a vessel, I should provide myself with a money-belt, and keep the treasure in it at all times."

"All we have to do is to search him," said Captain Blastblow. "We shall soon find out whether or not he is a party to the robbery. I suppose there isn't any doubt about the young swell, as the steward called him, and which I think is the best description of him."

"The package, with the two tin plates, precisely answers the description given of it by the man that lost it," I replied. "But I doubt whether we have any right to search Cornwood. We are not officers, and we are now in the State of Louisiana."

"We have as much right to search him as we had to lay hands on him when we came alongside of the *Islander*," replied Colonel Shepard. "I think we can get at the truth better than any court can. At any rate, he has taken part in stealing my steam-yacht; and I think I have some hold on him. If it turns out that he has not the money on him, I have no doubt I can make it all right with him. I am willing to take the responsibility."

"All right. I will help your man bring him down here, for I think we had better not say anything to Mr. Boomsby until we have settled where the other half of the money is," said Captain Blastblow.

"Bring him down here," replied the colonel.

The captain soon returned with the pilot, having Cornwood between them. The prisoner seemed to be somewhat bewildered, for no charge had yet been preferred against him.

"Mr. Cornwood, you seem to be acting in a different role than that for which I engaged you at St. Augustine," said Colonel Shepard, when the pilot had put his prisoner into a chair.

"It was my intention to place the steamer in your hands by the time you arrived in Key West," replied Cornwood, with dignity.

"You gave me a letter when you came on board the *Islander* at Key West," said Captain Blastblow, savagely, to the prisoner.

"I gave you the owner's letter," added Cornwood.

"No, you didn't! you gave me this letter," continued the captain, taking a paper from his pocket. "Is this your letter, Colonel Shepard?"

He gave the letter to his owner. The colonel looked at it and laughed.

"This is not so good an imitation of my handwriting as the other letter," he added. "I never wrote a line of this letter. It favors the theory we have adopted, and I will give it to you."

CAPTAIN BLASTBLOW.

DEAR SIR: This letter will be delivered to you by my excellent friend, Mr. Kirby Cornwood, who has been my companion during my trip to the interior of Florida, and I commend him to your acquaintance and good offices. You will give him a state-room on board of the *Islander*, for he will make the trip with

you to New Orleans. You will continue to avoid the Sylvania, and in all matters relating to the steamer you will take the advice of Mr. Cornwood, in whose fidelity and good judgment I have entire confidence.

Very truly yours,

P. G. SHEPARD.

"My excellent friend, Mr. Kirby Cornwood!" exclaimed the colonel. "Did you ever know a man to have so many excellent friends as I have? Why, they are all willing to sacrifice themselves, and take my steam-yacht and run her at my expense, and even without my knowledge."

"You did not write that letter, colonel?" asked Captain Blastblow.

"Of course I did not," replied the owner, warmly. "Why, the writing is quite different from that given to you by my friend, Mr. Boomsby."

"I am afraid I shall not be willing to take any written orders after this, unless the signature is witnessed by some one I know. I am sure I did not think of such a thing as a counterfeit letter. But did you send any letter to me by your excellent friend, Mr. Kirby Cornwood?" asked Captain Blastblow.

"I did send a letter to you by him, instructing you to wait at Key West till my arrival there," replied the colonel.

"Will you give me that letter, Mr. Kirby Cornwood?" demanded the captain, addressing the prisoner in a very vigorous manner.

"I gave you the letter I received from Colonel Shepard. I have no other," replied Cornwood, doggedly.

"I don't believe you, when Colonel Shepard says he did not write that letter."

"Do you mean to tell me I lie?" cried Cornwood.

"That's the substance of what I mean," answered the captain, who seemed to hold the prisoner in utter contempt.

"You are a coward, or you would not say that to a man with his arms tied behind him," returned Cornwood, repressing his wrath.

"You invited me to say it, and I said it; and it wouldn't make any difference to me whether your arms were tied or not. But I want the other letter, and I am going to have it. Captain Cayo, we will search him, and then we shall know whether he has it or not," added Captain Blastblow.

The captain and the pilot proceeded at once to execute the threat. Cornwood leaped from his chair, and began to kick at his two persecutors. He was boiling with rage, or with some other passion. But Captain Cayo seized him from behind by the shoulders, and threw him down before he could do any harm. The captain took from his pocket a strong cord he had evidently brought down for the purpose, and while the pilot held him down, tied his ankles together. They then began the search, examining all his pockets first. They found neither the money nor the letter.

"We haven't gone deep enough," said Captain Blastblow, as he thrust his hand into the inside of Cornwood's shirt. The latter seemed to understand what this movement meant, and he renewed his struggles in the most desperate manner.

Captain Cayo put his foot on Cornwood's chest, as he had done when he captured the Floridian, and compelled him to lie quiet. Then he threw up his manacled feet; but I took care of them by sitting down upon his legs. Captain Blastblow then proceeded with his search. He removed a portion of the prisoner's clothing above his trousers, and we could not help seeing the wash-leather belt he wore around his waist. He unbuckled it, and held it up before us.

"Now you may take Mr. Kirby Cornwood on deck," said the captain, in a tone of triumph, as he felt the outside of the pocket-book attached to the belt.

"Do you mean to rob me of my money? Have I fallen among thieves?" demanded Cornwood.

"No; but we have," replied Captain Blastblow.

"This is an outrage, and----"

"Never mind that now; we will hear it another time," interposed the captain.

"I protest against----"

"All right," added the captain, as he seated himself at the cabin-table. "Go on deck, Mr. Kirby Cornwood, and take the air. It will do you good."

The captain handed the money-belt to Colonel Shepard, who opened it, and took from the pocket a large pile of bank-notes.

"That looks more like it," said the captain. "I don't believe that fellow will prosecute us for anything we have done. He belongs in the Florida state prison, if they have such an institution."

"I think we had better count the money," I suggested, as I took the package we had found under the companion-way from my breast-pocket.

"Yes, count, and see if the rascals made a fair 'divvy' of it," added the captain.

Colonel Shepard began to count the bills he had taken from the money-belt, and I opened the package in my possession. As I did so, I found the words, "First National Bank of Florida," as if impressed by a stamp, on the wrapper. The two tin plates, by which I had been able to recognize the package, were made by cutting off the round ends of a pair of tins used for doubling papers and tearing off checks or other papers. I concluded they were a device of the bank messenger, by which he could square his package. When I had shown these things to the captain, I proceeded to count the money.

"Just two thousand dollars," said the colonel, who finished his work long before I did mine.

"Nineteen hundred and ninety," I added, when I had finished the count.

"He may have taken out ten dollars," suggested the colonel.

"I don't believe Cornwood did, for I found other money in his pockets, which I did not touch," added Captain Blastblow.

"Count it over again, Captain Alick," said the colonel.

I did so, laying off the bills in hundreds, as they amounted to this sum. My last lot came out right, and I had twenty piles. It made just two thousand dollars. It was clear now, if it had not been before, that Cornwood's visit to Key West related to Nick Boomsby, and not to the detention of the Islander when she arrived there. The equal division of the money explained the long and rather stormy conversations between the passengers of the Islander. Cornwood was smart, if he was nothing else in the way of honesty and uprightness. He had bullied and persuaded poor Nick Boomsby to give him half the money, and would probably have stolen the other half before the vessel got to New Orleans, if we had not captured her on the way.

I was sorry for Nick Boomsby, for he had been the playmate of my early years; not so sorry that he had been found out as that he could commit a crime. But I could hardly wonder at his guilt when I thought of what his father had done, and what an example he had given his son. I thought the father was almost, if not quite, as much to blame as the son.

"What shall be done with this money?" asked Colonel Shepard, when he had wrapped up both divisions of the money and the money-belt in one package.

"What shall we do with our two prisoners?" I inquired, in answer to the question.

"We can hand them over to the police in New Orleans," replied the colonel.

"Then we can hand the money also over to them," I added. "Probably the news of the robbery of the messenger has been in half the newspapers in the country, and the police of all the large cities will know all about the case."

It was finally agreed that my father should keep the money till we arrived at New Orleans, as he would be in another steamer from the robbers. Colonel Shepard decided to go on board of the Islander at once, and his family were assisted to their new quarters.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### UP THE MISSISSIPPI.

As soon as we had transferred the family of Colonel Shepard to the Islander, we unlashd the two vessels, and each stemmed the swift current of the Mississippi on its own account. I stopped the screw to allow the other steamer to go clear of the Sylvania, and she went ahead several lengths before we could recover our headway. I saw Captain Blastblow waving his adieus to me, as though he intended to run away from us, notwithstanding his former experience.

"Let her out, Moses," I called to the engineer through the speaking-tube.

The chief engineer understood me perfectly, and I immediately heard the sound of the coal-shovel in the fire-room. I saw from the smoke issuing from the smoke-stack of the Islander, that her captain intended to hurry her. I had beaten her several times to my own satisfaction; and I was certain that he could not sail her any faster than those who had handled her on the Great Lakes. I did not like the idea of having the Sylvania beaten, though I was not much inclined to race for any reason.

It was Washburn's watch, and I gave him the wheel. I had run the steamer over on the left bank of the river, and the mate kept her at a safe distance from the shore. It was soon evident to me that we were gaining on the Islander. We were overhauling her as we had done many times before Captain Blastblow had proved that he was a good seaman, as well as an upright and straightforward man. He had intimated that he could sail the Islander faster than I could the Sylvania; and I only desired to show him that he was mistaken.

While the race was in progress, I went down into the cabin to arrange about changing the passengers into other quarters. Four of the late occupants of the cabin, besides Chloe, had gone on board of Colonel Shepard's yacht, and four were left in the Sylvania. There was a state-room for each of them, and I proposed that they should arrange the matter among themselves. But my father insisted that I should do it myself. I put my father and Mr. Tiffany into the two large apartments, and Miss Margie and Owen into the two small ones. Cobbington and the new waiter each had a berth, and there were still two spare ones. Everybody was entirely satisfied, though I could see that Owen was very sorry that Miss Edith had moved into the Islander.

When I went on deck the Sylvania was abreast of the Islander. Both steamers were tugging hard against the current, and each was carrying all the steam it was safe to put on. Slowly we walked by the Islander, and I could not help going aft to see how Captain Blastblow liked the looks of the stern of the Sylvania. When he saw me, he laughed pleasantly, and I was convinced there was no bad feeling in his heart. I had no feeling of personal triumph, for I was satisfied he would have beaten me if we had exchanged vessels. The superiority was in the steamer, and not in the management.

The river presented the same unvarying features, and in the whole of Plaquemine Parish, which contains the river almost up to New Orleans and the Delta, there is no land more than ten feet above the level of the gulf. The water was loaded with a sort of yellow mud, and it was easy enough to see how the levees had been formed and the Delta projected far out into the gulf.

When the water, for any reason, lost its five-mile current, the soil it contained was deposited on the bottom. As the mighty stream brings its load of mud down to the gulf, it is left there, and the same force works it to each side. In this way, though the effect of a century of accumulations are hardly perceptible, the Delta has been extended fifteen or twenty miles out into the gulf.

In this mud, which forms the bars at the mouth of the river, vessels drawing from sixteen to twenty feet ground; but their keels are driven through it by strong tugs, or even by the winds acting on the sails. The State of Louisiana has to look out for its levees almost as carefully as Holland does for its dikes. Millions have been spent on them, and every year requires additional expenditures to keep them in repair. Even New Orleans is four feet below high-water mark, as well as much of the surrounding country. The levees, created by the deposit of sediment from the river, and by human labor, are broken through when the freshets send the water down faster than the flow of the river will carry it off.

As I have said before, it was now a season of unusually high water. The country beyond the levees was covered. Sugar, cotton, and rice plantations were inundated. Occasionally we could see a group of houses on a knoll, like an island, but a few inches above the level of the water. In other places we saw dwellings floating, and others still in their places, but partly submerged. It all looked to me like a region in which I should not care to live.

"We are leaving the Islander a good way behind us," said Washburn, when I returned to the pilot-house, after my survey of the surrounding country.

"She is only about half a mile astern of us," I replied. "I suppose we shall gain about half a mile an hour on her in this current, when we drive the Sylvania."

"It is five o'clock in the afternoon," added the mate, glancing at the clock. "I estimate that we are all of fifty miles from New Orleans. Do you intend to run after dark, Alick?"

"Why not?" I asked, somewhat surprised at the question.

"I don't think it is quite prudent to do so. The river is very high, and I would rather see where we are going than go on in the dark," answered Washburn.

"The river is over a mile wide, and too deep for snags and sawyers."

"It is cloudy now, and it will be very dark. We don't run by courses here, and we may get into trouble in some way, though I confess I can't see how."

"We shall get to New Orleans by midnight," I added.

"What good will it do to get there by midnight? As we approach the city there will be something to be seen, but our passengers can't see it in the night. If I understand the matter, we are in no hurry, and it makes no difference whether we get in to-night or to-morrow noon."

"I think you are right, Washburn; at any rate it is best to be on the safe side. We will keep on as far as we can while we have the light, and then we will look out for a good place to tie up for the night," I answered.

I had hardly come to a decision before we saw a large body floating down the river. We could not make out what it was at first. A bend of the river swept it over to the side on which we were sailing, and Washburn headed out for the middle to avoid it. We soon ascertained that it was an old flatboat, such as come down the great river with a cargo of coal, lumber, grain, or other merchandise, and is then broken up, because it will not pay its cost to take it back to the point from which it started.

The flatboat came down the stream broadside to, though we saw it make two or three whirls as it advanced. It had evidently broken loose from its moorings at or near the city, and was on its way to the gulf on its own account. After passing the bend, the current began to carry it out into the middle of the river, and we were obliged to sheer off again to avoid a collision with it. I breathed easier when I saw it astern of the Sylvania.

"I should not like to make that thing out, close aboard of us in the dark," said Washburn.

"Would you like to have it drift against you while moored to the shore?" I asked.

"I should not; but that would be better than hitting it with full steam on. But we must haul up in the right place. We needn't choose a place where the current sets against the shore, as it does at a bend. I should haul her up on the other side of the river, and then anything floating on its own hook will be carried away from us," replied Washburn.

"The logic is correct, and we will seek such a place as you describe."

The sight of the flatboat assured me that it was not safe to run in the night, at least during high water, when the current was bearing off houses, vessels, and other cumbrous things. Running over a floating log might disable our propeller, and we should be helpless then. There were but few great bends in this part of the river, much as the mighty stream twists about above New Orleans. I kept a lookout for a suitable place to moor the steamer to the shore.

The supper-bell had just rung when I saw such a place as I had been looking for. On the right bank was a point of land where a considerable bend sent the whole force of the powerful current over to the other side of the river. I rang the bell to reduce the speed, as I pointed out the spot to the mate. He ran the nose of the boat up to the bank, and Buck jumped ashore with a line, with which a hawser was drawn to the land. It was made fast to a pine-tree, and no other line seemed to be needed.

I could see the Islander about two miles down the river. We all went down to supper except a hand to notify us of danger from any source. I was not at my meal more than fifteen minutes, for I had dined late. When I came on deck, the Islander was almost abreast of the Sylvania. Colonel Shepard was in the pilot-house with the captain, and they seemed to be in earnest conversation.

Probably Captain Blastblow had not thought of hauling up for the night any more than I had when Washburn spoke to me about the matter. I had no doubt they were discussing the same subject which the mate and I had disposed of.

"What are you doing here, Captain Alick?" shouted Captain Blastblow, as he rang his speed-bell.

"Waiting for the Islander to come up with us," I replied, laughing, for I could not be less good-natured than the captain of the Islander.

"Did you have to tie up to the bank to wait?" asked Captain Blastblow; and by this time the steamer was working just steam enough to balance her in the current, so that she was nearly stationary.

"We are going to lie here to-night," I replied.

"What for?"

"Did you meet a flatboat floating down the river about an hour ago?" I asked, thinking that would furnish sufficient explanation of my action.

"I did; I ran into it, and smashed in one of its sides so that it filled with water," answered Captain Blastblow.

"Then the next man that meets it in the dark cannot see it as well as you did," I continued. "I don't think it is safe to run in the night when the river is full of floating logs, flatboats, and other things."

The captain and the owner of the *Islander* discussed the subject, though I could not hear what they said. In a few minutes the captain rang the gong, and the steamer went ahead at full speed. I hoped no accident would happen to the *Islander*, and the chances were in favor of her reaching New Orleans in safety. But there was not much fun in paddling through the muddy river in the dark, let alone the prudence of doing so. My father and Owen came into the pilot-house after supper, and both of them approved what I had done.

The *Sylvania* lay alongside the bank of the stream, held by the hawser, with her stern a little way out from the shore. At seven o'clock it was very dark, and I directed the watch I had set for the first part of the night to rig lanterns at the fore-stay and the topping lift of the main-boom. I had a quantity of Bengola lights put in the pilot-house, that we might light up the scene around us, if it should be desirable to do so.



"I SAW THE ISLANDER WITH A HOUSE HANGING TO HER BOW."  
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About nine o'clock I heard the noise of escaping steam, not more than half a mile distant. Then shouts came from the same direction. I lighted one of the fireworks, and in the glare I saw the *Islander* with a house hanging to her bow.



## CHAPTER XXII.

### THE ISLANDER IN A BAD FIX.

The silver light from the Bengola enabled me to see clearly the strange sight that presented itself to our gaze. Owen was smoking his cigar, and Washburn and my father were talking about India. The whistle and the shout from the steamer were the first intimations we had that anything was wrong. I could see some lights in the gloom that hung over the river, but nothing to enable me to ascertain the situation, until the Bengola illuminated the scene.

It was a strange sight. I could not tell whether the building was a house or a stable, though it appeared to have too many windows for the latter. The Islander, it appeared, had run her bow into the structure up to the pilot-house. The steamer was still working her screw. But the odd complication floated slowly down the stream towards the bank of the river opposite the position of the Sylvania.

"Call all hands!" I said, with energy. "Tell the engineer to stir up the fires."

Washburn hastened to execute the orders, and the rest of us watched with increasing wonder the floating mass, which was every moment increasing its distance from us.

"I say, Captain Alick, can you tell me what all that means?" asked Owen Garningham. "Was the Islander going into that house to spend the night?"

"I really can't say whether she was or not; but it is not likely that the steamer went on shore for a night's lodging in the building," I replied.

"I dare say the Islander could not handle herself very well on the land, if she found any land to get on," added Owen.

"It is more likely that the house, or whatever it is, was afloat when the Islander knocked for admission," I continued.

"If the steamer knocked, the house appears to have opened to her."

"How is your steam, Moses?" I called through the tube to the engineer.

"Rather low for working in this current," came back to me through the tube.

At that moment the Islander whistled again. I pulled our whistle line, and found we had steam enough to give a smart reply; but I was not willing to trust the Sylvania to the rapid river without a full head of steam. I lighted another Bengola. In its glare I saw that the other steamer was backing her screw, as probably she had been doing from the beginning. I judged that the building was about fifty feet long, and, as it was partly submerged, it presented a large broadside to the rapid current.

"I don't see how she got into that scrape, unless she was looking for a night's lodging," said Washburn. "That building is big enough to be seen in the dark."

"Of course Captain Blastblow did not intend to run into it," I added. "Probably he had not time to get out of the way when he first saw it."

"But it seems to me I should not go far with such a load before I shook it off."

"But don't you see that he can't pull out of the house?" demanded Owen. "He is stuck fast in her side."

"They have axes on board the Islander; and I don't think it would take our crew long to cut her out of that hole," added Washburn. "Why does she keep whistling? Her captain can imagine that we have not steam enough to work the Sylvania in such a current."

"I say, Washy, have you ever been down the Danube?" asked Owen.

"I never have been. I was never in Europe," replied the mate.

"I should say this current is quite as swift as that of the Danube at Vienna; and it makes seven miles an hour there."

"The ordinary current of the Mississippi is about five miles an hour, and in such a freshet it must be as much as seven."

"What is a freshet, Mr. Mate?"

"An inundation; an overflow of the water; a flood; a----"

"Cut it short! I understand it perfectly. I never heard it called a freshet before. Has it anything to do with the fact that this is fresh water, Washy?"

"I don't think it has, though I never heard of such a thing as a freshet in salt water, which could not very well be, since a freshet is caused by heavy rains and the melting of the snow," replied Washburn. "You never heard of a freshet before! Where have you been all your life?"

"That's an American word, Mr. Washburn," interposed my father. "I never heard it except in this country."

At this moment Mr. Tiffany and his daughter joined us in the pilot-house, after asking if they might come in. I gave them chairs and explained to them the rather ludicrous situation of the Islander. All hands were on the fore-castle except the chief engineer and Landy Perkins. I ordered a Bengola to be burned on the top-gallant fore-castle to enable them to see the Islander and its odd burden.

"Mr. Brickland says he has steam enough," said Landy Perkins, reporting to me at the pilothouse.

"All right," I replied. "Buck, cast off the hawser, when I bring her up to it."

The end of the fast had been passed around a pine-tree, and made fast at the bitts, so that we could unmoor without going on shore. I rang to go ahead; and when the hawser was hauled in, I backed the steamer away from the bank. I directed the deck hands to keep the fireworks ablaze that I might see where to steer. I soon discovered the Islander and the building, and ran for them as fast as possible. As we had the current with us, we made at least fifteen miles an hour.

As the Sylvania came nearer to her consort, I could better make out the condition of things on board of her. The building appeared to be some kind of a workshop. The Islander had drove her bow through its side. I concluded that some of the boarding and studding had not been broken off. The bow had carried them within the structure, and the lower ends had dropped down on the deck, and thus prevented the vessel from withdrawing her forward part.

As we came nearer to her, I had our fenders hung over the port side. We had two gilded axes slung on the front of the pilot-house, which had probably never been taken from their resting-places. I told Ben Bowman to take one of these, and Dyer Perkins the other, for both of them had had some experience in the woods. I had made up my mind just where the trouble was. I directed Washburn to go on board of the Islander when we got alongside of her, and superintend the cutting away of the boards and joists, with two more men from the other steamer.

Buck and Hop were to stand by the hawsers by which we were to make fast to the Islander. As soon as we came up abreast of the consort, I saw Colonel Shepard and his family on the quarter-deck. They were very much alarmed at the situation, for Mrs. Shepard was wringing her hands in terror, and the colonel was trying to comfort her. As soon as our bow came abreast of the party, Owen made a long leap to the deck of the Islander. It was a careless trick, and he deserved to fall overboard for risking his life when there was not the least need of it. As soon as we were fairly alongside our consort, the deck hands leaped on board of her with the fasts, and we were soon securely lashed together.

"Stop your screw, Captain Blastblow!" I shouted, though I realized a moment later that I had no business to give orders to him, or to undertake to manage the business of the occasion.

Washburn leaped on board with his two axe-men, and I heard him politely ask the captain to send two of his men with axes to assist him. Captain Blastblow not only stopped the steamer, but he instantly ordered his mate and another man to do what the mate of the Sylvania desired.

"I think we had better go ahead, Captain Blastblow," I continued, trying to be less imperative than before.

"If you see the way out of this scrape, Captain Alick, I am willing to do anything you say," replied the captain of the Islander.

"I think I do see the way out of it; and the best plan is to go ahead, full steam," I answered.

I had a theory, though I had had as yet no opportunity to test its correctness. I called Buck to the wheel, and told him to steer for the middle of the river. I was afraid if the building struck the bank it might be tumbled over on the steamers. I went on board of the Islander. I asked the captain to steer for the middle of the river, and then went forward into the building. My theory in regard to the boarding and studding was correct. Washburn was directing the four men, and assisting them himself, to pull out the boards and joists. They had little occasion to use the axes after the two steamers began to go ahead. Backing the Islander had tightened up every piece of lumber that had been forced in by the bow. The harder the boat pulled back, the more firmly the joists were held in their places. It was no wonder to me that the captain had not been able to shake off this unwieldy burden.

My first thought, in having the steamers go ahead, was to prevent the Islander from drawing out of the building while my men were in it, for they might have been crushed by the swaying of the structure. When we went ahead, we not

only loosened the timbers and boards, so that they could be removed from their positions, but we prevented the Islander from coming out of her lodging-place until the hands were in a safe part of the boat.

"There, sir, I think she is all clear now," said Washburn.

I could find nothing to impede the withdrawal of our consort's bow, and I sent my hands back to the Sylvania, and directed the others to go abaft the pilot-house of the Islander. I requested Captain Blastblow to keep his craft going till I rang my gong. I returned to the pilot-house of the Sylvania, and rang to stop her. The gong of the Islander followed suit instantly. I waited a minute to notice the effect. I expected the consort would draw out of her "chancery" at once; but she did not. I told the mate to see that our hawsers were good for a hard pull, and he soon reported them fast and strong.

"Now, back her, if you please, Captain Blastblow," I called to the Islander.

At the same time I rang two bells. Both steamers began to back at the same time. The Islander immediately went clear of the building, which continued on its way down the river. No crash, or severe wrench, as I had anticipated, attended the separation of the steamer and its burden.

"You are all right now, Captain Blastblow!" I shouted, rejoiced that he had got rid of his incubus.

"Thank you, Captain Alick, for your assistance; and I think we will lie up with you," answered the captain of the Islander.

We cast off the fasts, and the consort followed us up to the place where we had moored before, and made fast to a tree just below us. Presently the captain came up to pay us a visit. I inquired about his prisoners first, and learned that they were under the care of Captain Cayo in the fore-cabin.

"Our people seem to think you were looking for a night's lodging in that floating building, Captain Blastblow," I said.

"Well, not exactly," added the captain. "We have been very sorry, for the last hour and a half, while we were dragged down the river by that building, that we did not follow your example, and hang up for the night."

"Where did you pick up that house, captain?" asked Owen.

"I kept a sharp lookout on the top-gallant forecastle; but none of us saw the building until it was too late to get out of the way," replied Captain Blastblow. "Following the example of Captain Alick, I kept as close to the shore on the port side as possible. About an hour after we left you, I saw something black loom up before me, and the next instant we struck her at full speed. The house had floated out of a bayou, I found, which was the reason we did not see it sooner. It was a building where they worked on rice. It was stretched across a creek, so that the rice could be dropped into a boat under it. We have a white man and two negroes on board that we saved from it."

After a long talk, in which Captain Blastblow did me the honor to say that I was a "smart boy," he returned to his craft, and the rest of us turned in.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### AN EMBARRASSING SITUATION.

I was on my feet at daylight; but I found that Moses Brickland and Dyer Perkins were up before me. They had opened up the fires, drawn the clinkers from the furnaces, and were now oiling the engine. They had nearly steam enough to enable us to start up the river. Everything looked very quiet on board of the *Islander*, and there was no smoke issuing from her smoke-stack.

I jumped ashore, and the first thing I noticed was that the water was more than a foot higher than it was the night before. It seemed to me that there must be an inundation above us. I found no one stirring on board of the consort, and I went on deck. I knocked at the door of the chief engineer. I told him I intended to get under way in the course of fifteen minutes, and I did not care to leave the *Islander* behind. He got up at once, and called his starboard fireman.

Without standing on any ceremony, I walked into the captain's state-room, and told him I should be off in fifteen minutes. I found he had given no orders about starting, but I assured him his engineer and fireman were attending to their duty. I bantered him a little, saying I did not leave him behind for fear he would get into trouble. He was good-natured about it, and replied that he should sail in the company of the *Sylvania* if possible. He admitted that we could outsail him, for he had done his best to keep up with the *Sylvania*.

"How are your prisoners getting along?" I asked, for I had thought more than once that they might escape while we were hauled up.

"They were all right last night when I turned in. I looked this place over, and there is not more than half an acre on this bank that is not under water," replied the captain. "They could not get away without a boat."

We went out on the deck, and found the two quarter-boats were hanging at the davits. Captain Cayo had charge of the prisoners, and the fore-cabin was locked every night before they went to their berths. But the door must have been opened to let the firemen out. I told the captain that he had better make sure they were safe before we left our moorings, as it would be easier to find them now than it would be after we got half way to New Orleans. He went below, and when he came up he was assured they were on board.

I had avoided Nick Boomsby since the capture of the *Islander*, for I knew he would beg me to get him out of his present trouble. I could not see my way to do anything of the kind, and therefore I kept out of his way. I remained on board of the steamer until the engineer reported that he had steam enough to go ahead, when I returned to the *Sylvania*. The fasts were cast off, and by five o'clock we were again stemming the tide of the mighty river. The current was even stronger than it had been the day before. I told the engineer to let the steamer go at her ordinary speed, and the *Islander* kept very near us.

The river was covered with lumber, shanties swept from their resting-places, and other obstructions; but in the daytime we could easily avoid them. It was half-past seven before any of our passengers came on deck. We were passing a little village that seemed to be struggling for existence, for the high water was crowding hard upon its houses and other buildings. By eleven o'clock we saw several villages, and some very handsome and romantic estates, though they were mostly covered with water.

At noon the city was in plain sight, and soon we had New Orleans on one side and Algiers on the other. The water was almost up to the top of the levees. The shores were crowded with steamboats and sailing-vessels. The former were entirely different from any I had ever seen before, though for some time after I saw them every day. I had a map of New Orleans in a large atlas I kept in my room; and I had decided to make a landing as near as I could to the foot of Canal Street. I had read that this street had a green, with trees extending through it.

I had no difficulty in identifying it when I came to it. At the foot of it was the customhouse, said to be one of the largest public buildings in the United States; and I had no difficulty in believing the statement. In front of it was the broad levee where steamers landed, and such a forest of them I never saw before. They were packed in like sardines, and I could find no opening by which I could get to the shore.

I found that the decks of the steamers were common ground, and most of them could only be reached by passing over others. But near the levee I found a wharf, the lower end of which was under water, at which I concluded we could lie by paying wharfage. I ran the *Sylvania* in as far as I could and made fast. The *Islander* came up alongside of her, and was secured to the bow and stern. My father and the Tiffanys concluded to take up their quarters at the St. Charles Hotel, so that they could see more of the city. I called a carriage for them; and then the Shepards decided to follow their

example, as they were tired of being on the water for over a week.

As soon as they were gone we thought it was time to attend to the disposition of the prisoners. My father had taken the money with him, but the hotel was not more than a quarter of a mile from the wharf. I sent Buck Lingley to assist Captain Cayo, and he was assigned to the care of Nick Boomsby.

"Here we are," said Captain Blastblow, after everything had been put in order on both vessels. "Do you expect to get away from here this summer?"

"This summer! I expect to get away from here in two or three days," I replied, rather startled by the remark of the captain.

"I think not," he added, shaking his head ominously.

"Why not?"

"Are you a lawyer, Captain Alick?" demanded Captain Blastblow, with a very comical expression on his face.

"I am no lawyer, not even a sea-lawyer," I answered, wondering what he was driving at.

"Neither am I; but it has occurred to me that we might be kept here longer than we wanted to stay."

"What do you mean by that?"

"I was thinking just now that if we had let Cornwood and Boomsby escape from the steamer last night it would have saved us a world of trouble," added Captain Blastblow, with a cunning leer and a wink.

"I don't understand you," I replied, satisfied by this time that he had found a mare's nest, or there was some kind of trouble ahead.

"We have two men in the fore-cabin who are charged with robbery."

"One of them is; the other is an accomplice after the fact," I replied.

"That sounds as though you had been a lawyer all your life, or at least since you put on jacket and trousers. An accomplice after the fact! I suppose that he took part in the robbery after it was all done."

"It means that Cornwood took the money, knowing it was stolen, and aided and abetted Boomsby in escaping. In my opinion, he came down to Key West solely to get part of the money. But no matter for that; what is to keep us here all summer?" I asked.

"I presume you mean to hand the robbers over to the police of New Orleans?" queried Captain Blastblow.

"That is the only thing we can do, unless we carry them back to Florida; and I don't care about going back there so soon."

"Just so. I don't know anything about law; but once I brought in a fellow in my vessel who had committed a crime in another State. One of the passengers who knew all about the crime complained of the rascal, and he was hauled up before a court. It so happened that I knew something about the matter, and I was summoned as a witness, and the man was sent to jail. I could identify the man, but no one else could. They had to send south for a requisition from the Governor of Georgia. For one reason and another it took two weeks to get it, and I had to stay home from one trip to Savannah to appear as a witness."

"And you think we may be kept here as witnesses," I inquired, with no little anxiety.

"We are dead sure to be kept here till the Governor of Florida can send an officer with a requisition for the prisoner. It will take at least one week for that, and it may take two or three. Somebody must complain of Boomsby and Cornwood in Jacksonville, and then the governor must be sure that it is all right. After all this the Governor of Louisiana must be sure that he is not sending a man off who is not likely to be guilty."

The situation looked rather trying to me, and I decided to go on shore and have a talk with my father about it. As soon as I reached the customhouse I bought a Picayune, and the first thing I saw in the paper was "Further Details of the Great Storm." I found that the whole country above was inundated, and that it was expected the river would rise still higher. Many railroads could not send out trains, bridges had been carried away, and many lives had been lost. It was an appalling state of things. Vast numbers of men were employed in strengthening the levees above New Orleans. The Missouri River had risen higher than ever before, and whole villages had been carried away in the North-western States.

I found my father in the reading-room of the St. Charles devouring the contents of a newspaper. He began to give me the startling intelligence, but I told him I had just read it. I then stated the situation in relation to our two prisoners. He

was alarmed at the prospect of a long delay, for the heat was intense in the city. Besides, we were not sure the city itself would not be inundated by the rising waters.

My father was as much perplexed as I was. Our business was "Yachting on the Mississippi," and the idea of being detained two or even three weeks for the officials of two States to investigate a case that was plain enough to us was hardly to be endured on the one hand, while we had no desire to have a crime go unpunished on the other. We were certainly in a dilemma. We decided to have a conference with the rest of the party.

We found them in the ladies' parlor. Mrs. Shepard was fanning herself vigorously, and I judged that she was in a very unhappy state of mind. I had seen very little of my passengers during the voyage from Jacksonville, for the heavy sea which constantly deluged the deck had kept them in the cabin. I spoke to the colonel's wife, and hoped she was very well.

"I am not well at all, Captain Alick," she replied. "My nerves are shaken all to pieces by the voyage from Jacksonville, and if my husband owns the *Islander* for the next twenty years I shall never go to sea in her again."

"Indeed, is it so bad as that? But you have not been in the *Islander* in any very heavy weather," I added.

"I was in the *Sylvania* when I never expected to see land again; and I shall never forget that terrible time after the shipwreck, for I never suffered so much in one night, though I have crossed the Atlantic four times. I am told that you managed the *Sylvania* very well, and I have no doubt of it; but it was a terrible storm for such a small vessel. Last night I wished I was in the *Sylvania*, for I was very much alarmed when we were carried down the river by that terrible building."

"My wife don't feel safe in the city," added Colonel Shepard. "She is afraid we may be inundated here. She prefers to be on board of the steamer, and wants to start up the river immediately."

"I do feel safer on the river than I do on shore," said Mrs. Shepard. "I heard there was a case of yellow fever in the city."

"Impossible, so early in the season," replied her husband.

"At any rate, I don't want to stay here another day."

The lady was nervous, but she could not help it; and her health seemed to be falling back under the excitement of the recent trip.

Our conference resulted in a decision to sail up the river next morning, taking our prisoners with us. I went back to the wharf, and informed Captain Blastblow of the wishes of the party.

Cornwood and Nick seemed to be very well satisfied with their condition on board. But I wanted to see something of the city if the passengers did not, and Washburn and I used up the afternoon in going to the principal points of interest. It would take a whole volume to give my impressions of New Orleans; but that is no part of my present purpose. At nine o'clock the next morning our passengers came on board, and we started up the river.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### A CREVASSE ON THE MISSISSIPPI.

When Mrs. Shepard came on board, she seemed to be more composed. She declared that, when the whole country was under water, she felt better to be in a boat. During the night the water had risen nearly a foot, and the citizens were not a little alarmed. Hundreds of laborers were at work on the levees, and several small crevasses had been made a few miles above the city. We had engaged a pilot, though rather for the information he could give us than because we needed him in the navigation of the river.

Captain Cayo had taken leave of us, and Colonel Shepard had paid his bill for services and expenses. I liked the pilot very well; and I was sorry to lose him. The white man and the negroes rescued from the floating building stayed on board as long as we remained at the wharf. It was not easy for them to return to their homes; and they had no money to pay for their food and shelter. We made up a liberal purse for them, and divided it equally among them; and they went ashore very grateful to us for what we had done. Captain Blastblow said they made more money by coming with us than they could by staying at home.

At Colonel Shepard's request we "lashed boats" for the sociability of the thing. We rigged a plank bridge, with a railing to it, so that the ladies could pass from one steamer to the other without assistance, though Owen was always ready when the young ladies wished to pass from one to the other. After this job had been done, I went forward and found Cornwood at the helm, where I had left the pilot. I was not exactly pleased to see him at the wheel. After we had left the wharf, Nick and the Floridian had been permitted to enjoy the liberty of the deck, for I did not believe they would be likely to attempt to escape while the country seemed to be covered with water in every direction.

"What are you doing there, Cornwood?" I asked, as I entered the pilot-house.

"The pilot has gone below for some matches, and I offered to take the wheel while he was absent," replied Cornwood, in the mildest of tones.

"I will thank the pilot to call a deck-hand when he wants to be relieved," I replied.

"You think I mean mischief, I dare say," he added, with his silky smile; "but you can see that I can do no harm if I desired to, which I do not. Captain Blastblow is at the wheel of the other steamer."

At this moment the pilot came in, with a cigar in his mouth, and took the wheel.

"Captain Garningham, I should like to have a little talk with you," said Cornwood. He led the way to a couple of chairs on the fore-castle, which had just been abandoned by the young ladies.

"Captain Garningham, I have been subjected to such an outrage as I never before experienced in my life," said the Floridian.

"I think you cannot greatly wonder at it," I replied.

"Should you wonder at it if a party were to come on board of the Sylvania, take you by force, strip you almost to the skin, and rob you of your money? That is precisely my case, and you say I need not greatly wonder at it," continued Cornwood, as mildly as he had begun.

"I think my case would be a little different from what yours was," I replied.

"As yet I have not even been informed of the cause of such brutal treatment. If you had stayed a few hours longer in New Orleans, and had not treated the men you picked up on the house so liberally, I should have sought a remedy in a writ of *habeas corpus*."

"I don't think you were quite ready to adopt such a course as that, for it would have resulted in having you sent to the calaboose to wait for a requisition from the Governor of Florida," I answered, laughing at what I considered the absurdity of the proceeding. "The only reason we did not hand you over to the police was that we were afraid of being detained as witnesses."

"I understand you; and I prefer to fight this battle in some other State than Louisiana. I shall not try to escape; and I know that Nick Boomsby will not. If I am not always honest, I am now; and I assure you I don't know the reason for the savage treatment I received on board of the Islander; and I will thank you to tell me. In a word, I entreat you to do so."

I concluded that Cornwood wanted to prepare for his defence, for I was satisfied that he understood the charge as well

as I did. But he seemed to be so earnest over the matter that I went over the case for him.

"When you started from St. Augustine to recover the *Islander*, you were satisfied that Nick Boomsby had stolen the four thousand dollars," I proceeded.

"On the contrary I was satisfied that Buckner stole it," interposed Cornwood.

"I am stating my belief, be it right or wrong. When I told you about the sailing of the *Islander* without her owner and his family, you were satisfied that Nick was on board of her, and that he had the money stolen from the messenger."

"Nothing could be farther from the truth; but go on," added the Floridian.

"You would not have gone to Key West to stop the *Islander* at your own expense."

"I did go at my own expense," added Cornwood, with a smile.

"But not to stop the *Islander*," I added.

"I admit that I had another mission there. I had been thinking of going to Key West on business for a week."

"When you got there you forged a letter to Captain Blastblow, to induce him to leave before the arrival of the *Sylvania*," I added.

"That was a little harmless strategy to enable me to carry out the purpose for which I went to Key West," added Cornwood, with the smoothest of smiles.

"I never heard forgery called by that name before," I replied, with becoming severity.

"It was not to obtain money, or any other valuable consideration from Colonel Shepard that I wrote his name. Why, I could have made two hundred dollars by detaining the *Islander*," said the Floridian, with spirit.

"Instead of doing what he employed you to do, you sold him out, and let his steamer go off without him. You were satisfied that Nick had the four thousand dollars with him, and you were bound to have the half, if not the whole of it. It looks like a plain case."

"You are taking an entirely wrong view of the matter, Captain Garningham," protested Cornwood. "I shall be able to prove in due time that you are utterly mistaken."

"Two thousand dollars were found on you, and the same on Nick."

"I grant that this fact has a suspicious look about it; and I can not greatly blame you for your course, though the brutality exercised upon me was entirely unnecessary. Now I will explain the whole matter to you just as it was; and you will see that you were greatly mistaken."

"I am ready to hear anything you have to say," I replied.

"That four thousand dollars is a rather annoying coincidence," he began.

"I should think it might be," I added.

"You quite mistake my meaning. I am willing to admit that I have told professional lies in the interest of my clients. I am Buckner's counsel, though I told you to the contrary. He admitted his guilt to me."

"Did he, indeed? Did he tell you what he did with the package of bills after he took it from the counter?"

"He did: he acknowledged that he was guilty, and told me how it was done," replied Cornwood, with easy assurance, of which I had seen a great deal on his part. "Buckner's wife was at the door of the saloon, and he gave the package to her as he rushed out. She had it under her shawl before Nick got half way to the door. She went home; and my client considers it a successful affair. He offered me five hundred dollars to get him out of the scrape, and that is the fee for which I am working just now, in part."

"And he gave you the money, did he?" I asked, hardly able to keep from laughing in the face of the guileless Floridian.

"Not he, for his wife started for Kentucky, or some other state, as soon as she got the money. This is where the unlucky coincidence comes in. My first business in Key West was to see that Nick did not return home, as I feared you would compel him to do when you found him on board of the *Islander*. My second was to pay four thousand dollars, which I drew from the First National Bank of Florida Friday morning before I started for Cedar Keys."

"O, I see! That was where the four thousand dollars came from," I exclaimed.

"Precisely so. I was to pay it into the Marine Court, pending a suit in which I was interested, against a salvage company."



"But you did not pay it in."

"How could I when it was Sunday? I intended to do so the next day. When I found that Nick did not mean to stop in Key West, I directed Captain Blastblow to get up his anchor and hurry to New Orleans before the Sylvania came in. I could not get ashore myself when I had induced Nick to continue the voyage. The four thousand dollars was a burden to me, and I asked Nick to take part of it from me to keep till we got to our destination. The loss of it would ruin me, and I thought it would be safer in the care of two persons than one. That's the substance of it, and you can see that it explains the whole affair."

"I see it does: it makes it all as clear as Mississippi mud," I replied, laughing heartily.

"You evidently do not believe the statement I have made," said the Floridian, looking very much wounded in his feelings.

"Whether I do or not, Cornwood, we will not quarrel about it," I added, as good-naturedly as I could.

"I will show you some documents I have in my valise which will make it all as clear as the pure waters of Green Cove Springs."

"I think I will not look at them at present. Has Nick learned this story by heart?" I inquired. "He used to be a very bungling liar when we were small boys together; and I don't know whether he has improved any or not."

"I think it is rather cruel of you, Captain Garningham, to sport with my feelings when I have been subjected to such inconvenience and discomfort by you."

"I must be candid with you, Cornwood. If I take your statement for the truth, I judge that you are liable to the state prison, or whatever you call it in Florida, for what you have done. You know that Buckner is guilty, but you are engaged in a conspiracy to keep the principal witness out of court, which makes you virtually an accomplice to the crime."

"You forget the duty I owe my client, who has entrusted his sacred liberty in my keeping."

"Most of the lawyers I ever knew were honest men, and I don't believe one of them would resort to such a trick to clear his client. What's all that?" I exclaimed, as I saw a gathering on the levee of the right bank of the river.

"A crevasse in the levee," said the pilot. "It's a bad one, too."

A steamboat was backing her wheels near the opening, evidently to prevent being sucked into the breach by the furious current that poured through it. Quite a number of men were assembled on the levee, but they seemed to be incapable of doing anything to stop the flow of the water. When we came abreast of the crevasse, we could see through it to the country beyond. It was covered with water, which was pouring in through the breach at a frightful rate.

"That was done by the crawfish that burrow into the levees, for I see some of their houses on the top, where they go when it is high-water," said the pilot.

Just then a row-boat came to the crevasse, and fearlessly headed into the opening. In an instant it was swamped, and the two men it had contained were struggling in the mad current. They held on to their oars, and were swept rapidly inland.

"There will be a hundred lives lost by that break," added the pilot. "There are several plantations on that knoll, and the water is lifting the houses on it."

I could see the houses toppling over, half a mile from the levee.

## CHAPTER XXV.

### SAILING ACROSS THE FIELDS.

I was appalled at the terrible sight. It was an open country, and there were few trees to be seen, except around the houses at the plantations. It looked like an inland sea. I saw the two men struggling in the water at some distance from the levee. They were evidently trying to touch bottom with their feet, but the water was over their heads.

"How deep is the water on that flat, Mr. Pilot?" I asked, not a little excited at the idea of witnessing such a loss of life as he had predicted.

"I should say it was from eight to ten feet deep all the way to those plantations," he replied.

"Why don't one of the steamers waiting here go over to the assistance of those poor people?" I inquired.

"They can't get through, and they would be swamped if they should try it. The breach is not more than thirty feet wide, and these boats would stick till they were torn to pieces. They are so low in the water that it would put their fires out when they went through and fill their holds."

I looked about the decks of both our steamers, and found that all the passengers were on board of the Islander. I told Ben Bowman, who was on duty in the engine-room, to put on all the steam she could safely carry. He assured me he had enough for anything.

"Look out, Captain Blastblow, if you please, for I am going to cast off," I called to the Islander. "Keep the ladies in a safe place. All the Sylvania's on board!"

I went into the pilot-house, and rang to back the steamer. I kept her moving until we were in the middle of the river. I had carefully examined the crevasse, and I judged that the water was not more than two feet lower on the flat than it was in the river.

"How deep is the water in the cut, Mr. Pilot?" I asked.

"Not less than eight feet; and it may be ten. You can't tell."

I stopped the Sylvania, and then rang to go ahead at full speed.

"Are you going through the crevasse?" demanded the pilot.

"I see no difficulty in doing so. Mr. Washburn, see that every opening in the deck and deck-house is closed and securely fastened."

"It will be a ticklish business to go through that breach," said the pilot, shaking his head.

"Would you let a hundred people drown without doing any thing to save them?" I asked.

"Not if I could help it. I am willing to do all I can; but I shouldn't wonder if your boat made a dive into the mud on the other side of the levee, and stuck there."

"If she does we have two life-boats at the davits," I replied.

The Sylvania soon got up her best speed, and the pilot steered the steamer for a point just above the crevasse. I closed the windows of the pilot-house, and directed all hands to go on the hurricane-deck, except the engineers and firemen.

"I think you ought to stop the engine, for she will go through quick enough without any help," suggested the pilot.

"We must have steerage-way, or we can do nothing," I replied with quick tones, for we were within a few fathoms of the whirl of waters that were dashing through the crevasse. I felt the speed of the steamer increasing, and I firmly grasped the wheel with the pilot.

"You know this boat better than I do, and this business is a little out of my line; but I will help you all I can," said the pilot, who seemed to be fully self-possessed, though he was not used to handling a vessel like the Sylvania.

Washburn came into the pilot-house, after seeing that all the openings were closed, and the ship's company disposed in safe places.

"I don't think you will have any trouble going through there, Alick," said the mate.

"I don't know as you will, but I wouldn't take a river-boat through such a place unless she was insured for her full value," added the pilot.

"No more talking, if you please," I added.

We had entered the rapid current that swept into the crevasse. It was a thrilling moment, for the next minute would determine whether the Sylvania was to be swamped or not. But I had a reasonable degree of confidence in the vessel. She had always done all I expected of her, and I could hardly conceive of her disappointing me in this instance.

The people assembled on the levee uttered a long and deep shout of warning to us, but we had gone too far to recede even if we had been disposed to do so. I saw the two men who had been swamped in the small boat, still buoying themselves up with the oars; and beyond them the houses tottering over as they were undermined by the rising waters. The sight of these was quite enough to keep my courage up, and no thought of doing anything but trying to save those who must perish without assistance came to my mind.

The little steamer rushed madly into the opening, with her screw turning at its most rapid rate. When she had reached the fall she made a tremendous dive, as it were, burying her bowsprit in the muddy tide. Tons of the yellow fluid, loaded with sediment, flowed in on the fore-castle and swept aft. I judged by the shock that she struck her fore-foot into the earth.

The muddy water swashed up, and entirely covered the windows of the pilot-house, leaving enough of the soil to make the glass as opaque as the levee itself. We could not see a thing outside after this volume of mud was discharged upon the windows. But in another instant I felt the bow of the steamer rising. The screw was still shaking the vessel, and I felt that no great injury had been done to her.

"Open the windows, if you please, Washburn," I said, trying to keep as cool as possible.

"We are all right now," added the pilot. "One of our river steamers would never have come up after that dive."

I rang the speed-bell as soon as I felt that we were fairly through the cut in the levee. A yell from the people assured us that we were all right, if we did not find it out before.

"I suppose you are not a pilot in these waters!" I continued, turning to Mr. Bell, for that was his name.

"Well, hardly, in these waters: at any rate I never took a steamboat over this ground before. But I reckon I can do it as well as any other man, for I was raised along here, and I know the lay of the land as well as the water," replied the pilot.

The escape of steam from the safety-valve showed me that the engineers had slowed down, though I could not yet perceive it in the motion of the vessel. We were approaching the two men on the oars, and I rang to stop and back her. There was no difficulty in steering the steamer after we were out of the swiftest of the current, and I left the pilot-house.

The Sylvania looked as though she had been buried in yellow mud for a year, and had just been dug out. The water had all passed out at the scupper-holes and swinging-ports; but the deck and a considerable portion of the deck-house were covered with the mud from the water. All hands except the chief engineer and one fireman had come out of the hiding-places, and were ready for duty.

"Clear away the starboard quarter-boat," I called. "Mr. Washburn, you will pick up those men, and do it as quick as possible, for we are needed at those plantations."

The crew got into the boat and lowered it into the water. In a moment more they were pulling with all their might for the two men, who were some distance apart. They picked them up, one at a time, and came back to the Sylvania. They hooked on the falls, and with the help of Ben Bowman and Hop Tossford, hoisted the boat up to the davits. The two men rescued from the water seemed to be very much exhausted, and we helped them on deck.

The moment the boat was out of the water, I rang to go ahead. I told Moses to let her run at half speed, for I was afraid she might strike against some hummock, or other obstruction, and stick in the mud, which would cause a delay, if nothing worse. I sent Buck to the top-gallant fore-castle with the hand lead, and he reported eleven feet.

"The ground is low here," said the pilot; "but I think we can carry eight feet up to the knoll on which the houses stood. They must have had eight or nine in some parts of it, or the cabins of the niggers wouldn't have been upset."

"I think we can hurry her a little along here," I replied, ringing the speed-bell.

"By the mark twain," said Buck.

"He threw the lead into a hole that time," added the pilot.

"And a half-one," continued Buck.

"You will hold that all the way till you get to the knoll," said Mr. Bell. "We are going at a rattling speed."

"We shall be all right as long as we have eight feet. Our coal bunkers are pretty well emptied, and I don't know but we could go with seven and a half. It is plain sailing; but we must feel along when it gets down to eight and a half," I replied.

The two men who had been taken from the water came to the fore-castle at this moment. They were covered with yellow mud, and of course they were wet to the skin. But it was a hot day, and the sun was shining brightly. When I asked them, they told me they had come from one of the steamers that had stopped at the levee to render assistance.

"Eight feet and a half," shouted Buck.

I rang the speed bell, which soon reduced our rate one-half. Buck still reported eight and a half. We were within a hundred yards of the mansion-houses, of which I could see four, the lower parts of which were under water. We could see the inmates in the second stories. But the negro cabins were upset and many of them were floating about. It was evident enough that they had been built on lower ground than the residences of the planters. The knoll was covered with shade-trees and shrubs, and the estates were as beautiful as anything I ever looked upon--that is, what I could see of them above the water.

"Eight feet!" shouted the leadsman, with energy.

I rang to stop her, for I could feel a sort of sensation as though the keel of the Sylvania was making a furrow in the field under us. The steamer stopped almost as soon as I rang the bell. But as the water was rising instead of falling, I did not feel at all concerned about her situation. I immediately ordered both boats to be lowered. Ben and Hop went off in one, and Buck and Landy in the other. Not far from the knoll, which could not have been more than three or four feet above the flat over which we had been sailing, I saw the boat the two men from the steamer had been swamped in. I told Buck to tow it to the steamer, and we had it alongside in a few moments. I sent the quarter-boat back to the rescue of the people in the houses and cabins. The river steamer's boat was full of water. We drew her under the davits on the port side, made fast to her, and hauled her out of the water, hoisting the bow end first, so that the water would run out of her. When both ends were abreast of the rail of the vessel, we tipped her over, and entirely freed her of water. I sent Washburn and Dyer Perkins in her to assist the other two boats.

Even at this important hour, the abominably dirty condition of the Sylvania, which had been bathed in mud, actually pained me. Away from the furious current of the crevasse, the mud settled, and the water was comparatively clean. Cobbington and the two waiters had been at work swabbing the quarter-deck, but with no good result. I directed the engineer to rig the fire-engine, and we soon drowned the decks with water. This, with the swabs, made clean work. By the time the first boat came off from the knoll, the Sylvania looked nearly as neat as when she had left the great river. The hot sun dried the planks about as soon as they were swabbed.

In the port-boat, under the direction of Ben Bowman, was a family of four persons whom I took to be the occupants of one of the mansions. A gentleman and his wife, with a son and daughter, were the first helped on board: nearly all the others were negroes. I showed the white people down into the cabin, and directed Cobbington to do all he could for their comfort.

In the course of half an hour we had seventy-two persons whom we rescued. We were unable to find any more. The three boats had searched every house which could contain a human being. They had taken men, women and children from the trees, as well as the houses. We sounded the whistle vigorously, and then waited for any call.

There were no more, and I directed the pilot to work back to the levee.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### A DESPERATE STRUGGLE WITH THE RUSHING WATERS.

The water had risen so that the Sylvania had swung around and drifted half-way up to the knoll, or to the houses on the highest part of it. As soon as we were under way, I had a chance to look over our large number of passengers. Three-quarters of them were negroes, mostly house-servants. I was told that the field hands had escaped in another direction before the water rose high enough to prevent it. The inundation was only partly due to the crevasse, for the water had broken in at some unknown point in the rear of the plantations.

We had taken off the four families that occupied the mansion houses. They were all highly cultivated people, ladies and gentlemen in the highest sense of the words. I had conducted them all to the main cabin; but they were not disposed to remain there. They wanted to see how the Sylvania was to return to the Mississippi River, and expressed many doubts as to her being able to make her way through the crevasse against the strong current. I had some painful doubts myself in this direction. I had told the engineer about them, and hinted that we should want all the steam he could carry. But it was only a question of the power of the engine to force the vessel against the current. There would be no pitching and plunging, such as we had experienced in coming the other way.

We had not long to deliberate upon the matter of our exit from the fields over which we had been sailing. As the water had risen about a foot inside of the levee, I considered our chances good of going through without much difficulty. I went to the wheel, and took a place by the pilot. I saw that several steamers had arrived during our absence, and the pilot said they were attached to the levee force, and had come to close the breach. I could not see how it was to be done, but I had no time to think of the matter. I rang the gong one stroke when we were within a hundred yards of the crevasse, as I had arranged with the engineer to do.

The Sylvania soon began to shake and quiver as though she were in the hands of an angry giant, under the pressure of the steam. I had sent all the passengers to the after part of the vessel, giving the planters and their families places on the hurricane-deck. I desired to trim her aft, as we had hardly coal enough in the bunkers to keep the screw entirely under water. I regarded it as an excellent thing to have so much "live ballast" on board. I gave Buck and Hop strict orders not to let a single person come on the fore-castle.

I put Cobbington and Ben Bowman on the hurricane-deck, to keep the passengers there on the after part. If a few went forward, they would all do so, for it was the best place to see the operation of the steamer. By these means I hoped to keep the propeller entirely under water, and thus get the full benefit of its action on the swift current. It was still a torrent, but by no means so terrible as when we had gone through before.

Moses Brickland had never shaken the Sylvania as he was shaking her now. He was a prudent young man, and I never had occasion to criticise what he did. He understood the present situation as well as I did. The levee force was waiting to close the gap, and thus save many more lives miles from the scene of its operations. We must get through at once, or the gap would be closed. The abrupt fall was not more than a foot now, and I had strong hopes that we could overcome it.

It seemed to me that the water was rushing through the crevasse at the rate of twenty miles an hour. The arithmetic of the situation was therefore all against me. Moses had never run the Sylvania more than twelve knots an hour, and he was obliged to hurry her to do that. He had told me he could get fifteen miles an hour out of her on a great emergency, but he had never been disposed to try it. He had overhauled the boiler at New Orleans, and reported it in first-rate condition. Yet I could not, mathematically, see how a vessel going fifteen miles an hour could stem a current of twenty miles.

But the force of the current was merely guesswork. It might be twenty, and it might be no more than ten miles. Mr. Bell agreed with me on the former figure, while Washburn and Ben Bowman insisted that it was not more than ten at the present time. If I "split" the difference between the two estimates, it would leave just the result which the engineer could obtain on an emergency like the present.

The Sylvania went into the rapid current, which we began to feel at fifty yards from the gap. But it did not stop, or even sensibly detain us, for the water was scattered as soon as it passed through the opening. We made our course at a right angle with the levee, and kept the helm firmly against any tendency to "wabble;" for if the swift tide had struck her on the side, it would have hurled her around in spite of us.

At twenty yards from the levee we began to slacken our speed, for here we got almost the full force of the current. But she still went ahead, though she quivered as if the struggle would shake her in pieces. Not one of us said a word in the

pilot-house. I directed the helm, for I was more accustomed to the working of the steamer than any of my companions.

The bow went up abreast of the inside of the dike. The Sylvania trembled like a race-horse after his first heat. We held her head steadily up to the work, but I could not see that she gained a single inch. The propeller whirled like a circular saw, such as I had often observed in the lumber-mills at home. I almost fancied that I could hear it buzz.

I watched the edge of the crevasse, but I could not see that we either gained or lost. For several minutes we struggled against the savage tide. It was a desperate situation. The people on the levee, now swelled into a crowd by the arrival of several steamers, were watching us with intense interest. No one spoke a word.

"Look out sharp for the helm, Mr. Bell," I shouted, so as to be heard above the roar of the rushing waters and the clang of the engine.

I thought he did not respond to my movements with the wheel as promptly as was necessary. I felt that the least turn to the right or the left would be fatal to us, for by this time I realized that the situation was vastly more perilous than when we went into the current before. The least "wobble" might cause the current to strike her on the side, and send her over on her beam ends in the vortex below us.

"Can't you crowd her a little more, Moses," I called through the speaking-tube.

"Not much more," he promptly replied.

"We are not losing anything," said the pilot, holding his breath.

"Mind the helm," I replied, for I felt that I could not hold her alone. "If we get the bow half a degree across the current, it is all up with us."

"I can hold her alone, but you take the feeling off my hands," he answered, warmly.

He meant that I began to move the wheel before he felt the pressure on his hands, for one steers a vessel very much as he drives a horse, and depends quite as much upon feeling as upon sight. My feeling was much quicker than his, and I would not give up the helm to him, but told him he must watch my movements.

"We have gained an inch!" exclaimed the pilot.

"What is an inch going through such a torrent as this?" I replied, though I felt encouraged by the fact, if it was a fact, for I dared not look to the right or the left, as he did.

It seemed to me that the steamer would soon go through the crevasse or shake herself to pieces in the struggle. The jar and the quivering were so much increased that I was sure Moses was doing something more than he ordinarily considered his best. In a few minutes more we had worried up the little fall, which indicated the difference between the height of the water on either side of the levee. We had gained several yards, but I don't think we made more than an inch a minute; and those minutes seemed like hours.

Suddenly the Sylvania began to increase her speed through the water, and I concluded that we had passed the swiftest part of the current. Washburn informed me that the stern of the steamer was inside of the cut, and I felt that the battle was won. Still I kept my eyes fixed on the flagpole forward, in order to hold the vessel in the middle of the gap.

"I think we shall fetch it," said Mr. Bell.

"No doubt of it, if we don't lose our chances by talking about them," I replied.

The pilot said no more. I did not want him to abate his zeal until we were outside of the levee, for it would have been the easiest thing in the world to lose all we had gained by the struggle of the last hour. We kept it up half an hour longer. When the bow was outside of the levee, I was afraid Bell would think we were safe, while it was still possible to be carried back. But the steamer increased her speed every moment now, and we were soon out in the broad river. I kept her on her course, and as soon as she was clear of the treacherous current, she darted off at a furious speed.

"All right, Moses!" I shouted through the tube. The next instant I heard the steam escaping furiously through the safety-valve. I had no doubt that the chief-engineer felt an intense relief when he heard my voice the last time, for no money or any consideration short of the safety of the Sylvania would have permitted him to put on such a press of steam.

"Excuse me, Mr. Bell, if I spoke sharply to you, or said anything that hurt your feelings, for I meant nothing of the kind," I said to the pilot, when we were in the middle of the river.

"Don't mention it, captain," he replied, warmly. "I can say, and I reckon I know something about steamboats, I never saw a boat better handled than this one has been from first to last. I thought I had only a boy for a captain, but I find that you understand your business."

"Thank you, Mr. Bell; you are very kind to say so," I replied, with a blush. "I think I know the feeling of this vessel's helm rather better than any one in these parts, and I was a little afraid you might not see the necessity of keeping her up, without any wabbling."

"You were right every time, captain. I never handled a craft of the sort before, and it was quite right for you to trust her to no one but yourself."

As soon as we were fairly out in the river, the people on the levees set up a volley of cheers, which was taken up by the negroes on board. I saw the Islander had made fast to a steamer a little below the breach, and I asked the pilot to lay the Sylvania alongside of her.

"Young man, you are a brave boy," said Colonel Hungerford, the planter who had first come on board of the steamer. "I was on the point of telling you before you started back, that you could never get through that hole; and I was going to tell you of a way by which you could have got through the lakes and streams into the Bayou la Fourche, and up that to the Mississippi. But I see you need no advice from me. We are all very grateful to you."

"I beg you will not feel under any obligation to us, for we are sort of sea-knights, roaming about in quest of adventures; and we were very glad of the opportunity to render you and others any assistance. I believe you and your family were in no particular danger."

"I don't know about that, my young captain," replied the planter, shaking his head. "My mansion is surrounded with verandahs, and the water was beginning to lift it off its foundations."

I took my glass and looked at the house. One end of it appeared to be lifted up.

"I would not have staid in it two hours more for half the state. I have been through three inundations before, and I know something about them," replied the planter. "I hope I shall see more of you."

As we came up to the Islander, the passengers of both vessels, on board of her, began to clap their hands. I was embarrassed by this demonstration, and after asking Washburn to see that we were made fast to our consort, I sat down in the pilot-house where they could not see me.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### THE PLANTER AND HIS FAMILY.

I was quite exhausted after my efforts and the strain put upon me, and I was in no humor even to be praised. Some of the negroes our boats picked up on planks and on their toppling houses might have been drowned; but I did not believe the people in the mansion-houses were in any great danger. However, I had never seen an inundation before, and I may have been mistaken. My father was one of the first to visit me in the pilot-house.

"You have done well, Alick," said he; and that was all he did say, for he was not given to praising any one beyond his desert. "What are you going to do with all these people?"

"We can land them, or put them on board of one of the steamers here," I replied; and I had not thought of the matter before.

"Mrs. Shepard is very nervous indeed, and is anxious to get away from this place," continued my father.

"The Islander might have gone on," I suggested.

"We could not leave until assured that you did not need the assistance of the other steamer. We were about to send a line to you and attach it to one of the steamers. The only trouble was to get a line long enough and strong enough."

While we were talking Colonel Hungerford came into the pilot-house. I introduced him to my father, and the planter indulged in more praise which I do not care to repeat. He informed me that he had chartered one of the river steamers to take his servants and those of the other planters down to Carrollton, a few miles below.

"I am now going on board of another steamer to inquire if she is bound up the river, for I have concluded to visit my brother at Baton Rouge. But I suppose my mansion will not be fit to live in for some weeks to come, if ever. I desire to know your address, Captain Alick,—excuse me, but that is what I hear others call you,—that I may communicate with you at some future time."

"Quite unnecessary," said my father, with a smile, as though he suspected the object of the inquiry.

"But I desire to express my sense of obligation to your son for the great service he has rendered me and my family," persisted the planter.

"You have done that already, sir, to my entire satisfaction," I added.

"You are very strange people, not to allow me to do something."

"We are decidedly averse to having anything done," replied my father, laughing, not because anything was funny, but to prevent the southern gentleman from taking offence at what he said. "My son owns and commands this yacht, and I dare say he will be glad to have you take passage in his steamer to Baton Rouge, or any other point on the river in our route."

"I shall be most happy to accept your very kind invitation," replied Colonel Hungerford, promptly.

By this time the steamer he had engaged to take his "people," as he called them, like one of the patriarchs of old, came alongside. The four planters had a consultation, as to what disposition should be made of the servants, and the business manager of one of them was appointed to take the entire charge of the party. The other planters were going to New Orleans, and the same steamer was to convey them there.

In less than half an hour the boat started, and we restored things to their former condition on board of the Sylvania and Islander. We lashed boats again, and restored the bridge from one vessel to the other. All hands were employed in cleaning up the Sylvania; and I asked Captain Blastblow not to allow any of his passengers or crew to come on board till this had been done. He complied with my request, and sent all his crew on board to help.

We did not get under way until this was done, as Moses wanted to overhaul the engine a little, for he declared that such a wrenching as he had given the machine was enough to start half the nuts and bolts. My father remained in the pilot-house talking with the planter. But the subject of their conversation was the inundation. I lay upon the sofa, resting myself, and rather dreading to meet the people on board the Islander, for I had been praised enough, and this sort of thing was becoming more embarrassing. As the hands were drowning the decks again, Washburn brought the family of Colonel Hungerford into the pilot-house, which was about the only place for them, unless they went into the cabin.



The planter introduced his wife, son and daughter to my father and myself. In the daughter I saw a very beautiful young lady; the son was very affable and pleasant, and the father and mother were not less so. All of them began to express their obligations to me, and I replied as cheerfully as I could.

"We shall have a very pleasant party up to Baton Rouge, Colonel Hungerford," I ventured to say, in order to turn the current of the conversation.

"It's no use, Blanche," said the colonel to his daughter, who had been the last to speak. "Captain Alick won't let you speak of any obligation, and he won't even give me his address."

"I don't think he has any address in particular at present," interposed my father, "unless it be on the high seas or the Great Lakes. I have not yet made a home in America, as I intend to do. When we have one, we shall be very glad to have you discharge whatever sense of obligation you may feel by making us a visit; and we shall judge of the depth of the obligation by the length of the visit."

"Upon my word, that would be an odd way to discharge an obligation; and we should be obliged to stay with you all the year round," replied the planter.

The young lady had snapping black eyes; and I saw that she wanted to say something, but was restrained by the newness of the acquaintance.

"If we had got out on the river half an hour sooner, we might have saved imposing ourselves upon your hospitality, for a large steamer went up then," said Colonel Hungerford. "She stopped a little while at the crevasse, I am told, but finding she could do no good, she went on."

"I am glad she did, as otherwise she would have cheated us out of your pleasant company," replied my father.

"You are very kind, Major Garmingham," replied the colonel. "I confess I am greatly interested in your steamer, for I never have seen one like it before that I can remember."

Washburn reported that the engine was in order, and that the cleaning process was finished. I directed the pilot to blow his whistle and go ahead. In a few minutes we were again stemming the tide of the Mississippi. The crowd on the levees and the steamers honored us with a series of rousing cheers, to which the pilot replied with the steam whistle.

As soon as we were fairly out of the vicinity of the late exciting scene, the passengers of the *Islander*, including Mrs. Shepard, came on board. They were all presented to the planter and his family, and of course there was a great deal to say about the inundation, including the details of the escape of the people on the knoll. I found that the party were soon the best of friends, and I went into my room to lie down. I was so tired that I dropped asleep.

I was awakened by Captain Blastblow coming into my room. He seemed to be considerably excited; but I was sure he would not be where he was if any accident had happened to either steamer.

"Sorry to disturb you, Captain Alick, but this has been a very exciting time; and while we were all so busy, your two prisoners have taken to themselves legs or wings, and cleared out," said he, with a lugubrious gaze at me, as I sat upon the bed.

"Cleared out!" I exclaimed. "Where have they gone?"

"That's what bothers me. I kept my eye on them for a good while, but they behaved so well that I soon forgot all about them as we became so absorbed in the fate of the *Sylvania*," replied the captain, blankly. "I know I ought to have kept an eye on them to the end, and I am to blame. But it wasn't quite human to mind much about those rascals when we expected every minute to see your steamer fall back and be swamped. I had both boats ready to drop into the water."

"Gone, have they?" I repeated. "Haven't you any idea where they went? Your steamer was not near the levee, and they would not have gone ashore there, if it had been."

"I can only guess where they went. Not long before you got out of that hole, a large passenger steamer came alongside, and held on at our bowsprit-bitts awhile. She kept her wheels working all the time, while I was telling the captain what had happened. I am inclined to think that Cornwood and Boomsby stepped on board of her before she left. I found just now that their baggage was gone; and they could easily have got it out of the fore-cabin while I was talking to the captain. I am sorry for it, and if it hadn't been for that break, and your running into that hole, it would not have happened."

"How far ahead of us is that steamer?" I asked.

"She must be all of two hours ahead," replied Captain Blastblow.

"I am sorry we have lost them, but it can't be helped," I added, as I led the way out into the pilot-house where the passengers were assembled. I told my father of the escape of the robbers, and asked him if the money was still safe,

meaning the four thousand dollars.

"It must be, for it was in my trunk in the Sylvania all the time you were inside of the levee," replied he. "But I will make sure of it." He went down into the after cabin, and returned with the intelligence that it was where he had put it. This was some relief; and we dropped the matter because we could not do anything about the escape of the rascals. I felt rather cheap about the matter, because I had not delivered them to the police at New Orleans.

While I was asleep, my father and Mr. Tiffany had directed Cobbington to remove their portmanteaus, as they called their trunks, from the grand state-rooms. They reported to me, and I assigned one of them to the planter and his wife, and the other to Miss Blanche. They were delighted with the apartments. Owen insisted upon giving up his room to Mr. Tiffany; and there were berths enough for my father and my cousin. Our cabin was about full again.

I saw that my father was very much pleased with the planter and his family; and I think one might have gone all over the country to find people more agreeable.

Supper was ready by the time the passengers had taken possession of their rooms and berths. I took the captain's place in the cabin for this occasion, though I often did so while we were in the river and the Sylvania was in charge of the pilot. Colonel Hungerford sat next to me on one side, and I told him all about the robbery of the bank messenger, and the escape of our prisoners.

He thought it very probable that they had taken the steamer bound up the river.

"Donaldsonville is the next town of any importance; and there we can telegraph to some place ahead of the steamer, and have the robbers detained by the police. Does any one remember the name of the steamer?" asked the colonel.

Miss Margie Tiffany remembered that it was the Queen of the South. Owen was so reckless as to say he was glad the prisoners had got away, and he hoped they would succeed in eluding the police. We were yachting on the Mississippi, and we could not bother with arresting and holding prisoners. We had the money they had stolen, and that was enough.

"We may find the Queen of the South at Donaldsonville when we get there," continued Colonel Hungerford. "It is seventy-four miles from St. Charles, which is the nearest post-office to my plantation. When shall we get there?"

"Not until early in the morning," I replied. "We can't get along very fast against this current."

"The Queen may be there, as she will arrive in the night, waiting for freight or passengers," replied the planter. "If you will allow me, I will take charge of the apprehension of those men, for I think I shall understand it better than you, as I have had considerable experience in such cases."

Colonel Hungerford looked slyly at his wife and daughter. I could not understand the meaning of his expressive communication; but I was entirely willing he should cause the arrest of the fugitives.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### A DISTINGUISHED PASSENGER.

The planter went on deck with me after supper, and we paid our first visit to the Islander, where we were courteously received by the Shepards. On our return we went on the hurricane deck to take a look at the shores, as well as we could see them, for it was almost dark by this time.

"Who is your father, Captain Garmingham, or, if you will forgive me for it, Captain Alick?" asked the Colonel.

"Major Garmingham, formerly of the British army," I replied.

"Yes, yes, I know all that; but what is he?" persisted my new passenger.

"I don't know that he is anything in particular just now," I answered, perplexed by the earnestness of Colonel Hungerford. "He is certainly neither a soldier nor a sailor, a tinker nor a tailor."

"Is he an American?"

"No, sir; he was born in England. His father was Sir Alexander Garmingham, and he is Sir Bent Garmingham, Baronet, whose estates and last residence were at Shalford, Essex."

"I see," said the passenger. "Then he is a baronet."

"He is; but he insists upon dropping his title in this country."

"In my intercourse with him I shall take pleasure in dropping it," added the planter. "But, Captain Alick,--excuse me if I am too familiar."

"I am seldom called by any other name, and I have not the slightest objection to the name," I interposed.

"As I was going to say, Captain Alick, I am not a little embarrassed by the situation. You and your associates have rendered me an important service, and it would afford me very great satisfaction to acknowledge it. You are the captain of the steamer, and your father is a very wealthy man."

"He is, sir," I replied; for I wished to leave no doubt in his mind on this subject.

"Your mate was very efficient. What is he?"

"He is the son of a distinguished ex-governor of one of the States, and the nephew of----"

"Precisely so; I know his uncle very well. I can do nothing for him. And your two deckhands?" continued the planter.

"They are the sons of English gentlemen, over here on a vacation, and their fathers have each an income of over ten thousand pounds a-year," I added, quietly.

"Your engineer, whose skill and pluck carried us through the crevasse, is, I dare say, one of the sons of her Majesty, the Queen of England," added the passenger, laughing.

"On the contrary, he is a son of a Michigan farmer, now well to do in the world," I replied.

"Of course, he is a millionaire!"

"O, no, sir, only in comfortable circumstances. He has known what poverty is, but he has enough to live on now."

"By the way, Captain Alick, do you happen to have anybody on board who is not 'well to do,' as you call it?" asked the planter.

"Ben Bowman, the assistant, who was in the boat that brought off your family to the steamer, has been a lake sailor, cook and fireman all his life; and I don't know that he has five hundred dollars in the world. He sends most of his wages to his mother, and is one of the truest and bravest men I ever saw."

I also told him the story of Cobbington and the two firemen. I judged that he felt very grateful for the service the Sylvania had rendered to him and "his people," and that he was thinking up some way to reward her officers and crew for what they had done.

"The pilot is a Louisiana man, and says he was raised near St. Charles," I added.

"His name is Billy Bell, and I know him very well," replied Colonel Hungerford. "You have a very distinguished and wealthy ship's company, Captain Alick. I wished to distribute a thousand dollars, more or less, among them; but I see that such a proposition would be taken as an insult by some of them."

"It would be taken as it was intended, not as an insult; but it would be respectfully declined by the captain, the mate, the two deck-hands, and perhaps by all the others; for I am sure that no one on board would be willing to be paid for an act of common humanity," I replied.

"A strange ship and a strange crew," added Colonel Hungerford. "Perhaps we shall find some way to get out of it."

I had just resolved not to assist him in his task, for it was a little humiliating to have my crew paid for what they had done, when Miss Blanche and Miss Margie came on the hurricane deck. They were already fast friends. The English girl began to pour out a volley of questions about the river and the steamers we saw, and I answered them as well as I could; but Colonel Hungerford was better acquainted with the scene, and he took the task upon himself of informing her, leaving Miss Blanche to ply me with other interrogatories.

I told her all about the steamer, her going south, our adventures in Florida, and our yachting on the Mississippi, which had thus far been a series of adventures. Then she wanted to know who and what my father was, and I told her all I had just related to her father.

"Then you will one day be Sir Alexander Garmingham, and as a genuine republican, I shall be under the necessity of hating you, Captain Alick," said she, mirthfully.

"Then I promise never to allow myself to be called by that title," I replied. "I have said as much to my father; and he does not like to be called by anything but his military title, for he says he has earned that fighting against the enemies of his queen. But I am a democrat, and don't believe in any titles. Are you really a Republican, Miss Hungerford?"

"I am a republican, but I am also a Democrat."

"I see! and I am a democrat and also a Republican."

"I don't think it will be safe for us to talk politics. You may do that with father."

"I have told you my story, Miss Hungerford; and now it is no more than fair that you should tell me yours," I added.

"I shall be very happy to give you my whole history from my birth to the present day," replied the fair maiden, laughing. "I was born at St. Charles, and lived there and in New Orleans until about a year ago, since which time we have resided most of the time in Baton Rouge."

"Then your home is not at St. Charles?"

"Oh, yes! Our home is there, but we have one at the capital of the state also," said the mischievous girl.

"I thought you were going to your uncle's in Baton Rouge to stay until the mansion was repaired."

"I haven't any uncle in Baton Rouge, or anywhere else," chuckled Miss Blanche.

"Your father certainly said he should stay at his brother's in Baton Rouge," I added, puzzled by the statement.

"That was just as we girls used to say we were 'going to grandmother's' when we went to the seminary."

"Who is your father, Miss Hungerford?" I asked, repeating the question the planter had put to me.

"Colonel Hungerford," she answered, naively.

"Yes, I know; but what is he?"

"The Governor of Louisiana," replied Miss Blanche, with a merry laugh.

"The governor!" I exclaimed, appalled to think I had been talking so familiarly to the chief magistrate of the state.

"But he won't let any one call him governor when he is not attending to his official duties, if he can help it. He likes to be a plain citizen when he is off duty," continued the young lady. "We went down to stay a few days at the plantation."

Miss Margie's father called her, and thought it was too damp for her to be out after dark. We all went below, and the colonel said he must smoke his cigar. I conducted him to the pilot-house, where Owen and Miss Edith were spending the evening. My father was there also; and I took the occasion to introduce our distinguished guest to him again, with his title in full.

"So you have found me out, Captain Alick," said his excellency, with a pleasant laugh, which did much to restore the

equilibrium between us. "That puss of mine has been telling family secrets, and you must promise not to tell anybody what you have discovered."

"No one not on board," I replied.

"Everybody else will know the secret, so that I shall gain nothing. But we will not quarrel about trifles."

Everybody on board was tired enough to retire early, and before ten o'clock we had the deck and pilot-house to ourselves. The watches continued the same as before. Washburn gave up his berth in our room to Billy Bell, as we learned to call him, for the captain and mate never had their watch below at the same time, and we could both occupy the same bed at different times. The river is a mile wide, and at the present high stage of the water, there was no difficulty in steering, under the instructions of the pilot.

We had a sort of panorama, or diagram of the river, which I had obtained in New Orleans, arranged on the space between the windows of the pilot-house, so that we could tell where we were at all times. Ben Bowman had put the chart on rollers, and it could be wound up from one end to the other. The only things that were likely to bother us were the bayous and cut-offs; and the pilot was at hand at any moment he might be needed.

We passed no place of importance during the night; and at five o'clock in the morning we were at Donaldsonville. We made fast to the levee, and as we were in no hurry, I did not call any of the passengers. I told Gopher and Cobbington who the planter we had rescued was, that they might have things in proper condition at the breakfast-table. I inquired what boats had stopped at the place, and learned that the Queen of the South had left two hours before. This showed that her speed did not exceed that of our little fleet.

I asked if any passengers had landed, and was informed that several had done so. I thought I would visit the hotels, and see if Cornwood and Nick were at any one of them. I was about to leave the steamer when the governor came out of the cabin. He insisted that I should not leave the vessel, as the rascals might see me. They could not escape from the place except by boat. He went ashore himself, after I had given him a full description of the fugitives.

He returned in a short time, and said a report would come down in the course of an hour or two. Our party had a merry time at breakfast, and the meal was as elaborate as the resources of the New Orleans market and the skill of Gopher could make it. Colonel Hungerford, as he insisted that we should call him, was in the highest spirits. Before the meal was over, a gentleman came on board and desired to see the governor. He was the marshal of the city. No such passengers as had been described to him had landed. He had telegraphed to Baton Rouge for the police to search the steamer on her arrival.

Nothing more could be done, and we started up the river again. We arrived at the capital of the state at four in the afternoon. We spent the day in viewing the wonders of the mighty river, the waters of which were almost up to the top of the levees. The governor said that the country was inundated for thirty miles, though we could see but little water except what was between the fringe of the trees on the banks of the stream.

It takes the waters about a month to travel from the melting snows on the north and north-west to the Gulf. At the mouth of the Missouri the flood rises about twenty-five feet; below the Ohio the rise is sometimes more than fifty feet, while at New Orleans it seldom exceeds twelve feet. The greater height, caused by the addition of the waters of the Ohio to the flood, is reduced in Louisiana by the passage of much of the flow through the Atchafalaya, La Fourche, and other bayous, into the Gulf of Mexico.

On our arrival at the capital, we found that the Queen had not been searched, for telegraphic communication with points below had been cut off by the flood.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

### UP THE RIVER FOR MANY DAYS.

Colonel Hungerford was even more vexed at the failure of the plan to arrest the fugitives than I was. But Baton Rouge was on the last of the bluffs that one sees in descending the great river, and above the region of continuous levees. There was no doubt we could operate from this region, and secure the capture of the fugitives.

"How long since the Queen left?" asked the governor, of the man who had given us the information.

"She must have been gone nearly three hours," he replied.

"The fugitives are not likely to leave the steamer before she gets to Vicksburg, for there is no railroad from any point this side of that city. It is thirty-five miles from here to Bayou Sara. The steamer may stop there, and may not," said the governor, musing. "That is the last place in this State at which she is at all likely to make a landing. I will telegraph at once."

Without waiting to see any of our passengers ashore, I went with the governor to the telegraph office. He sent the dispatch to an official, directing him to board the steamer, if she did not stop, and arrest the fugitives, a sufficient description of whom I gave him. When this was done, Colonel Hungerford had time to attend to the landing of the party. He insisted that all the passengers should go to his residence and stay over Sunday with him. Colonel Shepard declined, and declared that he and his family had no claims upon his hospitality. A good-natured controversy ensued, and ended in the Colonel and all the others yielding the point.

Three carriages started for the residence of the chief magistrate, and another was awaiting his orders at the levee. By this time a reply came from the official in Bayou Sara, in which he promised to follow the instructions of the governor as soon as the steamer came in sight, for she had not yet appeared.

"Now, Captain Alick, if you will get into the carriage, I will take you up to the house," said Colonel Hungerford.

"You must excuse me, sir, for I have to attend to the affairs of the vessel," I answered.

"Must I argue this same question with you, too?" demanded the governor.

"I hope you will not, for I think it will do no good," I added, laughing. "Your excellency forgets that I am the captain of the Sylvania, and a true sailor never gives up his ship."

"Your ship is all well enough. You must go to my house, and bring Mr. Washburn with you."

"Impossible, sir! Our steamer is not a river boat, and she is not a flat-bottomed craft," I tried to explain. "Her keel does not take kindly to the levee. I must stay here and look out for her; but I will call at your house this evening."

But it was no use to argue the point; the governor persisted, and I finally compromised with him by agreeing that either Washburn or myself should be at his house all the time we remained in the place; in other words, we were to have "watch and watch" in visiting him. I took my first turn.

Nothing could be more delightful than the home of the governor, and I think I never saw so many beautiful residences in a city of the size of the capital. I had put on my best uniform, and prepared to make a creditable appearance in the place. Our party were presented to all the principal people of the city, who called to see the governor and congratulate him on the escape of himself and his family from the inundation, news of which had come by the steamer. I tried to keep in a corner, and talk with Miss Margie and Miss Blanche; but I was dragged out twenty times to be exhibited as the captain who ran his vessel through the crevasse, and over the cane-fields of the plantations.

We had a very large party at tea, and in spite of the embarrassments of my position, I enjoyed the occasion very much. Before we left the table the governor received a dispatch informing him that the two fugitives had been captured on board of the Queen of the South, and committed to the calaboose, or lockup. Again I felt really sorry for poor Nick Boomsby, and almost wished that he had escaped, though I could not justify myself in permitting him to do so.

On Sunday we all went to church, leaving the Sylvania in charge of a crew from the Islander, and the whole ship's company, including the pilot, dined with the governor. The next morning I was astonished to hear that Cornwood and Nick had arrived, having been brought down in charge of an officer in the night, and were in prison. Late on Saturday night I had sent by telegraph to Florida, a condensed account of the arrest of the robber and his accomplice after the fact, and the information that the money had been recovered. A reply soon came that proper officers, with a requisition

for the culprits, would be sent at once for them.

In the mean time, the prisoners were brought before the court, and the evidence against them was heard. Cornwood was his own counsel, as well as Nick's. The testimony was considered strong enough to hold the fugitives for the requisition. They were sent to the lockup again, and our party resumed their merrymaking.

We rode all about the country; we went to dinner parties; and we reciprocated the hospitalities extended to us by taking the governor and his friends on several excursions in the two steamers. Mrs. Shepard improved wonderfully as soon as she realized that the earth beneath her was solid, and there was no danger of the unruly waters drowning her while she slept. It was an exceedingly jolly time we had from morning till night, and sometimes half the latter.

After we had been at the capital of the state three days, I thought it was about time to move up the river again; but the Florida officials had not yet appeared. It was not till the following Saturday that they arrived. They had been detained in procuring the requisition by the absence of the governor, and in collecting what evidence they could obtain. With the officers came Peverell, the bank messenger, from whom the money had been stolen.

Another hearing before the court was necessary. The package containing the four thousand dollars was produced, and identified by Peverell. He testified as to the manner in which the package had disappeared from the counter of the saloon. He brought the affidavits of two men who had seen Nick go off to the Islander just before she sailed, with a bundle in his hand.

Captain Blastblow and I testified that the money had been found, in equal parts, on the prisoners. The plan of Cornwood to get possession of the whole or half of the money was shown from the manner in which he had conducted himself, in causing the departure of the Islander from Key West before the arrival of the Sylvania, though the latter was in sight when the former left.

Cornwood attempted to disprove the charges by repeating the silly story he had told me. He cross-questioned the witnesses, and did his best to browbeat Peverell. The messenger showed that it was impossible that any money could have been obtained from the bank while Cornwood was in Jacksonville between the time the Floridian arrived and departed. But the court was satisfied with the evidence, and the governor complied with the requisition.

Before I left the court-room, I went to Nick to say how sorry I was for him--sorry that he had done anything to reduce himself to such a situation.

"I don't know what made me do it," blubbered Nick, to the great disgust of his fellow-criminal. "I didn't think of doing it until the minute I did it. I had been thinking, as I told you at the time, of clearing out; and the sight of the package of money seemed to show me how it could be done."

"What are you talking about, you ninny?" growled Cornwood. "You are convicting yourself."

"I don't care anything about that. I won't lie any more about it, for it ain't no use," replied Nick, sourly. "If it hadn't been for you, I should have got off all right, Cornwood."

I concluded that his penitence was not very deep. He told me then how Cornwood had come on board of the Islander and accused him of taking the package, and he had been compelled to give him half of it to prevent him from exposing him. But all he said was no more than we had reasoned out before, and the confession seemed to be hardly original.

"You can do something for me, Captain Alick," he continued. "If you will get me out of this scrape I will never do anything wrong again as long as I live!"

"I can do nothing for you," I replied, as gently as I could.

"They say you are thick with the governor, Alick. If you say the word, he will let me off," pleaded the culprit.

"He can do nothing for you any more than I can. You are in the hands of the law now, and nothing but the law can settle your case, Nick. Good-by."

I had hardly uttered the last words before I felt a heavy hand laid upon my throat, which was followed by a choking sensation.

"What are you about, Sandy Duddleton?" demanded my ancient enemy. "What have you been sayin' ag'in my boy? He's a hund'ed times as honest as ever you was!"

I thought I should be choked to death; and the instinct of self-preservation took possession of me. I sprang at the throat of my old tyrant. He went down upon the floor, and I on the top of him, before my father or any other person could come to my aid. As he went down he released his grasp on my throat in his effort to save himself.



"I SPRANG AT THE THROAT OF MY OLD TYRANT."  
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"Arrest that person!" cried the justice, in the sternest of tones.

In another instant two officers had Captain Boomsby in their clutches. A complaint was made against him for a breach of the peace. The justice made short work of him; he was sentenced to pay a fine of one hundred dollars, and to stand committed until paid. It was more money than he had, and he was sent to jail. As usual, he was more than "half seas over," as he used to call intoxication when I sailed with him in the Great West. It appeared that he had followed the officers, but had some difficulty in finding "his boy."

In the afternoon the Florida party took a boat down to New Orleans, intending to return home by the steamer to Cedar Keys. I afterwards learned that both Nick and Cornwood were convicted, and sentenced to the penitentiary for three years. Though Cornwood was only an accomplice after the fact, he was the greater villain of the two. I never saw either of them again.

We spent another Sunday in Baton Rouge, and delightful as our sojourn had been, even Mrs. Shepard thought it was about time to depart. But I could not leave with my ancient enemy unforgiven. I went to the clerk of the court and paid Captain Boomsby's fine. He was released from confinement, and took the next boat down the river. He had the grace to take my hand, and say good-by before he went; and that was the last time I ever saw him.

We had a large crowd on the levee when we left, and we kept our whistles going till a bend in the river took us out of sight of the hospitable city where we had enjoyed so much. The water had fallen a little, but not much. The melting snows of the northern hills had not yet sent down their full tribute to the Gulf.

We stopped at Natchez and at Vicksburg, and were very handsomely treated by the people. But the broad river was the greatest study to us, for we had visited no end of towns and cities on our long voyage. We were interested in the numerous islands, hundreds of them. When we looked at some of them from below, the fresh foliage seemed to form a regular flight of steps. The pilot explained this appearance. The rapid current was continually wearing away the upstream end of the island, and depositing its soil on the other end, in which every year new trees sprang up; and each step denoted a period in the growth of the wood.

It was the first day of May when we reached Cairo, at the mouth of the Ohio, where the waters of the two rivers seemed to be spread out like an inland sea or lake. We found an excellent hotel there; but Washburn and I spent what time we had to spare with our friend West, who had been for a time a student in Somerset College.

A couple of days more brought us to St. Louis, where we found enough to interest us for a week. When we were about ready to continue our voyage, Colonel Shepard came into the pilot-house, where I was seated with Washburn, and wanted to know how much farther up the river I intended to go. He had heard me speak of sailing the next morning, and he thought it was about time for him to leave for New York, by train, with his family.



## CHAPTER XXX.

### UP ANOTHER RIVER AND HOME AGAIN.

Colonel Shepard looked somewhat perplexed, for while we were going "Up the River," not a word had been said about going "Down the River." Doubtless all our passengers thought the steamers would have to return by the way they came, and had taken it for granted that this must be the case. I had a different view of the matter.

"Do you mean to go up to Lake Itasca?" asked Colonel Shepard, as he lighted his cigar, indicating that he meant to have the talk out, and the future course of the steam yachts decided upon.

"It would be rather difficult to get over the Falls of St. Anthony," I replied. "Billy Bell don't know the way up there."

"Of course you mean to sail around to New York, and from thence to Lake St. Clair by the way you came?" suggested the colonel.

"I am happy to say that I don't mean anything of the kind," I answered with a smile. "I am afraid it would be rather tedious for our passengers to go over the same route again so soon."

"I supposed they would cut across the country by railroad and steamboat. I had intended to go from St. Louis to Pittsburg by boat."

"I hope you won't give up the voyage so soon," I protested. "I am only afraid the ladies will be sea-sick again."

"Give up!" exclaimed the colonel. "Of course there is an end to navigation in this direction. We can run up the Missouri for a week or two, up to St. Paul's, or up to Pittsburg; but I do not see the point of following either of these routes, unless it be the latter, which will bring us so much nearer to New York."

"I don't think the Sylvania has any particular business in New York, and I had not thought of taking her there again," I added. "I can't say that I should care to descend the Mississippi, cross the Gulf of Mexico, and follow the coast by the way we came. I am in favor of variety in our yacht trips."

"So am I; and for that reason, I am in favor of going to New York by steamer and railroad from here. I have three weeks more to spare, and if you wish to go up to St. Paul's or Pittsburg, I am entirely willing to go with you, Captain Alick."

"As your plans seem to be different from mine, we ought to have considered this subject at Cairo, for you have come over two hundred miles out of your way, if you intend to go to Pittsburg."

"It makes little difference to me, or to my family, where we go, for we have enjoyed this trip so much that none of us were in a hurry to bring it to an end. Mrs. Shepard has entirely recovered from her nervous debility, and I know she will be sorry when we have to part company."

"Then you had better allow the Islander to continue in the fleet; and I promise that you shall not be any farther from New York at any time than you are now, or at any point where it will take you longer to get there. More than this, the Islander shall land you twelve miles nearer New York than Pittsburg."

"Then I will go with you," replied the colonel.

"But it will take much longer to go by my way," I added.

"Will it take more than three weeks longer, Captain Alick?" asked the owner of our consort.

"You shall be in New York in half that time, if you wish."

"I suppose it is no use for me to ask what this marvellous route is to be!" queried the colonel.

"Not the least," I replied, decidedly. "No one has said a word as to where we were going for the last month, or since we decided to go up the river. Nobody seemed to care."

"We all took it for granted that the steamers were to return by the way they came," said Colonel Shepard. "I was talking with your father about the matter one day, more than a week ago; and he had the same view of the subject I had."

"We will sail at nine o'clock to-morrow morning, if you please."

"Certainly if that is the pleasure of the commander of the fleet," answered Colonel Shepard.

I had kept my own counsel so far, and I thought I had better continue to do so for a while longer. Washburn and I had settled the question, even before we left Detroit, and had procured all the information necessary to carry out our plan, for the mate first suggested it. We had taken in coal sufficient to run the steamer about two days. With this supply, we drew a little less than eight feet of water, just enough to sink the propeller.

Before night I engaged two pilots, one for each steamer, for I was not sure we could lash boats much longer. At the time appointed all our passengers were on board, and we backed out from the levee. It was so much more social to lash boats, that we did so at the request of the ladies. Recent heavy rains all over the western states had again raised the river several feet above the level it was when we arrived at St. Louis.

"Won't you explain the great mystery to me, Captain Alick?" asked Miss Margie, as I passed her, seated on the quarter-deck, reading a novel.

"What great mystery?" I inquired, taking a chair by her side.

"Why, the mystery of where we are going," she replied, with a bewitching laugh. "All the passengers are trying to solve the riddle; and no one has done it yet."

"What book are you reading, Miss Margie?" I asked.

"Little Dorrit. What has that to do with it?" said she, looking at me with surprise.

"Perhaps nothing; but before I explain to you the great mystery, as you call it, let me tell you how the book you are reading comes out. You have got acquainted with Little Dorrit, the Father of the Marshalsea, and----"

"Now, stop! I don't want you to tell me how it comes out!" protested the fair maiden, vehemently. "I wouldn't have you do it for the world. It would utterly spoil all the pleasure I might have in reading the book."

"Is that so? Why shouldn't I explain this great mystery, as well as the other? I am sure I should deprive you of half the excitement of the trip if I should tell you beforehand all about it."

"Then you needn't tell me a word!" And I did not.

At lunch-time we were in the midst of another great inland sea, at the mouth of the Missouri. Some of us wished we were going up that great river, to explore it where there were no towns, or other evidences of civilization. As that was not our present purpose, we forgot all about it as soon as we were out of sight of its mouth. Twenty miles more brought the fleet to another broad expanse of water, in which were several islands.

"Adieu to the Mississippi!" I shouted, walking from one end to the other of the steamer. But I made no further explanation.

There was a call for maps and guide-books then, succeeded by an anxious study for a few moments.

"This is the mouth of the Illinois River!" exclaimed Miss Margie, rushing up to me.

"I don't deny it," I replied. To avoid more questions, I went to the pilot-house.

"We are making about twelve miles an hour," said the pilot of the Sylvania.

"How can that be? The most we could make in the Mississippi was seven miles against the strong current."

"The current is the other way here," added the pilot.

"Do you mean that the stream runs up?"

"Precisely that," answered the man, laughing at my perplexity. "When the Mississippi is very high, it flows the water back in the Illinois for seventy miles. We get a little current here to help us. After a while, it will really be still water."

In this part of the river, the stream was full to the top of its banks, and in some places it overflowed them. The river had furrowed out a deep channel in the alluvial soil, and at low water, it had tolerably high bluffs on each side of it. It was almost as wide as the Father of Waters, where we had left it, at its lower part; but in a few hours the width began to diminish a little.

Before night, I had called all hands, and, after unbending the squaresails, sent down all the yards and top-masts, for I feared that we might have trouble with the "low bridges," and perhaps with the trees that overhung the stream in some places. We frequently met river steamers, and I found by comparison, that our lower masts were not higher above the surface of the water than the smoke-stacks of the boats.

We continued on our course all night, one of the pilots being on duty all the time. In the morning the appearance of the country was more picturesque, and we had a delightful day. In the afternoon we passed through the lake at Peoria, which was a beautiful sheet of water. We had a current to contend with, and our progress was not so rapid as it had

been the day before. On the following morning we reached the head of the natural navigation of the river. I went ashore at Peru, and chartered a canal-boat, and engaged a number of horses and drivers.

"What now, Captain Alick?" called Colonel Shepard, when I came on board of the Sylvania, with the Islander made fast to her.

"Lots of work for a few hours," I replied, directing the mate to call all hands, for I wished to avoid all delays.

I found the two steamers were each drawing seven and a half feet of water. We were about to enter the Illinois and Michigan Canal, extending from La Salle to Chicago. I had ascertained that it was six feet deep; and I did not think it was likely to be below that at the present high stage of water. We had only about a hundred miles between the steamers and Lake Michigan.

The government of the United States has already considered the question of making this canal deep enough to float ordinary lake-craft, so that gunboats and other war vessels may be sent through from the Mississippi to the lakes in case of war with our English neighbors. Probably it will be done some time, but in the interests of commerce rather than war.

The steamers, drawing seven and a half feet of water, could not pass through the canal, which was only six feet deep. But I was not disturbed by this fact, as I was prepared for it. The year before, when I had put the Sylvania through a thorough course of repairs, I had removed everything out of her except her engine and boiler. She had a considerable quantity of ballast in her, composed of pigs of iron. When everything was taken out of her, she drew a little less than six feet.

The canal-boat I had engaged was drawn in between the two steamers, and we proceeded to load it with cables, anchors and ballast. We rigged a derrick formed of the foreyards of the vessels, and made as easy work of it as possible. When, at night, we had taken every movable thing out of the steamers, they realized all my expectations, for they drew only six feet. But this was making no allowance for possible shoal places; and Moses, with the engineer of the Islander, had been at work, while we were removing the heavy weights from the hold, in detaching the propellers of the two craft. With our shears, we hoisted them out into the canal-boat.

The removal of these heavy weights from the sterns set the vessels on a more even keel, fore and aft. A western river-steamer draws more water forward than aft, so that she may be the more easily worked over shoal places; while a sea or lake vessel is just the reverse. We found that we were likely to sink the canal-boat, and I was obliged to procure another. We divided the weight between the two, and then transferred our spare spars to them.

Our passengers had been greatly interested in watching the various operations in progress. It was dark when our heavy labors were finished. The ship's company and the passengers were to remain on board during the passage. Though I had told them they could take a train and be in Chicago in a few hours, they all preferred to remain, to enjoy the novelty of the canal trip.

Our passengers were really in no haste to reach their point of destination, yet they were impatient to be on the move, as is always the case with the average American traveller. I concluded to start at once, as the nights were now cheered by a full moon, and I intended to keep the boats going until they arrived at Chicago. There was nothing for the engineers and firemen to do on board, and I sent Moses Brickland and Ben Bowman forward by railroad to several designated places to engage fresh horses for us.

Our passengers sat up till midnight on the hurricane-deck, for the weather was very warm for the season in this latitude, while Washburn and the deck-hands steered. In the morning our canal drivers said we had averaged three miles an hour, with two changes of horses. This was getting along faster than I had expected. I had written to Mr. Brickland, at Montomercy, informing him when we should arrive at Chicago, and inviting him and his wife to join us there, and make the trip home in the steamer.

The next day was full of interest to our canal travellers. Our strange craft excited a good deal of interest all along the route.

When our party came on deck the next morning, they found the steamers in the canal basin at Chicago. We had made the trip in thirty-four hours, and had not touched bottom once, so far as I knew. The fleet had stopped only long enough to change horses at any place. We got the boats alongside, and sent our party on the way to the hotels, for the odor of the basin was not that of ottar of roses.

The engineers went to work on the propellers first, and after resorting to various expedients, we got them in place. Steam was up by this time, and we towed the canal boats down to a point near the lake. It required the whole day to restore our anchors, cables, and ballast to their places, rig the spars, and bend on the sails. By six o'clock we were in as good condition as when we entered the Mississippi at the Balize.

We had hardly finished the work before Mr. and Mrs. Brickland came on board. They were delighted to see us, and both of them wept when they realized that Moses and I were alive, well and happy, after our long voyage. I had sent for

our passengers, and when they came on board, I introduced my foster father and mother to them; and the old people were very pleasantly received.

They welcomed my father as one who had come from the other world, for Mr. Brickland declared he had been unable to realize that he was still alive, though I had written them to that effect. My father insisted upon resigning the best state-room to them, though I had intended to give up my room, while Washburn and I divided the nights between us in the fore-cabin.

At dark we were under way, and fortunately we had smooth water, so that Mrs. Shepard had no cause to complain of the lake. At Mackinaw we stopped a day to give the party an opportunity to pull in some of the famous trout of that locality. Off Thunder Bay, where I had once weathered a gale in the Lake Bird, there was a considerable stirring up of the waters, and Mrs. Shepard declared that it was worse than the broad Atlantic; but the last was always the worst to her. She was delighted with St. Clair River, when we passed through it the next day. We crossed the Flats by the canal, and stood over to Glinten River. The region looked very natural to us, after our long absence. In the middle of the afternoon, we made a landing at the wharf back of Mr. Brickland's house.

A considerable crowd had gathered on the pier, for we had been seen by some one who reported us in town. Those who were acquainted received a warm welcome. The Shepards insisted upon going to the hotel; and I did not very strongly object, as we had not sufficient accommodations for them in the house. They remained there a week, for the springs seemed greatly to improve the health of the lady.

The Islander was started on her voyage to New York the day after her arrival at Montomercy, for the colonel wanted to use her there soon after his arrival. When his family were ready to depart, I conveyed them to Buffalo in the Sylvania. The Tiffanys wanted to see more of the country, and accompanied the Shepards. Owen had decided to go to England, and Buck Lingley and Hop Tossford felt obliged to go with him, though their year was not quite up. I landed my passengers in the canal basin.

I had not felt so sad since the news came to me of the death of my father as on this occasion. I parted with Margie Tiffany and her father--more especially with Margie--with a regret which I cannot describe. But I was permitted to write to her (and her father) as often as once a month, and I hope before long to see her in England.

Buck and Hop had not been gone more than an hour before they re-appeared with "store clothes" on, and did not look at all like the excellent sailors they were. Their real names were Richard Lawrence and Edward Blakeley; and when they appeared in their new dress I called them by their proper names. They were very sorry to leave the Sylvania, and I expressed the hope that they would come and spend a summer with me in a cruise around the Great Lakes. They promised to do it, if possible.

Once more we bade them good-by. We staid in Buffalo to see the party off for New York; and up to this time that was the last I have seen of them.

After my father joined our party, I noticed that Owen Garningham was never himself again. Though he continued to flutter around Miss Edith, he never seemed to be so well pleased with me as before. Yet I do not think he had anything against me. I could only attribute the change in him to the cancelling of the contract for the use of the Sylvania for a year, though he had said very little about the matter. He parted with me, I think with real sorrow, and hoped he should see me again before even another year had passed by.

I saw my cousin seated in the car by the side of Miss Edith. He sailed for England in June, but I have no idea how he had the courage to tear himself away from her. I have no doubt they will be man and wife in due time, though my father says his mother will never consent to the match. As soon as the train started we returned to the Sylvania. The two waiters we had hired in Florida wanted to seek their fortune in New York, and Colonel Shepard promised to do all he could for them on their arrival.

Cobbington returned to Montomercy with my father and myself. He was now in apparently good health, but he declared that it would cost him his life to remain in the North over winter. Governor Hungerford wrote to me, as he had promised to do, during the summer. Before the cold weather came, I had secured a situation in Baton Rouge for the invalid, where at the last accounts he was in good health, acting as messenger for the governor.

My father and I were so well contented in the home of the Bricklands, that we remained there the rest of the season. He built a summer residence on an island in Lake Superior, where we expect to go every season in the Sylvania. I liked my home in the west too well to think of giving it up, though I was admitted to the college at Racine in September, as Washburn was at Brunswick.

My story is told; but I hope, when I have graduated, to make another such trip as that in which we circumnavigated twenty-four states, besides New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, coasted along the whole eastern shore of the United States, visited the interior of Florida, crossed the Gulf of Mexico, and sailed "UP THE RIVER," yachting on the Mississippi.

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