

The Black Cat

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In the Cabin of the Ben Bolt.*

BY BERT LESTON TAYLOR.



THE whaling bark *Ben Bolt*, of Fairhaven, Mass., had put into the quaint old port of Russell, on the northeast coast of New Zealand, to take on supplies of wood, water, and provisions, and to give the crew a run ashore. On Saturday, the 23d of December, the bark waited only the turn of the tide and the pleasure of her commander, who was as like to square away for Fairhaven as for any other point on the world's map. We had been out a twelvemonth; the one whale to our credit had, in the killing, smashed one of the boats and disabled a brace of the crew, and Captain Mayhew's temper, never the best, grew steadily worse as the profitless days slipped by.

As the skipper, with the narrator of this tale following at his heels in discreet silence, stalked through the streets of Russell towards the consul's office, to answer charges of ill usage filed by two of the crew, he was in a particularly bad humor. Moreover, it being early in the forenoon, he was sober; and to Captain Mayhew sobriety brought increase of irritability.

As we entered the anteroom to the consul's office a lady rose from a seat by the window and, stepping up to the captain, asked him, in a voice so sweet and musical that it brought him up all

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standing, whether she might have a word with him. The skipper clawed off his cap, and the lady, who was young, and, to my mind, very handsome, took him by the arm and drew him to a spot well out of earshot. Fragments of the conversation reached me, but I paid little heed to them. I was staring hard at the winsome face of the young lady, who seemingly was striving to convince the captain of some proposition not vastly to his fancy. As the argument grew, the lady's face took on a beseeching expression and her voice a tone of earnest pleading. I caught the phrase, "One hundred pounds," and this appeared to sway the debate materially, for the captain ceased to shake his head, and began to pace a few steps to and fro, while the young lady awaited the decision in plain anxiety. Presently the skipper signed for me to draw near.

"Dick," said he in an undertone, "take a shore boat and row this lady out to the bark. Any traps, Miss?" turning to the lady.

"A few," said she. "I will have them sent down from the hotel."

"Dick will look after them," said the captain, with unwonted graciousness, and went about his business.

I have made many voyages since the one with which, in part, this story deals; I have wandered in strange lands, and seen many types of fair women, but I have never looked upon another such face as that which drew my eyes, as a magnet draws steel, as I pulled away from the stone pier at Russell for the trip across the bay.

She was, I judged, twenty-five years old; very tall,—perhaps five feet seven inches,—large, and finely proportioned. I am drawing her portrait, not from the hasty sketch that my eyes made during the passage to the *Ben Bolt*, but from the leisure pencilings for which the after days afforded opportunity.

Her skin was very dark, but unblemished. Her eyes were black and rather small, and because of a very high forehead, appeared to be set midway of her face. It was this peculiarity that gave to the face its strong individuality. Her eyebrows were heavy and straight, with no inclination for meeting, and her nose, the least perfect of her features, was a trifle broad and a bit inclined

to "pug." She had a large mouth and full, red lips, and her teeth were small, separated, and perfectly cut as so many girls. A delicately rounded chin, graduating into the curves of a fine neck and shoulders, and black, fluffy hair, parted with a few becoming ringlets, completed this unconventional portrait. I have been at some pains to draw it; for, as you may guess, my interest in it was more than passing. Evelyth Annerly was her name. There was music in every syllable; music, to my young and romantic fancy, sweeter than the murmur of the night breeze through the shrubs, or the surge of the bow-parted waves.

My passenger seemed to be wholly occupied with her thoughts, which crossed the smoothest of brows with two faint lines. But she must at last have grown conscious of my impertinent scrutiny, for she turned from her absent contemplation of the sea with the query:—

"Well, Mr. Dick, am I satisfactory?"

I felt my face color up, and, too confused to turn the question, I fixed my eyes upon the bottom of the boat and tugged violently at the oars.

"I am in no hurry to reach the bark," said she, with a low, rippling laugh that is in my ears to this day. "I suppose you think it odd that your vessel should have such a passenger," she went on, as, being rid of my embarrassment, I again raised my eyes.

"It was in my mind, Miss," said I, "that the cabin of a whaler was hardly suited to a lady—"

"That has no other choice," she finished, with a smile. "And, pray, how comes it that a young man of your manner and speech is found in such a rough and disagreeable calling?"

In reply to this question, and the kindly look that accompanied it, I told her my history, which was scant enough. My name was Richard Proctor. I was the son of an old seafaring friend of Captain Mayhew's, was twenty-two years old, and had been afloat some three years. While I held the nominal berth of second mate of the *Ben Bolt*, I was for the most part studying seamanship and navigation with her captain, who was as good a sailor and navigator as ever trod a deck, and who, though known as a hard man, had never treated me with aught but kindness.

To this dull recital my passenger listened with seeming interest. "And have you no ambition beyond a sailor's life?" she asked.

"I esteem it a noble calling, Miss," I replied; and forthwith entered into a defense of Jack's trade that sprang more from a memory for sea tales than from experience; for, short as the latter had been, I had witnessed sights that I had no mind to recall. Miss Annerly listened with an encouraging smile.

"You are right," said she, nodding. "A gentleman is a gentleman before the mast or in my lady's drawing room. For this voyage, then, come what may, I shall feel that I have a protector."

These words, coming as an echo of my own thoughts, sent the blood tingling about my ears. I glanced quickly at the young lady's face, expecting to find her laughing at me. But no; there was a serious look in her eyes. It was the first time that I had looked straight into those eyes, and I thought afterwards that she must have read in mine the foolish thoughts that were running in my head.

"I would do anything to serve you," I said warmly, and was rather glad at that moment to find myself within the shadow of the *Ben Bolt*.

When I got back to the town I learned that the complaint against Captain Mayhew having been dismissed by the consul, the two seamen had taken to their heels, with the captain and a detachment of Russell police in hot pursuit. As I could think of nothing better to do while awaiting the skipper's return, I strolled into Flood's Hotel.

Besides the proprietor, the sole occupant of the drinking room was a gentleman that sat at a table near the door, with his chair tilted against the wall, his hands in his coat pockets, and an unlighted cigarette caught loosely between his lips. He was large and well built, flaxen haired and blue eyed, and would have been handsome but for a too prominent nose and a scar, that might have been caused by a saber slash, across his left cheek. There was something about the man that I did not fancy — possibly his provokingly cool appearance; the day was intensely hot, and I was much heated by my pull at the oars. I set him down, without

good reason, as a stranger to Russell, for there was nothing about that out-of-the-way place to attract a tourist, and there were no vessels except the *Ben Bolt* in port.

As I entered he nodded pleasantly, and without troubling to remove his cigarette inquired, in lazily deliberate tones: —

“From the whaler?”

I replied as briefly, but the catechism had only begun. In response to his carelessly put queries I stated that the *Ben Bolt* was a bark of six hundred tons' burden; that she carried twenty men, including boat-steerers, and three officers; that the crew was composed chiefly of Portuguese, with a sprinkling of Yankee boys that had cut from home for various reasons; that the cabin was entirely below the main deck; that there were three rooms in the cabin, and that the captain's room was on the starboard side; and a number of other details concerning the order of things aboard the bark that impressed me as being of no significance to a stranger, least of all to a man of the world, such as my questioner appeared to be. One inquiry, when the captain intended to sail, I could not answer.

“But,” said I, as at that moment I caught sight of my commander rolling up the approach to the tavern, “here comes Captain Mayhew, and if there is anything about the *Ben Bolt* that you haven't discovered, perhaps he can enlighten you.” The faintest sort of a smile flitted across the gentleman's face. He thanked me, lighted his cigarette, and picked up a newspaper at his elbow.

Captain Mayhew was breathing hard, partly from presumed exertions and partly from visible wrath. As he strode up to the bar and called for a glass of brandy, I went out on the veranda and paced up and down, awaiting possible orders. Five minutes went by, and glancing through the open window, I discovered the captain in close speech with the gentleman of the scar. A bottle was on the table between them, and I noted that the captain had regained his breath and a fair share of what passed with him for amiability. The table being near the window, I overheard, without design of playing the listener, a part of the conversation.

“What you tell me, Mr. Tutherly, may be all fair and above board,” the captain was saying; “but when John Mayhew passes

his word, there is an end of the matter. That, sir, is the only virtue that I pretend to lay hold on."

"And the sentiment does you credit, Captain," came the reply, with the shadow of a sneer in it. "But it strikes me that in this case you might strain a point with a clear conscience and without prejudice to your honor. The peace and happiness of a family deserve consideration, sir."

"I reckon the family will have to manage their own affairs," said the captain. "Besides, sir, the young lady has spun me a vastly different yarn, and, begging your pardon, her word is as good as yours, as far as it goes."

There was a pause, and then Tutherly, as his name appeared to be, spoke again. "Captain Mayhew," said he, "for excellent reasons I can say no more upon the matter than I have told you. But I warn you, sir, that if you refuse to accept either of my propositions the consequences may be unpleasant to you."

"I wish you luck," returned the skipper, with something like a chuckle.

"I'll pledge you there with a will," retorted the other. I heard the clinking of glasses, and presently the captain came out of the tavern and signified his intention of going aboard the bark. I ventured to ask what success had attended upon his pursuit of the deserters, and he growled a reply to the effect that they were by that time half way to Whangarea, and be damned to them.

The captain had a final call at the consul's, and that over we went down to the pier. There we found Tutherly, pacing leisurely up and down, and seemingly unmindful of the broiling sun. Without remark he watched our preparations for departure, but as the boat shot away from the landing he called out:—

"*Bon voyage*, Captain Mayhew! I'll see you again."

"I'm damned if you will!" flung back the captain.

The other laughed, a merry, bantering laugh, and turning on his heel, walked slowly towards the town.

The tide had begun to ebb when we reached the bark, and the captain gave orders to weigh anchor. Half an hour later, with a fresh easterly breeze, the *Ben Bolt* stood out of the Bay of Islands and turned her prow to the northwest.

Miss Annerly had remained on deck, looking toward Russell, until we left the bay, when she vanished in the cabin, to reappear shortly afterwards, her white skirts exchanged for a becoming costume of blue serge. She gave me a nod and a smile, thanked me for a seat that I placed for her in the lee of the companion hatchway, and directed her attention to a book. But it seemed to me that her thoughts were far from her reading. She would sit motionless for ten minutes at a time, with the book in her lap and her hands clasped across it, and gaze absently at the misty coast line. I asked Mr. Frye, the mate, what port the bark was bound to, but found him as ignorant as myself. Opportunity for a good guess was not long delayed.

At sundown, when North Cape was about four miles distant, bearing south, Captain Mayhew came up from the cabin, glanced around, and called to the mate:—

“Mr. Frye, man the starboard fore and main braces. Put your helm up, Carter. Lay the yards square. How’s her head now?”

“West, sir,” replied the man at the wheel.

“Steady your helm. Let her go off another point. Steady—so. Keep her west by south, and steer straight.” Saying which, the captain returned below.

The wind had hauled, since we left Russell, to about east-northeast, and the bark was running with the wind a point on the starboard quarter. The weather clew of the mainsail had been hauled up, the spanker and jib sheets eased off, and the studding sails set fore and aft. With a ten-knot breeze and all sail set, the *Ben Bolt* was bowling along towards the coast of New South Wales, a thousand miles away.

In the plain tale that I am setting down I shall make no further apology for my words and acts than that I was young, impulsive, and impressionable. While I am still far from old, the roving life that I have led has shattered many of my ideals and swept away most of my airy castles. But I shall never forget those few days aboard the *Ben Bolt*, when the heart was young and the blood ran swiftly, and life seemed as bright and as joyous as the tender skies that arched above the southern seas.

I was in love. I sang it to the stars, as I paced the deck in the lonely hours of the middle watch. I cried it to the fickle winds

that would not stay to listen, and to the constant waves that sought to follow the bark in her flight. I was in love; but in love, as I told myself, with a being so far above me, so removed from my sphere of life, that I never thought seriously of voicing my secret to other ears than those of Mother Nature.

Captain Mayhew exchanged but few words with his handsome passenger. While he was as polite as his iron nature allowed, he made no effort toward amiability. He spent on deck no more time than duty demanded, and as Miss Annerly avoided the cabin the larger part of the day, she and I were very much in each other's company. She expressed an interest in everything about the *Ben Bolt*, and would listen with sympathetic eyes and seemingly attentive ears while I explained the names of the masts, yards, and rigging, the uses of sheets, braces, halliards, and stays, and the thousand little things so bewildering to the landsman, yet so simple to the nautical mind.

But her interest centered in the mysteries of latitude and longitude. Each noon she would watch the operation of taking the sun, and later would sit by my side at the little table in the cabin, while I calculated the latitude and longitude, to compare with the figures made by the captain, and pricked off on the chart the position of the *Ben Bolt*. If the reckoning showed a good run for the bark her face would light up with pleasure; but if the contrary were shown, she would frown, and ask anxiously what were the chances for a better run on the morrow.

The *Ben Bolt* was a fast sailer, and during the first day out from Russell we covered 256 of the eleven hundred odd miles to Sydney, to which port Miss Annerly one morning informed me she was bound. But during the afternoon of Sunday, the second day, the wind fell flat, and the bark barely had headway on the long swells. During that day we added only a hundred miles. We did better the next day, rolling up 240; but on Tuesday and Wednesday variable winds and head seas prevailed, and we tallied only 276 miles for the two days.

On Thursday, at noon, the *Ben Bolt* was in latitude 34° S., longitude 158° E., with three hundred miles of open water between the tip of her flying jibboom and Sydney. We had made a run of 872 miles in five days, an average of nearly 175. I told

Miss Annerly that this was a remarkably good record for the *Ben Bolt*, or for any other sailing craft of her size, and she expressed herself as well satisfied with the performance; for the most she had desired was to reach Sydney within seven days, a desire that now bade fair to be gratified.

Friday morning I turned out at sunrise, and stood for a few moments on the topgallant fore-castle, watching the effect of the sun's rays on the westerly waste of gray sea and sky into which the bark was sweeping. Suddenly there was borne to my ears, on the rush of the easterly wind, the tones of a sweet, clear, and unfamiliar voice, and fragments of a song about "the lark" and "heaven's gate" and "chaliced flowers." I whipped about in surprise, but the belly of the mainsail shut everything abaft the waist of the vessel from view.

"With everything that pretty is,
My lady sweet, arise!
Arise, arise!
My lady sweet, arise!"

I waited till the song was done, and then hurried aft, to receive a shock of surprise that literally took my breath away.

Leaning against the weather rail, with his face turned to the blazing east and his head bared to the fresh, sweet breeze, was the man that we had left on the pier at Russell almost a week before. I swept a quick glance around the sea. There was not a sail in sight.

At that moment Miss Annerly came up the companionway. I saw her look toward Tutherly, and then, as if faint, seize the man-rope for support. Her face grew white even in the rosy light of the dawn, and an unmistakable expression of fear leaped into her eyes. All this in a twinkling, and while the gentleman was turning his gaze in her direction. The next instant she was advancing, with composed face and outstretched hand, and saying,—

"Good morning, Mr. Tutherly. 'This is another unexpected meeting."

"Just came aboard," said he, holding her hand a moment, and surveying her in frank admiration. "Beautiful morning, isn't it?"

“Charming,” said she, shading her eyes and looking adown the crimson wake of the *Ben Bolt*. “I haven’t missed a sunrise for six days.”

At this point I walked away and plied the man at the wheel for an explanation of Tutherly’s presence on the bark; but all the helmsman could say was that the stranger had come sauntering aft some few minutes before I had made my appearance. I went forward, but the lookout had not even seen Tutherly. Taken flat aback, I returned aft and went below. As I passed Miss Annerly and Tutherly the former excused herself on pretense of securing a wrap, and followed me into the cabin. With a glance at the door to the captain’s room, and in a voice that trembled a bit with excitement, —

“Dick,” said she, “how came that man aboard this vessel?”

“If you do not know, I am sure I cannot tell,” said I, with a kind of foolish resentment. “You appeared to be well in his acquaintance, and accepted his presence on the bark as a matter of course. I never saw the man but once before, at Russell, on the day we left it.”

And thereupon I told her of my encounter with Tutherly, of the questions he had put to me, and of the fragment of speech that I had overheard between him and the captain.

Miss Annerly listened without interruption, and when I had done she went into her stateroom, secured the wrap for which she had ostensibly come, and walked slowly out of the cabin.

All that day my head was in a whirl. Miss Annerly’s fear of Tutherly was none the less plain to me despite the gayety with which she veiled her real feelings. And her words of our first meeting, “For this voyage, then, come what may, I shall feel that I have a protector,” rang incessantly in my mind’s ears.

Captain Mayhew’s bearing towards Tutherly rather widened than narrowed my field of fancy. I was forward at the time of their second meeting, and lost the opportunity of enjoying the skipper’s astonishment when he clapped eyes on the bark’s new passenger; but shortly after the captain came up from the cabin I noted the two men under the lee of the tryworks, in earnest conversation. The captain appeared to be laying down the law, emphasizing his remarks with sundry thumps upon the rail;

while the other, his hands in his pockets and his chin in the air, listened with a provoking smile and an occasional interruption. What passed between them I could only surmise, but the upshot of the lengthy colloquy was that Tutherly took a seat at the breakfast table with us, and "ate a good deal for an astral body," as Miss Annerly declared laughingly; a remark that puzzled me not a little.

During the day the captain paid no further attention to Tutherly, except to sedulously shun him; nor did I pass more time aft than was necessary. I could not bear to see Evelyth smiling into Tutherly's face when I felt that distrust and dislike were in her heart; and I should have picked a quarrel with the fellow if I could have found a decent excuse.

At noon the log showed a run for the twenty-four hours of 220 miles, and I calculated that if the wind held we should be in Sydney harbor the next morning, several hours before sunrise. At nightfall the wind was in the same point, north by east, and rising fast.

After supper I sought my bunk in the steerage, to which I had removed my dunnage that Miss Annerly might have the third room in the cabin. As I lay sleepless for an hour or more, my mind busy with the day's doings, fancy wove the romance of a beautiful girl, and a lover waiting at Sydney; of an unconsenting family, and an emissary of parental opposition,—perhaps a rival suitor,—who had dropped, as from the clouds, upon the deck of a bark in mid-ocean; and of a foolish lad that loved the maid in secret, who gave his worship freely, and with no hope of reward.

I was awakened by a tremendous uproar above deck, the rush of many feet, and the shouts and curses of men in conflict. "Mutiny" said I as I tumbled into my clothes; then came the thought that Evelyth was in danger, and I sprang for the ladder.

When I reached the deck the din had subsided, except for a violent thumping in the direction of the fore-castle. The bark was swinging off, and men were at the braces. Dark forms were skurrying hither and thither in the light of an uncertain moon, and a landsman's eye would have seen only a hopeless disorder. But there was method in the mischief that was plainly afoot.

I started aft, but had gone scarcely a dozen feet when a hand was laid upon my arm, and a sharp voice demanded, "Here, what are you skulking around for? Lay for'ard and man the" —

I knocked the fellow down with a swinging blow, and continued aft on the run, with his curses in my ears. As I approached the cabin another man sprang at me from beside the wheel; but I dove under his arm, and fairly leaped down the companionway.

When I flung into the cabin Captain Mayhew was struggling with Tutherly, who had the skipper's arms in a grip that must have been like steel. Miss Annerly stood by the table, watching the altercation with an expression that was half fear and half defiance. Her hands were clenched and her lips compressed, and her eyes flashed back the rays of the lamp that swung above her head. Before I could interfere Tutherly had forced the skipper into a chair.

"Sit there, Captain Mayhew," said he, "while I talk with you."

"You damned pirate!" roared the captain; "what in Sam Hill do you mean?"

"I mean," replied Tutherly, stepping to the cabin door and sliding it to with a crash, "that the *Ben Bolt* shall not reach Sydney to-morrow, the 30th of December!"

"Ah!"

The single syllable from Miss Annerly's lips broke a silence that had abruptly succeeded the uproar within and without the cabin. The only sounds now from above were the measured tread of the officer of the deck (whoever he might be), the rattling of the blocks and spars and the thundering of the sails.

The air of the cabin was heavy with cigarette smoke, and the table was littered with ashes and half-filled whiskey glasses. The captain had plainly been drinking deeply; and what with the spirits and his natural high temper, he now looked ugly enough to do murder, as he sat with set teeth and dilated nostrils, and his fingers gripped about the arms of his chair. Miss Annerly had thrown herself back in her chair, and with her hands clasped behind her head, was gazing steadily at Tutherly from behind half-dropped eyelids. And as I looked upon her face a great lump came into my throat, and a darkness before my eyes.

Tutherly stood in the middle of the cabin, in his favorite attitude, hands in coat pockets, his blue eyes snapping with an exultation not apparent in the quiet speech that he now addressed to the skipper.

"Captain Mayhew," said he, "at Russell I made you two propositions, which you declined to consider, on the ground that you had passed your word with Miss Annerly to place her in Sydney within seven days, if it lay in the *Ben Bolt* to turn the trick. I did not press you, because I doubted your ability to make your promise good. But the bark is fast, Captain Mayhew, — remarkably fast."

"Well, what's your game?" growled the skipper hoarsely.

"The honor of an English family!" was the ringing reply. "A pretty game, is it not, captain? And just at present I hold the winning cards. The *Ben Bolt* is in charge of my men, and with Sydney light astern, is speeding on the back track as fast as wind can send her."

"You infernal villain!" began the captain, starting from his chair as if it had been strewn with nettles. He swayed a moment unsteadily on his feet, glaring at Tutherly, who moved not a muscle, and then dropped back into his chair, with a growl that lost itself in his throat.

A grim smile settled about Tutherly's mouth. He lighted his eternal cigarette and threw himself into a seat by the table.

"An American, like yourself, Captain, I regret that circumstances left me no other course than I have taken," said he. "The game was in my hands when you and your bark blundered into Russell and upset my calculations. As it is, I have delayed action until the eleventh hour; and for the act of piracy, as it may seem in your eyes, I am ready to offer you any satisfaction that you may in reason demand."

"I don't want any of your damned sentiment," returned the captain. "All I want you to do is make good what I have probably lost by the failure of my contract with this lady, and get off my bark as soon as the Lord 'll let ye."

"The first I shall be happy to do immediately, and the second at sunrise," said Tutherly. He took a check book from his pocket, and picked up a pen with a laconic —

"How much?"

"Five hundred dollars," said the captain.

"Cheap enough," rejoined Tutherly, writing. "There you are, Captain," said he, tearing off the check. "If you go to Sydney you will receive a case of excellent brandy, which I wish you would accept with my compliments. Never mind the sentiment in the case, although it is as honest as the liquor. And now, Miss Annerly, as you choose to call yourself, suppose that you and I proceed to terms."

The young lady laughed — a low, unpleasant laugh, but there was not a ripple on the current of her speech. "It pleases you, sir," said she, "to talk as you act, in riddles."

Tutherly blew a cloud of smoke at the deadlight over his head. "Then," said he, "I'll be plain as daylight. As you cannot reach Sydney by the 30th of December, your opportunity for mischief is gone, and the value of the papers in your possession is necessarily much depreciated. There must not, however, be annoyance in the future, and to that end I am authorized to offer you, in exchange for the documents, a sum of money that I should advise you to accept." He paused, and again dipped his pen.

"May I inquire, Mr. Tutherly, as you choose to call yourself," said Miss Annerly pleasantly, "by what right you, an American, have thrust yourself into this affair?"

"The right of a friend of the family," replied Tutherly. "Frankly," he went on, writing in his check book, "were the case my own, I should not pay a penny. However" — He pushed the slip of paper across the table. "There," said he, "is a check on the Bank of Sydney for five thousand pounds."

Miss Annerly picked up the bit of paper, glanced carelessly at it, and curled it around one finger in a moment of meditation. Then she took from her bosom a packet of yellowing letters, and tossed it upon the table. And as Tutherly took the packet, and untied the ribbon that bound it, she leaned her elbows upon the table, with her chin in her hands, and watched him with a smile that hid I know not what storm of emotions in her breast.

At this point Captain Mayhew rose abruptly and stumbled to his room. I was restrained from following his example by a foolish desire to witness the complete demolition of the altar at which

I had worshiped, and so I sat looking dully on, while the ashes of my first romance settled about me.

The inspection of the letters appeared to be satisfactory, for Tutherly retied the packet, placed it in his breast pocket, and buttoned his coat across it.

"I presume, Mr. Tutherly," said Miss Annerly, drumming on the table, "that I am indebted to your fertility of invention for the series of accidents and other delays that have attended my journey from England, including my remarkable casting away at Russell?"

Tutherly's eyes twinkled, and the corners of his mouth twitched. "Mr. Tutherly, you are a very clever man."

"Thank you," said he. "You are the cleverest woman I ever knew."

"Are you quite sure that you know me?" she asked, with the same inscrutable smile.

"I had a friend that did," he replied drily. "Perhaps you remember him — Ned Carrington?"

"Poor Ned!" murmured Miss Annerly dreamily. "But he was *such* a fool." She rose and crossed to her stateroom. "I trust, Mr. Tutherly," said she, looking back, "that I have seen the last of you?"

"I do desire we may be better strangers," he retorted, and the door closed upon her.

"Gad, what a woman!" muttered Tutherly, tossing away his cigarette and pouring out a glass of liquor. "Mr. Proctor," — as if he had just noticed my presence in the cabin, — "will you join me?"

I declined shortly and went on deck. I needed a breath of fresh air, and there was a plenty of it abroad. The wind had risen to half a gale, and the bark, close hauled, was driving east by north, with her lee chains buried in the smother. Heavy banks of rack were sweeping across the high-riding moon, and astern on the horizon a single light gleamed as a planet. It was the great light at Sydney.

I made my way to my bunk, but sleep would not come to me. My mind ran on the exciting incidents of the night, and I wondered what tragic drama of human passions lay back of the little

comedy played in the cabin of the *Ben Bolt*. All that I had witnessed made but one scene in the play; and so far as I was concerned, the curtain had doubtless dropped forever.

In response to the call, "All hands on deck!" I turned out in the gray of the morning. The sea had gone down, and the wind had dwindled to a three-knot breeze. The crew were standing about in the waist, awaiting orders, and Tutherly and his men — a round dozen of them — were grouped at the wheel, which was in the hands of one of their number. As I went aft Tutherly was rolling up a flag with which he had been signaling astern, and was turning to the crew.

"Lay aft, some of you chaps," he called, "and haul the main-sail up. Man the weather main brace. Let go your lee brace. Put your wheel down, Roberts."

The *Ben Bolt* lay hove to, and then an explanation of Tutherly's signals presented itself. Approaching the bark I saw the strangest craft that I had ever clapped eyes upon. She was about seventy feet long, shaped like a fat cigar, and was running with her deck just awash; but no smoke came from the funnel that rose some two feet above the waves. As this huge steel fish drew near it rose gradually to the surface; a scuttle swung up, as it seemed, automatically, and a man's head and shoulders pushed into view. At a signal from Tutherly the stranger shot under our lee quarter, and was made fast by the man addressed as Roberts.

Captain Mayhew came up from the cabin in time to see Tutherly follow the last of his men over the side. One by one they dropped out of sight, and the scuttle descended slowly as the submarine craft drifted away from the bark.

A moment later, as if to give a theatric touch to the departure, she dove beneath the waves, and the huge fin at her stern flashed back the first rays of the rising sun.

