



*Author of "Private Harris," "A-Roving," "Irish," "Oil at San Nicolas," etc.*

“**M**UST have been a bit of a shock to you,” I said. “Wasn’t it?”  
Mr. Harrington looked at me sideways thoughtfully.

“A shock! I suppose it was, though I never think of it that way. Not so much shock as surprise. There’s a difference if you care to study it out. But what you were sayin’ just now about the pawn-shop an’ the man who pawned what wasn’t his put me in mind of what happened to me once, an’ that, takin’ things all in all, was the biggest surprise I ever had in my life. Would you like to hear it? It’s early yet, an’—”

He raised his eyebrows.

“You would! All right, then. I’ll tell it. But I warn you, son, you may listen, but you won’t believe. I’ve not told this more than three times—I gave it up, not wishin’ to be

called a liar without cause. Yet the story’s true—as true as Gospel!

“It starts on Bute Street, Cardiff, down near the docks, an’ it goes to Naples, Sulina, Port Said, Hong-Kong, Nagasaki an’ Newcastle, New South Wales, till it reaches Batavia, or thereabouts, an’ finally it ends in a small back-room in Liverpool. An’ that’s the cause of it, hangin’ there over the bureau—the little copper ship!”

And Mr. Harrington nodded toward the small tablet of polished oak, on which was a sheet of thin copper embossed with the representation of a tramp steamer, broadside on.

“That!” I said. “How?”

“Ever examined it careful?” he asked. Rising to his feet he unhooked the tablet, and gave it into my hands, “Read, out what it says.”

And I obeyed, somewhat bewildered,  
 “S. S. *Arabella*, sunk in collision in the English Channel with the loss of the captain and first officer, who went down gallantly with their ship.”

“Yes,” said Mr. Harrington cutting me short, “that’s it, with the date, an’ the initials of the man who made it. Briggs his name was, carpenter on the *Arabella*, my first voyage.”

“Was he with you when you were wrecked?”

Mr. Harrington laughed a trifle scornfully.

“Was he? Would he have put that inscription on if he had? Of course not! No, I met him about a year after—he’d a shore job then—an’ he showed me the ship an’ I bought it. Good work, isn’t it?”

“Yes,” I said, “it is.”

“Ought to be screwed into the wall,” said Mr. Harrington, “but I’m too lazy. Also a nail does as well, an’ it’s easier to take down in a hurry. I fixed it on firm once with four screws; some one unfixed it, an’ that’s why it’s here in my berth on the *Umballa*. You don’t understand that about takin’ it down in a hurry, do you? Well, listen, an’ you’ll hear:

FUNNY how one thing leads to another other, isn’t it? If it hadn’t been for me droppin’ my watch down through the engine-room gratin’s on to the platform aboard the *Narcissus* an’ breakin’ it beyond all hope of repair, I wouldn’t be tellin’ you this: But that’s how I came to be lookin’ into a pawnbroker’s window on Bute Street, Cardiff, one afternoon soon after the *Narcissus* got into port from the Mediterranean.

By rights, o’ course, I should ha’ gone uptown to Queen Street or Duke Street, to one of them big jewelers, but I didn’t. What’s the good? If you keep your eyes open an’ look around, like as not you can pick something up cheap an’ save money. ’Sides a watch is a watch even if some one else has owned it. It’s

as good for tellin’ the time by, isn’t it?

An’ so one afternoon I left the *Narcissus* an’ walked up Bute Street in search of a watch. I may say now that I never found one, not that day at least. But I found something else, something I never expected to find in this world or the next, something I shouldn’t have set eyes on.

It was the third or fourth place I’d Stopped at, an’ I was wonderin’ whether to step in an’ buy without any more fuss or not, when all of a sudden my heart seemed to stop beatin’ an’ the blood in my veins ran cold as ice an’ I could scarcely breathe. An’ why? There, right hi front of me, between a small ivory image of Gautama, cross-legged in a boat, an’ an old-fashioned flintlock pistol, was that little copper ship, the *Arabella*. The very same, in a pawnbroker’s window on Bute Street, Cardiff.

For a while I didn’t move. I just stood an’ stared, with my brain whirlin’ ’round an’ ’round, not able to think, or anything. For why? I’ll explain in a minute.

I’d made a mistake, o’ course—it was one exactly sim’lar, but not the same. It couldn’t be.

I opened the door of the shop an’ went in. A little man with a big nose an’ a gray beard smiles at me over the counter, rubbin’ his hands like a Sheeney all the world over.

“Good afternoon,” says he, “an’ what can I do for you?”

“Good afternoon,” says I very polite.

“I’m not buyin’” I says, just to be plain for once, “but I saw a piece of wood in the window with a copper ship on it that’s the livin’ spit of one that I have at home. Might I have a glance at it?”

Might I? Might I look at any mortal thing in the show I wanted to? Why, of course. He came ’round the counter an’ undid the back of the window.

“The ship,” said he, “certainly.”

An’ a moment later I was turnin’ it

'round an' 'roundl in my hands, starin' stupidlike at my own initials scratched on the back—see, son; look at them—T. H. to T. C., an' I knew then that it was mine, the one I had owned an' given to Tommy Clarkson of the *Banshee*, an' which ought to be at the bottom of Flores Sea, in Lord only knows how many fathoms deep. An' yet there it was in that pawnbroker's!

An' then I saw the little man lookin' at me with his head on one side like a sparrow.

“Well,” says he, “what 'ull you give for it?”

“Me!” I says. “I'm not buyin', I told you, didn't I?”

“Did you?” he says. “I'll let you have it for two pounds.”

I bought it for twenty-five shillings, which was about twenty more than he'd given himself.

“You were on board the *Arabella* yourself, weren't you?” he says. “I knew some one who'd sailed on the ship would come in an' buy it. I knew all along.” Pleased he was, an' he'd reason to be, too.

An' so the little copper *Arabella* was mine once more, after I'd never thought to see it again. But why wasn't it sunk with the ship? The *Banshee* had gone down with all hands twelve months before an' yet there was the oak tablet with the copper plate which I'd screwed into the wall of Tommy Clarkson's room the very day that they left.

When a steel ship sinks in a typhoon there's maybe a few odds an' ends that 'ull float. That stands to reason, don't it? But whatever it is that floats, it's not goin' to be a piece of oak that's been fixed on to the wall of the second mate's room, with a screw-driver an' four screws. Is it?

Well, then, what happened? That's what I couldn't tell. But I knew this—some one had unscrewed it an' taken it off the ship. Which again is not done if the ship's sinkin' an' it's all hands to the boats.

What's more, knowin' Tommy Clarkson over an' above well, I was certain he'd not taken it off himself. Why should he? An' why the pawnbroker's in Cardiff when the *Banshee* had left Penarth, bound for Port Said an' the China Coast?

“Mister,” says I, leanin' over the counter, “will you do me a favor?”

Says the pawnbroker, “What is it?”

“Where did you get this?” I says.

“What d'you want to know for?” says he kind of suspicious.

“No harm to you,” I says, “but I must find out who sold it or pawned it, an' when.”

“Must!” says he.

“Yes,” says I very quiet. “Come, now,” I says, “what's the use of beatin' around? I'll know sooner or later. Why not now? You wouldn't like me to get angry,” I says, “an' hurt some one, would you?”

He looks scared.

“Meanin' me?” he says. “None of that, or I'll call the police.”

“Right,” says I, “an' welcome—but before they're here, an' one man wouldn't be no good, I'd have this place of yours wrecked; I'd have pretty well killed you an' the boy, an' you'd get such a name on the dock-side you'd be sorry you ever was born.

“Which 'ull it be?” I says. “Trouble, or just a few civil questions answered? An' now, how did you get that little copper ship?”

Son, there's nothin' to equal tact in settlin' an argument—nothin' at all.

He told me all right. He had to. He'd bought it a matter of two weeks previous.

“It wasn't pawned then?” I says.

“No,” says he, “or it wouldn't have been in the window.”

“Who sold it?”

He shrugged his shoulders.

“Sellin's diff'rent from pawnin',” he says. “I've no record.”

“Can't you remember what he was like?” I says.

“Remember!” says he. “It’s not likely I’ll forget. He was drunk an’—” here he gives me a scowl—“nasty an’ inclined to make trouble. He’d red hair, an’ a squint, one eye looked one way an’ the other the other, an’ on his right hand the little finger was missin’.”

“Do you know what he was?” says I.

“Sailor or fireman,” says he, “an’ he told me he’d sailed on the *Arabella* himself.”

“I’m much obliged,” says I very polite. “An’ when next I’m passin’ I’ll drop in an’ ask if you’ve seen him again.” An’ with that I walked out of the shop. Well, son, the rest was simple. All I need do was to find the man with the red hair an’ the squint an’ the missin’ finger—a fireman or a deck-hand on a tramp, probably, an’ by this time half-way to the Mediterranean or South America. Nothin’ easier than to lay hands on him, of course. Also, to help things along, the *Narcissus* I was due to leave port in less than a week. Easy! It was pretty nigh hopeless. Or I thought so, then. But nothin’s hopeless really—not if you have any luck.

An’ as it turned out, I had all the luck that was goin’. In two days I learned what I wanted to know.

It come about through meetin’ a friend I’d not seen for a year or more—Charley Williams, who’d been chief engineer on the *Mysore*—just back from Calcutta, an’ glad to be home. He’d another man with him, stout little chap called Bradley, mate of one of the Blue Circle boats, outward bound the next mornin’. We’d a few drinks together, the three of us, an’ then I says kind of casual—

“Either of you two ever met a deck-hand or fireman with red hair an’ a squint an’ a finger missin’ from his right hand?”

“No,” says Williams, “I’ve not.”

“I have, though,” says Bradley rather surprised. “From the description, that’s a deck-hand who once sailed with me—Martin his name is—one of the biggest toughs that ever left Tiger Bay with his half-month’s

advance gone in beer. Red Martin he’s known as,” he says, “because of his hair. A bad man, as bad as they make ’em. What are you lookin’ for him for?” says he very curious.

An’ that was a question I couldn’t answer—not truthfully, anyhow.

“Oh! I’m not lookin’,” says I. “I heard a story about him a few days ago, that’s all. Seen him lately?” I says offhand.

“No,” says Bradley, full of himself once more. “An’ don’t want to again, ever. Last time we met—at Liverpool, the day we paid off the hands—he wanted to kill me. He would have, too, if I’d given him half a chance. Only I didn’t. You can see the scar on his chin now, where I hit him. I’d a belayin’-pin handy, in case—not wishin’ to take any risks.

Ah’ from one thing an’ another I felt certain that it was Red Martin who’d blown into Cardiff carryin’ the little ship that I’d fixed on to the wall of Tommy Clarkson’s berth.

WELL, not bein’ a born fool I didn’t waste any time in theorizin’. I’d have to make haste I knew, an’ the question troublin’ me was: Had Red Martin signed on again an’ gone to sea, or was he in Cardiff still?

As a matter of fact he’d gone. That I discovered early the next mornin’ when I was wonderin’ what to do next—whether to pay a round of visits to every bar an’ sailors’ boardin’-house in the city or what. Instead of havin’ to decide for myself, though, I run across one of the hands, a Cockney that we’d had on the last voyage. “Hullo!” says I. “Hullo, George!” I says, an’ he knowin’ I’d no reason to like him for things that had happened, sheers off with his elbow crooked.

“I’m not troublin’ you, Mr. Harrington,” he says. “Why don’t you leave me alone?”

The picture of misery he was—like he’d been sleepin’ all night in the gutter an’

fightin' mad tom-cats into the bargain.

"Broke?" says I, grinnin'.

"Broke!" says he. "Yes, I am," he says.

"Some swine went through my pockets when I was sleepin' an' took every penny I had."

He seemed kind of nervous, and I didn't wonder.

"I'm feelin' queer," he says, "but——"

I knew what was comin' all right.

"Of course!" I says. "The usual thing, George, isn't it? Like at Odessa an' New Orleans an' Pensacola. I'm not surprised," says I. "You had money stolen in all them places, didn't you? Look here," I says, "have you heard of a man called Martin—Red Martin?"

He gives me a quick look, not quite satisfied like, out of the corners of his eyes.

"Red Martin," he says. "Why, yes, Mr. Harrington, I've heard of Red. I sailed with him five years ago out of Middlesboro' for the Black Sea. Once, an' once only."

"Not sailed with him since, have you?" I says.

"Never saw him till last Tuesday, week," he says.

I could almost have hugged him.

"What!" says I. "Where is he then?"

"Where? Not in Cardiff," says George. "He signed on for the *White Eagle* an' sailed for the Mediterranean four days ago. He told me so himself."

"Oh, Lord!" says I. "Then I've missed him."

"What d'you want him for?" says George, suspicious all of a sudden.

"Me!" says I. "I want to give him some money same as I'm givin' you. You've told me something I wanted to know," I says, an' then I pulled out a couple of bob an' told him to go try an' straighten himself up on it.

An' grateful! Gratitude's no word for it.

"Mr. Harrington," he says. "There's just one thing. Steer clear of Red, unless

you're searchin' for trouble. He's no good! I knew him five years ago, an' unless I'm greatly mistaken he ain't changed.

"For somehow," he says, "I don't believe that about wantin' to give him money. There's something wrong, ain't there? All right then," says he, "you be careful in handlin' Red Martin, else you'll be sorry. An' when he's in Cardiff you'll find him at Limehouse Larry's boardin'-house."

So that was a little more to go on, wasn't it? But not much. It gave me a chance, though, to do the silliest thing I ever did in my life. An' that's sayin' a good deal.

I knew where I could lay hands on Red Martin at least, for the *White Eagle* was bound for Naples with coal. What must I do then that very night but sit down an' write to the man I was after. Now, has any man ever done anything more —— foolish than that? But I was young in those days an' didn't know any better. An' what was it I put in the letter? It makes me feel kind of ashamed of myself even now to remember it.

I wrote, actually wrote to Red Martin, in cold blood, an' what's more I was sober, sayin' I'd like to meet him when next he was home. I was tryin' to find out what had become of the *Banshee* an' her crew, an' something had come to my ears that made me think perhaps he could help me. This was what I put in the letter an' sent off to Naples after him.

Did I get any answer? I did not. Not a word. An' what happened then? This—I'll tell you:

The *Narcissus* sailed for Constantinople a couple of days later with coal, an' after foolin' around there for orders we were sent up the Black Sea for Sulina to load grain for home. First thing we arrived, what did I see but the *White Eagle* nearly down to her Plimsoll mark an' ready for sea. Me! I nearly went off into a fit. They'd come to the same port as us, an' I'd be able to lay

hands on the man I was after.

Soon as ever we made fast I got leave from the chief—or maybe I didn't; it's immaterial, anyway—an' tramped back along the bank of the river to where the *White Eagle* was moored. I went aboard an' found the second mate in his berth.

Says I after I'd explained who I was:

"I'm lookin' for one of your deck-hands. There's some information he has that I'm after."

"An' the name?" says he, producin' the bottle out of his bureau. "Who is it you want?"

Son, I defy you to help admirin' the Scotch for two reasons: their hospitality's one, an' the other's the way they believe in supportin' their country's products.

"The name!" says I. "It's Martin. Red Martin he's known as, an' I'd like to speak to him."

With that the second mate of the *White Eagle* puts down his glass.

"Martin," says he, an' a curious look comes into his face. "Red Martin! Losh, mon, do ye no' ken the mon has desairted?"

"He has!" says I, struck all of a heap. "Deserted!"

"Aye," says the Scotchman. "Desairted. The queerest thing you could hear of. At Naples, two days before we were sailin' for this place."

"Any reason?" says I.

He shrugged his shoulders.

"If it was no' the letter, it was something we didn't know of."

"The letter!" says I, feelin' all cold in my innards.

"Aye," says he. "A letter. I was on deck when he read it, an' I seen the fear o' death in his eyes. That night he went off ashore after tea an' he never came back. It was the letter, of course, but what it had in it was more than the wit of man to discover. Trouble of some sort, at least."

An' that was all I could get from the second mate of the *White Eagle* save an' exceptin' a couple of glasses of Scotch whisky. I walked back to the *Narcissus* knowin' I'd thrown away all hope of findin' Red Martin easy, an' I could have kicked myself every foot of the way to Galatz an' back, just for bein' a fool. But why had he deserted? That's what I couldn't get at? What was the cause of it? There was some part of my letter that scared him, of course. An' which. The part about the *Banshee*, prob'ly. Then why?

I tell you, son, I was growin' more an' more puzzled an' worried. Red Martin knew maybe more than I ever dreamed, an' he was scared of his life. The very thought that some one might guess had drove him away from his ship, so it must have been bad.

Well, I'd lost my chance, through my own foolishness, no other word; but if Red Martin was still alive I'd find him. An' I did—nearly two years after I first bought the little ship from the pawnbroker on Bute Street.

I'D BEEN in Lord knows how many ports in that two years—Constantinople, Sulina, Algiers, Cardiff, Shields, New York, Portland, Maine, Rio, B. A., Belfast an' Antwerp, to name only a few—an' in every one of 'em I'd spent hours huntin' Red Martin. But I'd learned wisdom an' tact by this time.

I didn't talk more than was needed; I'd drop a few hints now an' again an' that's all. Such as:

"Did you ever meet a man, deck-hand, with red hair an' a squint an' the little finger of his right hand missin'? No good, that man," I'd say. "Bad reputation. Red Martin they call him," an' so on.

An' sometimes I'd find some one who'd heard of him or seen him or fought him. But I couldn't, not for the life of me, get hold of a clue that 'ud be any good.

He didn't seem to have gone to sea

since the day he'd cleared out of his ship at Naples. He'd vanished. An' at last I began to lose heart—he was dead an' I'd never know how the ship that I'd given to Tommy Clarkson had come to be in the pawnbroker's window in Bute Street. What I couldn't get over was that the *Banshee* had been sunk fathoms deep in a typhoon, yet this little ship that we're lookin' at now, an' which had been fastened tight on to the wall of the second's room, had been saved.

How had it reached home when all hands were dead? Son, my head used to ache with the problem. Yet there must be some explanation, I knew. An' I'd get it; I swore to.

An' then one day in early Spring the *Narcissus* reached Cardiff once more, an' for the first time I thought that I'd do what George, the Cockney trimmer, had said, an' ask for Red Martin at Limehouse Larry's. I'd no hope, of course, not the slightest.

It was the kind of boardin'-house I'd expected—only a little worse—dirty an' dark an' small; just the very place that a sailor or fireman 'ud choose as a change from on board ship.

Limehouse Larry, a heavy-built man with a flat nose an' small eyes, was at the door in his shirt-sleeves, readin' a paper. I didn't waste any tune in beatin' around. I just told him at once what I was after.

"Red Martin!" says he. "No, mister, he ain't been here for—why, it's pretty nigh two years now since we seen Red in Cardiff. An' you want him, eh?"

"Yes," says I. "I do," An' I says to myself, "That's all the reason you'll get out of me, my fat-bellied crimper."

But for some cause or other Limehouse Larry was inclined to be friendly. Also he wasn't sure of his ground. It don't do for a boardin'-house master even in these mild an' milky days to get in wrong with strangers, an' civility costs no money. He turns an' speaks over his shoulder to some one indoors.

"Any of you fellers run across Red Martin lately?" he says. "Rat, have you?"

Some one says: "Who the —— wants Red Martin?" an' a man comes to the door. "Police?" says he, a mean, low-down, pasty-faced little dock-rat.

"That's my business," says I.

"Well," says he, "maybe you are an' maybe you ain't. Personally," he says, "I hope that you are, an' I hope that you find him. If," says the Rat, "he gets twenty years it 'ull be no more than he deserves."

"You don't like him?" says I.

He laughs.

"Like him! Mister," says he, "if hate 'ud kill, Red Martin 'ud be dead four years ago. A sneakin', thievin' hound, that's what he is. Look at this," says the Rat, showin' me a mark under his ear.

"His work," he says. "I owe him something for that, an' I'll pay him. He did that with a boot when he was drunk."

But from the looks of the man who was speakin' I felt that Red Martin would have done some good in the world if he'd only finished his work an' saved the hangman a job later on.

"I don't suppose you know where I can lay hands on him, do you?" I says.

"Do I?" says the Rat. "Don't I?" He grins like he was pleased at doin' some one a bad turn. "How much is it worth?"

"A dollar," says I pretty sharp. "Not a penny more."

"Right," says he. "Let's see the money."

I took out two shillings an' a florin.

"Yours if you tell me."

"Well," says he, "I only heard yesterday. He's in Liverpool an' sick. A feller I know told me an' he got it from a girl that he met there.

"I don't know the address," says the Rat with a grin, "but if you find Nellie Seymour, you'll be able to find Red Martin,

an' that ought to be easy. For there ain't many people on Pitt Street an' thereabouts who've not heard of Nellie Seymour."

"Now," says I, "I'll give you your money same as I promised I would. But," says I, "I think you're the meanest, dirtiest little coward that ever breathed. You got it into your head Red Martin was wanted by the police, didn't you? So you sold him for four bob! Well, you're wrong, I'm not from the police; it's a private an' personal matter between him an' me.

"An'," says I, throwin' the money into the gutter, "if ever you find yourself in the same ship as me, you pray, an' pray hard, for you'll know what hell is before your time."

I went back to Bute Street, feelin' more satisfied with myself than I'd done for ages.

Well, I made up my mind what to do. I'd ten days to myself before the *Narcissus* was ready for sea, an' that evenin' I left for the north, just on the hope of findin' Red Martin, the man who'd sold the little ship I'd given to Tommy Clarkson of the *Banshee*.

I suppose there's no part of the world where I'm better acquainted than Liverpool—barrin' the Tyne an' Cardiff, of course. Havin' friends is always a help anywhere; any old kind of friends, too.

Do you know Pitt Street, Paradise Street, Park Lane an' Hanover Street, an' all that part? No? Well, you're lucky. You don't want to. A police-sergeant who was by way of bein' a pal of mine—I'd done him a service once an' saved him his stripes; some day I'll tell you how—gave me a hint what to do. The rest was simple.

IT WAS about dusk, cold an' wet, an' the lamps just bein' lit when I found her. The girl, I mean.

Small built she was, an' thin, pale but for the two little splashes of color in each of her cheeks, sharp-faced, dark-haired an'

untidy, an' dressed in a big coat an' a big black hat with a feather like a London coster girl. I sized her up at a glance, everything.

"Beg pardon!" I says, "aren't you Miss Seymour? Nellie Seymour?"

She gives me a quick look, uncertain kind of an' serious, an' I seen then that she wasn't as young as I'd thought. She puts on a smile, same as they all do.

"Why, yes," she says. "An' now, where did I meet you? I know you, of course, so well, but I can't just remember the name."

I shook my head.

"No," says I, "you've not met me before. It's not that. Listen," I says. "I want you to help me. I mean no harm, none in the world, but I must see Red Martin tonight."

That frightened her an' she dropped all pretense.

"What for?" she says. "What do you want?"

"Just what I said," says I. "I want you to help me, an' I think that I can help you."

She tilted her chin in the air.

"Is it charity?" she says. "Keep it! We're not beggars," she says. "If we need money, we earn it."

An' her face would have been white but for the two splashes of pink in her cheeks an' her lips.

"It's not charity," says I, "an' I'm not pryin' into what doesn't concern me. But," says I, "you'll be doin' both Red an' me a service if you let me see him. He can tell me something I want to know, an' that is the whole truth of the matter."

She thought for a minute, studyin' me careful, up an' down, from my head to my feet.

"He's sick," she says. "Awful." "

She stopped again an' I didn't speak.

"Well," she says, "I'll trust you. An' why not? He's done no wrong, Red hasn't. We're not afraid, neither of us."

She turned an' made off.

“Come,” she says, “I’ll take you to him..”

They lived at the top of a wretched old house let out to lodgers—high rent, bad quarters an’ no questions asked—up four flights of stairs with the bannisters broken. “This is it,” she says, an’ opened a door while I waited outside.

“Red,” she says, “here’s a gentleman come to speak to you.”

“Who is it?” says a man’s voice. “Come in, whoever you are, an’ shut the door.”

I stepped into the room just as the girl puts a match to the gas-jet.

In a bed in a corner was the man I was after. He’d a shock of red hair, an’ one eye was set wrong in his head, sideways, kind of, an’ there right on the point of the jaw was the scar that I’d heard of. A big man he was, broad an’ strong, but as weak as a child, just able to lift his head from the pillow an’ no more.

His face—an’ it weren’t a bad face, what-ever they’d said, strong an’ yet weak, that’s all—his face had no blood in it, an’ his cheeks were hollow; an’ every now an’ again he’d go off in a fit of coughin’ that ’ud give you the horrors to listen to, let alone have. He was pretty far gone by the look of him, wastin’ away, kind of.

“How are you feelin’, Red?” says the girl.

“I’m better,” says he with a smile. “Much better!”

I caught sight of his right hand on the quilt an’ saw that the little finger was missin’. She stoops down an’ kisses him.

“Red,” she says, “here’s some one to see you.”

He tried to sit up in bed, but she wouldn’t let him.

“Hush!” she says. “You’ll tire yourself, Red, you’re not to.”

“Do you want to speak to me?” says

he.

“Yes,” says I, “if I may. It’s important,” I says, “an’ I’ve come a long way to find you.”

At that, son, he laughed. Just a thin whisper of a laugh an’ it ended quick in a spell of coughin’.

“I knew,” says he. “I knew the minute I heard. You’ve found me at last.”

The girl puts her hand on his forehead.

“Red,” she says, “what is it? Shall I send him away?”

But he gives her a smile an’ motions to me with his chin.

“The *Banshee*, isn’t it?” he says, an’ I nodded.

“My God!” he says. “My God! I knew it would come some time. It had to.”

For a while we none of us says a word. Then Red Martin looks at the girl.

“Nell,” he says— “Nell, dear, you’d better leave us. Do you mind? There’s something private this gentleman wants to say to me.” An’ she goes out of the room softly.

I sat down by the side of the bed an’ we watched each other like two boxers sparrin’ for an openin’.

“Did I ever meet you before?” says Red suddenly.

“No,” says I. “I’ve heard of you, that’s all. I’ve been tryin’ to find you for two years almost—just to ask you a question.”

“Was it you, then, who wrote to me?” he says.

“To the *While Eagle* at Naples? Yes.”

“Man,” says he, “may you never feel like I felt when I got that letter. An’ it was you, was it? I often wondered if I’d ever know.” An’ then—“Who are you?” he says.

“Me?” says I. “Harrington’s my name an’ I’m second engineer on the *Narcissus*, now at Cardiff.”

He doesn’t say anything, an’ I put my hand into the side pocket of my big coat an’ pulled out the little oak tablet on which was

the copper ship.

“Red,” I says, “have you ever seen this before?”

He kind of choked, an’ there come into his thin face a look of fear an’ misery an’ something I didn’t understand at the time, but did later.

“Great God!” says he. “Was it that then? Was that why you came after me? I wondered—I wondered often. I was mad! mad, of course. But I wanted the money, an’ that was the only way I could get it. Did you know the *Arabella*?”

“I was second aboard of her the voyage she was sunk,” says I.

“An’ me,” he says. “I was a deck-hand three years before.”

“I saw this in a pawnbroker’s window!” says I, “an’ I went in an’ bought it.”

“Because of the ship?” says he. “The *Arabella*?”

“Yes,” says I, “an’ no. Because of the ship, an’ because the little copper picture had been mine in the, first place, bought from the man who made it, an’ given by me to Tommy Clarkson the day the *Banshee* sailed on her last voyage.”

The sick man was lyin’ back on his pillow, starin’ at me with a kind of horror.

“An’ that’s how it was, was it?” he says. “You, of all men! You! But how could I know? How could I tell when I unscrewed that piece of wood what it would lead to? Well, it don’t matter. You saw it, an’ that’s enough. An’ you’ve found me at last, somehow, so you’ll hear how it happened, though I swore solemn I’d never breathe a word as long as I lived.”

That, son, was how I came to hear the story of the *Banshee* an’ Tommy Clarkson, told me by Red Martin—the queerest an’ most unbelievable story you ever heard, an’ such as you wouldn’t hardly think possible even at sea where things happen that couldn’t happen anywhere else. An’ though I’d heard a good

few yarns in my time the one Red Martin told me about the loss of the *Banshee* is queerer than all the rest of them put together.

IN MANY respects the *Banshee* was like the *Umballa*, bigger, that’s all, by a couple of hundred tons—run the same way, of course, on the cheap—undermanned an’ underfied. A long, narrer, ugly old cow of a boat, built on the Tyne, a bad sea-boat, with no give in her, an’ like to roll the funnel out of the fiddley whenever she had the wind on her beam.

An’ roll! She’d roll like a sow in a puddle of mud, just waller, day after day, just for the fun of it. A rough old ship was the *Banshee*, owned in West Hartlepool, an’ you don’t need no more recommendation than that.

Brandypeg Brown was the captain, a quick-tempered, hard-drinkin’ old crab; a slave-driver naturally, or he wouldn’t have had the ship. He’d take the *Banshee* anywhere or do anything, same as a Glasgow second engineer I was shipmates with used to say of the “Black Watch.” But Brandypeg Brown didn’t ask any questions, it was all one to him, pearl-poachin’, runnin’ a blockade in South America, filibusterin’, gun-runnin’—he didn’t care.

Just what the owners asked him to do he’d do it. But they paid him all right. They must have. An’ from what he knew they must have breathed more than one sigh of rejoicin’ when the news come that the *Banshee* had gone down with all hands.

Tommy Clarkson had been out of a billet for six months owin’ to sickness when he went second mate on the *Banshee*. The best he could get, an’ he wanted the money. He was gloomy over it, all the same.

“Why?” says I. “What’s wrong with the *Banshee*? Brandypeg Brown chooses you for his second mate, yet you’re kickin’!” Says I: “Don’t you realize there’s no higher praise you could have than that? For,” says I, “he takes care to pick good men to work under

him. He has to.”

“But even that didn’t bring any comfort to Tommy Clarkson. An’ the mornin’ they sailed I did as I told you, gave him this little copper ship here an’ screwed it into the wall of his berth with four screws.

“There,” says I, “that’s to remind you of the time when you an’ I were shipmates aboard of the *Arabella*.” Which we had been for one voyage. “Take care of it, won’t you?” I says.

“Yes,” says he, “I will. It ’ull stay here on the wall till I leave the ship.”

He was right in that, but not quite the way that he meant. An’ I little thought when I watched the *Banshee* puttin’ out to sea that afternoon that I’d never see him again, neither him, nor the ship, nor anything but this little copper plate with the piece of oak.

Just before Red Martin began I asked him a question. Says I—

“Tell me, were you one of the hands on the *Banshee* ever?”

Though he had said he’d unscrewed the copper ship from the wall, I wasn’t sure if he meant it.

“One of the hands!” says he. “Why, yes!”

“When?” says I. “Not that voyage when——”

An’ I didn’t finish, not knowin’ how.

“Yes,” says he, “that very voyage she was lost.”

“Good God!” says I, sittin’ back in my chair. “Then all hands weren’t drowned after all!”

“Of course not,” says he. “How could you have found the little copper ship if we had ’uv been? There was eight of us got out alive. The others are dead, though God knows that it wasn’t by drownin’ they died.”

An’ then he told me the story, little by little, all disconnected an’ interrupted by coughin’. An’ what a story! Listen, son, an’ I’ll tell it the same as he told me, or as near as

I can.

IT WAS on the voyage home that the trouble broke out, but it had been brewin’ from the day that they left Penarth. Just simmerin’ same as it does always on a ship an’ a voyage like that, until something, gen’rally some little thing, brings things to a head, an’ hell’s loose an’ some one gets hurt. An’ then, maybe, it’s half-mast enterin’ port an’ a line or two in the log, sayin’ on such-an’-such a night in heavy weather, Mr. So-an’-so, the mate or the second, was lost overboard. Can you wonder?

But on the *Banshee* it was worse than that by a —— sight. Can you wonder, with a skipper like Brandypeg Brown an’ a mate with a bad temper an’ a rotten tongue an’ the habit of usin’ his fists whenever he got a chance? An’ from what Red Martin said, it was the mate’s fault from beginnin’ to end.

By the time they’d been two weeks at sea the hands were half-crazy an’ ready for murder. You see, son, he’d chosen the wrong crew. Plug Ferguson, the mate of the *Mysore*, might have carried it through to a finish, but not the man who was mate of the *Banshee*. He’d nothin’ behind the fist—no personality, if that’s the word that I’m gettin’ after. They hated him, but they weren’t afraid.

An’ he talked too much, talked in a way that a deck-hand will never forget, not so long as he lives. That’s what Red Martin told me, just to explain how it started.

It don’t matter much the ports they touched at durin’ the trip, besides I’ve forgotten. All I’m certain about is they went from Penarth to Port Said with coal, an’ then on through the ditch eastward. Heaven knows where! But at one time or another they put in at Hong-Kong an’ Nagasaki an’ Sydney. Finally they got orders to take a cargo of coal from Newcastle, New South Wales to Batavia in Java, where they were to load sugar for the U. K., or the U. S., or the Mediterranean.

“The only wonder to me,” says Red

Martin, "is that the mate wasn't killed weeks sooner'n he was. He carried a gun, though, an' was ready to use it. An' there's few men care to be runnin' the risk of swingin', just for the sake of killin' a thing like that in too great a hurry. So," says Red, "we waited, just waited an' talked. It was comin', of course. A hell-ship if ever there was one. No old wind-jammer bound for 'Frisco round the Horn could have beaten the *Banshee*."

That's what he said, talkin' under his breath an' keepin' one of his eyes fixed on me an' the other lookin' toward the window.

Son, there must have been a curse over the ship from the very first. Nothin' seems to have gone right. An' on top of every thing, after all them months of misery, when they just got past Torres Strait an' into Arafura Sea, something carried adrift in the engine-room.

Many things might have happened, of course. Red Martin, bein' a deck-hand, didn't know much about it, save that they hove to for eight hours an' then went on again at a crawl, a few knots an hour only. The weather was scorchin' hot, like you get it in those parts, moist an' sticky an' steamy. I know; I've been through it. Also the food was bad, rotten, crawlin', an' the cockroaches an' rats swarmed all over the ship, fore an' aft. The old man, Brandypeg Brown, was drinkin' himself to death, an' the mate kept on in the same old way, hazin' the crew, givin' 'em no rest, not even in that heat. What a voyage! I could see it all, just as Red told me, fillin' in all that he left out.

An' then, "Yes," says I, "an' what happened next?"

He clutched at my wrist an' for the rest of the time he was talkin' he held it. "What happened next?" says he.

"Why," he says, "one mornin' one of the trimmers was taken sick. He couldn't get out of his bunk for breakfast an' he died before six bells in the forenoon watch. An' by tea-time two others were sickenin'.

"An' what was it?" I says.

Red looks up into my face kind of scared. "Only the plague," says he. "That's what it was—plague!"

Think of it, son! That ship, the *Banshee*, like they were then, with the plague aboard! An' Red Martin shivered as if he could see the whole miserable business over again.

Within three days five of them died—the bo'sun, the trimmer who'd gone first, a fireman, a deck-hand an' the chief engineer. That left seventeen alive an' able to work. An' where would it end? They didn't know. How could they?

Brandypeg Brown kept on; he wouldn't turn back or put in anywhere. An' what port could they have put into, either? Islands by the hundred, of course: Timor, Wetta, Ombay, Gunong, Pantar, an' Lord only knows how many more. But what good were they? It was either Batavia, the port they were bound for, or else p'raps Samarang.

An' all the time there was Brandypeg drinkin' by himself in the chart-room an' the mate bullyin' the hands, treatin' 'em like they was dirt under his feet. An' they weren't Lascars or Chinks, neither, but white men, British seamen, dyin' of plague.

"Could you blame us?" says Red. "Could you blame us for what happened? He got all he deserved, no more an' no less."

It was a queer story Red Martin told me, lyin' there in his bed an' holdin' my hand. A queer, queer story, but I believed every word of it. I could see the whole thing—that shipload of men in the heat, mad with fear, plague aboard, the captain drunk, the mate—an' maybe he had his troubles same as the rest of 'em. I've wondered often if he weren't hazin' the crew just to make 'em forget, to take their minds off the death that was killin' 'em one by one, an' the bad food, an' that awful, sweatin' heat, an' the sharks followin' after the ship.

What a voyage! A nightmare, eh? Fear drove them. An', son, more often than not it's fear that makes men risk things, not courage, nor anything like it.

THEN one afternoon what had been threatenin' for weeks came. The chief engineer had been buried the night before, with old Brandypeg Brown, almost too drunk to stand, readin' a few words from the burial of the dead at sea, an' each of the men listening wonderin' who'd be the one to go next.

The day after what must the mate do but start off once more on his old game, only worse. Why? God knows! He wasn't drinkin'. Even that excuse couldn't help him. What followed he brought on his own shoulders.

Red told me he'd been tryin' to get some sleep, he an' two of the others, on the fo'c's'le, head under an awnin'. That's how he saw. One of the deck-hands, a big Swede, was chippin' paint on the bridge-deck, an' the mate came down from the bridge an' spoke to him. An' the Swede straightened up an' answered him back.

None of them heard what he said, but the mate drew back a pace an' hit him hard on the jaw an' he went down in a heap on the deck. An' the mate laughed. That was the last sound he uttered.

The Swede 'got to his feet, with the blood all over his mouth, an' staggerin' like he was drunk. Then he seemed to them watchin' to go mad—he laughed also, an' the mate put his hand 'round to his hip-pocket, but it was too late.

The Swede swung his hammer over his shoulder an' brought it down on top of the mate's head. No man could ha' lived after that. The Swede just stared down at the man he had killed, an' all of a sudden threw up his arms an' pitched forward on to the body an' lay there without stirrin', not even-when the fellers who'd seen came down the deck an'

touched him.

"He was dead, too," said Red Martin. "Dead, an' none of us knew what had killed him."

Then one of the firemen, another Squarehead an' a pal of the man who'd been killed, knelt down an' took the mate's revolver out of his pocket.

That, son, was how it began—mutiny. Yes, mutiny on the high seas, on the *Banshee*. It didn't break out at a given signal. It wasn't arranged. Them kind of things aren't, gen'rally. It was fear an' the sight of the dead bodies—that did it. An' the whole time the ship kept on under way, the cranks turnin' an' the man at the wheel—the ord'nary seaman, so Red said—too frightened to move. Queer, that, wasn't it?

An' then Brandypeg Brown opened the door of the chart-room an' stepped out on to the deck an' Red Martin an' the rest of 'em stood in a group an' waited. The old man saw the two dead men, an' he stopped. He didn't speak, not accordin' to Red, but he tried his best to pull out his gun, same as the mate, but bein' stout in the body couldn't. The Squarehead fireman shot him through the chest.

What came next? Red didn't tell me, not in any detail, an' I didn't ask. An outline, that's all I wanted, an' that's all I got. What I'm tellin' you now is most what I've : pieced together since.

Can you blame 'em exactly, those deckhands an' firemen on the *Banshee*? They didn't mean to do what they did. Things just happened. But what court of law in the world would have believed that they hadn't planned things deliberate?

I don't like to think too much of what followed. The engineer on watch, either the second or third, must have heard the shootin' an' rushed up on deck. Prob'ly he put his head into the other's room.

'Wake up!' he'd say. "For God's sake,

come on deck. There's murder aboard."

Whether or no, when it was over, the second an' third engineers of the *Banshee* were dead, both of them, an' the carpenter had a bullet through his wrist.

An' so of the twenty-two human bein's that had left Newcastle, New South Wales, or the *Banshee* five were dead of plague, five had been killed that afternoon, an' one was wounded. That left eleven fit an' able to work—allowin' for the fact that they were al half-crazy with fear an' lookin' for death any minute. But of that eleven only one man had any knowledge of navigation—Tommy Clarkson, the second mate.

Do you see now what's comin'? The devilment of it all! It isn't hard to imagine it—my man, Red Martin, goin' aft with that gang of frightened murderers at his heels an' troopin' down the companion to the second mate. An':

"Mr. Clarkson, sir, might I speak to you a minute?" Like that, very respectable. An' the answer:

"All right, I'm comin'. What is it?"

"There's something wrong on deck, sir."

An' then Tommy Clarkson droppin' out of his bunk, seein' that crowd waitin' an' not hearin' the engines, an' knowin' the s' lip was hove to.

They took him on deck, not sayin' much, an' showed him the five bodies stretched out side by side near the fiddle, an' they gave him his choice. He could either do what they said, navigate the vessel, or they'd kill ham. Sounds cruel, doesn't it? In cold mood, like that, too.

An' yet wouldn't most of us do what they did. Honestly, now! Wouldn't we? They were all in it as deep as each other. They wanted to save their lives. They were scared. An' he must have known, just by their faces, they meant what they said.

Would you have told 'em to shoot?

Maybe you would. But I doubt it. You'd have done what he done—held out, promised anything, simply to gain time. No one wants to die sooner'n he needs, not that I've noticed, anyhow. It's sad, of course, but, this wicked old world's got some attractions even to them that are all the time prayin' to be called quickly to everlastin' joy in the next.

But Tommy Clarkson! Would he navigate the ship? He would. Would he obey orders? He would. So it was settled. They'd spare his life if he did what they ordered. If not, he'd die, same as the others.

An' their plans? Red Martin told me they'd arranged the whole thing—story an' 'ull, every detail thought out beforehand. They'd make for Batavia still, that port bein' as good as any, an' they'd say that ten of the ship's company, includin' all the officers but the second mate, had lost their lives by fever or plague. Always supposin' that none of the others died, too, an' that was a fear not even Brandypeg's liquor could make 'em forget.

"We buried the dead almost at once," said Red Martin. "The five of 'em—the old man, the mate, the second an' third engineers an' the Swede. We didn't say no prayers," says he, "we couldn't. An'," he says, "the sharks were still followin' the ship. We could see 'em." An' that, son, was worse than anything else—the way that he said it.

He went on in a whisper.

"My hands aren't clean, either," he says. "It was me that killed the third engineer. I had to. It was him or me. He ran out on the deck an' saw me. I didn't——"

I stopped him.

"All right, Red," I says. "There's no need to worry."

After that he just lay very still without sayin' a word an' the woman looked in at the door an' went out when he shook his head at her.

The rest of the tale's not clear. Up to this point I see everything—the motives, the

suddenness, the way things just came about—all the details dovetail into each other. But the last part of it's diff'rent.

Just think for a minute of that ship, the *Banshee*, with those twelve wretches, eleven it was soon, for the carpenter died of blood poisonin' an' drink on top of the wound in his wrist, with those eleven wretches steamin' for Batavia. An' on board, in their power, an officer! Would he betray them? They must 'uv spoken an' argued about it time an' time again. Would his word have held good against theirs? Prob'ly.

What's more, in them cases, there's always the one man who'll rat, who'll turn King's evidence—Queen's, it was then—an' tell all what happened, just for the sake of his own mis'erable skin. An' most likely there'd have been some flaw in the story as well. There always is. An' Tommy Clarkson! What were his feelin's? Those men were capable' of any mortal thing under the face of Heaven. Did they trust him? An' what could he do, if they didn't? Nothin'—except wait. Would they kill him before they reached port? That thought could never have left him, not for a minute.

There was only the one way, of course. The *Banshee* would reach Batavia, with ten of the hands on board, an' no officers. That was their only hope.

Tommy Clarkson had been sentenced to death. He got a reprieve for a day or so, that's all—just because he could do them a service. Imaginin' things is not one of my strong points, but it isn't hard to imagine them fellers, the mutineers, talkin' in whispers of a night-time, workin' short-handed, each man watchin' the others for signs of plague, no discipline, the ship like a farmyard, only the blood-marks washed out, with Tommy Clarkson pacin' the bridge an' the donkeyman runnin' the engines, an' both of 'em sleepin' in snatches.

Did he know he was doomed? Yes,

son, he must have. But was he afraid? Prob'ly he'd reached the place where fear'd left him. He hadn't room for it alongside of his other thoughts. Also, he knew he was safe till he'd brought them in sight of Batavia. But they never reached there. That's where he fooled 'em.

“Red,” says I, “what about Mr. Clarkson? Did you kill him?” I says, as if killin' was the most ord'nary thing goin'.

He shook his head.

“No,” says he. “We didn't.” An' then he looked at me kind of scared. “We had to think of ourselves,” says he, “but nothin' happened the same as we planned. Mr. Clarkson put the fear of death on us, that's never been absent from that day to this.”

Yes, son, that was the way Red Martin put it, lyin' there in his bed, three years after that hell's-voyage on the *Banshee*.

“Well,” says I. “An' what was it he did?” An' he told.

Next time you happen to be in the chart-room get hold of the chart of the Malay Archipelago, an' then trace the course of the *Banshee* after the killin' in Flores Sea to Batavia past the Karimon Javas, north of Samarang, an' the Thousand Islands. Java itself is about six hundred miles long, as far as I know, an' the *Banshee* was perhaps makin' three knots. If you fix that in your mind, maybe you'll be able to understand what happened next.

ONE evenin', just before sunset, they sighted land, an' the *Banshee* kept on her way steady, with no one on board worryin' much about Tommy Clarkson. He told 'em they'd reach Batavia in a day an' a half, an' none of them havin' been there before an' not knowin' the coast, they believed what he said.

In the dead of night, about two bells or four bells in the middle watch, Tommy went aft, leavin' one of the hands half asleep at the wheel. He must have been, else he was deaf.

Whether or no, he didn't hear what he might have heard if he'd only been listenin'.

The night bein' clear an' fine; there was no look-out on the fo'c's'le head, naturally. That helped, too. Tommy Clarkson left the bridge an' went aft, an' that was the last ever seen of him.

"Yes," says Red with his little chokin' laugh. "He disappeared. We never saw him again."

"Drowned?" says I.

"No," says Red. "He went off in the smallest of the four boats we had, the dingey. He lowered it gradual into the water, slid down the falls an' went astern." An' that was the end of the second mate of the *Banshee*.

An' the hands'. They couldn't tell what had become of him, whether he'd be picked up or be drowned, or get to shore an' be killed by natives or reach some settlement where he could give the alarm. An', as Red said, from the moment he made off, not one of those men on the *Banshee* could breathe easy.

"An' what happened next?" I says. "The day after he left the ship."

"We didn't know where we were quite," says Red. "He'd not taken us anywhere near Batavia, of course—we knew that much at least. But he'd not marked the chart—not properly; he'd traced about nine diff'rent courses, each one of which might have been ours."

Son, think for a minute what it must have been like for the men on the *Banshee*! Where were they? All they knew was that they were lost. Tommy Clarkson might have taken them northwest from Flores Sea to Borneo, or further west to Billiton Island, or Banka, or even Sumatra. They didn't know, how could they?

"An'," says Red Martin, "there was only one thing we could do."

"An' that?" says I.

"We beached the ship," says Red. "Ran her aground in a small, sandy bay, black

mud an' mangroves, with cliffs behind."

That's how they got rid of the *Banshee*, an' on the whole, knowin' the facts, I think they were wise.

An' at last Fate seemed to be helpin' them. By the time that the ship was hard an' fast, heelin' over into the sand, it was blowin' a livin' gale. An' in less than an hour a typhoon burst over 'em.

"An'," says Red Martin, "it was in that blow that the *Banshee* was supposed to have gone to the bottom with all hands."

"But," says I, "what did you do with the ship?"

"I'm comin' to that," says Red. "We set her on fire. But before that we spent about two whole days gettin' things ready."

They were careful, too, I'll say that for 'em. They took no chances. They even scraped off the name wherever they found it, in case it mightn't be burnt quite.

"An'," says Red, "we got one of the lifeboats provisioned with food an' water, an' rigged up a mast an' a sail made out of an awnin'. Then," says he, "we divided all the money we'd found in the captain's room, went through the ship once more an' when that was done set her alight, an' waited till she was burnin' from stem to stern before leavin' her."

If they were picked up by a passin' ship—an' there was always the chance—well, then they'd say that the *Banshee* had sunk in the typhoon an' trust to the second mate not bein' saved. But that was their great an' terrible fear, that they'd be sighted an' taken to port an' that the second mate 'ud be waitin' to have them given in charge as murderers.

"Which we weren't," said Red Martin. "Not really. We hadn't meant to kill no one," says he. "It was the mate's fault for hittin' the Swede, an' the other Square-head's for shootin' the old man."

His voice was gettin' weaker, gradual, an' his breathin' seemed to be hurtin' him. P'r'aps I ought to have called the girl or

something, but I wanted to hear the end of the yarn.

“Were you picked up?” says I.

“No,” says he. “Though three times steamers passed quite close to us at night.”

“Did you reach any port?” says I.

He nodded his head.

“Yes,” says he, but he didn’t say which. They landed some miles along the coast from wherever it was, an’ separated, movin’ into the town in twos an’ threes.

“There was only eight of us by this time,” says Red.

“What became of the others?” says I.

“The steward,” he says, “was bit by a cobra soon after we came ashore, an’ died. An’ one of the firemen——”

An’ there Red stopped.

“Yes?” says I.

“We’d agreed to obey orders,” says Red. “An’ he knew the punishment.”

I understood then what had happened.

“Before we cut adrift from each other,” says Red, “we swore solemn that never so long as we’d life in our bodies would we tell what we’d done. An’,” says he kind of smilin’, “I’m breakin’ my oath.”

“Red,” says I, leanin’ forward an’ askin’ the question I’d had on my mind for two years; “Red, what of the little copper ship that I gave Mr. Clarkson?”

He smiled.

“I’d seen that,” he says, “screwed to the wall of the second’s room, an’ I took a fancy to ownin’ it. Because I’d been on the *Arabella* myself, as I told you. A year later,” he says, “I sold it. I’d been drinkin’ an’ I needed the money. How could I tell that the man who gave it to Mr. Clarkson ’ud see it?”

An’ then I turned the piece of oak ’round, same as I done just now, an’ showed him the initials, A. H. to T. C.

“I never saw ‘em,” says Red. “Never! But,” says he, “from the day that we left the *Banshee* up till now I’ve lived in dread that

the second mate ’ud come back. I’ve heard of men bein’ lost in them places along with the natives for years an’ years an’ then bein’ found.”

“That was why,” says he, “I went half-crazy with fear when I got that letter at Naples. For the name might have been put on just to deceive me. I thought that it was, an’ that Mr. Clarkson was back.”

“Red,” says I, but he doesn’t answer.

He lay back on the pillow, worn-out, an’ the grip on my fingers loosed. Then the girl came into the room an’ he opened his eyes an’ smiled, at her.

“Red,” she says, “what is it?”

“It’s all right, Nellie,” he says. “I’ve told an’ I’m feelin’ easier than I’ve felt for a long time.”

“Does it hurt you at all, Red?” says I.

“Hurt!” says he. “Why, no! I’m nearly well, but for the cough. Weak, that’s all.” An’ he spoke like he knew it was true.

“Have you all that you want?” says I.

“Medicine, food, things like that?”

“Yes,” he says, “I have. Nellie’s the best girl in the world. She’s been spendin’ her money an’ nursin’ me ever since I’ve been sick. An’,” says he, “I can’t say that she mustn’t. She’s the best an’ the bravest girl in the world, an’ I’m not worth what she’s doin’.”

“Red,” she says, “don’t, please! You mustn’t say them kind of things.”

Her face was white, whiter by far than it had been, an’ she looked at me quickly, sort of beggin’ me not to speak an’ afraid that I might.

“Yes, Nellie,” says he, an’ a wreck of a man he was, too, thin an’ wasted to skin an’ bone almost. “Yes, Nellie,” he says, “it’s the truth, an’ as soon as I’m better, I’ll do as I said, an’ I’ll marry you.”

She bent over an’ kissed him to hide the tears. Women are queer things—men, also, if it comes to that. She loved him, at least, an’

that's more than you can say for some, for all that they promise. A queer kind of mix-up, wasn't it?

I sat there by the bed, in a daze, seein' everything: the eight mutineers, or ten, mad with fear, the plague an' the sick men dyin'; the mate an' Brandypeg Brown, the five dead bodies stretched on the deck, an' Tommy Clarkson all by himself on the bridge, takin' the *Banshee* out of her course an' then castin' himself adrift in the boat. What a voyage! What a terrible voyage!

An' the end of it all! The little copper-ship in the pawnshop window in Bute Street, Cardiff, down near the docks, an' Red Martin, sick in bed in a Liverpool slum.

Some one tapped at the door an' I turned to the girl.

"It's the doctor," she says.

"Good-by, Red," I says, givin' him my hand. "Good-by, an' I'll come an' see you tomorrer."

"The finest girl in the world," says he in a whisper, "an' as soon as I'm well, I'll marry her."

As I went out I passed the doctor.

"Been visitin' a friend of mine," I says. "Havin' a chat about old times."

NEXT mornin' I kept my promise an' strolled round to see Red Martin again. I climbed the

stairs to the little room at the top of the house an' knocked. There was no answer, so I knocked once more. An', after a time, thinkin' maybe Red might be sleepin' an' the girl out, I pushed open the door an' entered on tip-toe.

I was wrong, though—they were both in the room, the pair of 'em—the girl on her knees by the side of the bed, cryin', an' Red Martin, with a smile on his lips an' the lines smoothed out of his face, dead.

An' as I stood there by the door, it seemed like he'd found rest from his troubles. Maybe he had. We can't tell about those things, none of us, not even the parsons. An' I wondered then if what he'd done was as bad as he'd thought. He hadn't set out in life intendin' to kill an' murder an' take hold of the *Banshee*, had he?

Perhaps it was made all right where he'd gone to—everything understood an' allowed for. An' there was the girl, too. An' son, remember this, an' it's true, no man can be all bad, if there's a woman to cry when he's dead.

I didn't speak to her. I just went out softly an' left them together.

Weird story, isn't it? An' that's how I learned of the castin' away of the *Banshee* an' the reason the little ship come to be in the pawnbroker's window in Cardiff.