

to be afraid of. We know all about her look," said he, "though it's a windfall I didn't just expect."

With that he signed to Malloch to sit down, settling himself forward with an eye on the ship, and quite taking the thing for granted as I turned the boat. So far there was no help for it, as the first attempt I might make to raise an alarm was certain to be my last; accordingly I headed round, and sculled for the *Cornucopia*.

It got dusk very fast, as is the case after sundown in California; the bay coming out distinct again all round. The ebb had begun to run hard, and the ship was just swinging when we reached her under the lee of one counter, Whitaker hooked on, soon hauling round the other way under the stern, and blocking us from any notice by the timber-barque ahead. The barque being laden, swung slower than the ship, so as at the moment to slue her whole length our way; but she was no advantage to me, for the crew had been running since she anchored. The brig had by that time dropped off into the sea-way, with her upper sails drawing; and my only chance lay in King, up above. He knew I was there, and said nothing to the boat; only there seemed to be something forward off the bowsprit that troubled him, as he kept running there, with a growl and a snarl that would have roused the harbour if he once opened out.

"Quiet that dog at once, see!" said Whitaker quickly; and I then spoke to King, which kept him within bounds.

"Now look ye, my young cull," the villain went on: "you've just got to go up with us, fasten in your dog, and show the key of the after-cabin padlock, then you can shut yourself in too till we're off; it'll be a pair of oars this time, I'll swear!" he said, chuckling at me. "What's more," said he, "I'll give ye my word on it, which I'll defy 'em to say I've broke yet, good or bad."

Here young Malloch nudged him aside, whispering something I could not hear; for my part, I felt life was sweet, so that I must have given in to anything; but he did not give me the offer again.

"Take his shooting-iron from him, Jack," said he; meaning a small revolver I had lately begun to wear inside my clothes, and which I had no idea he had noticed. He held out his free hand for it, as he hauled the boat round for the gangway man-ropes on the dark side.

"I've changed my mind," said he in a hoarse voice; "call the dog to the gangway there."

The word stuck in my throat, and I commenced to explain that he might jump down upon us, which I had known him try for less cause. Just then he ran snuffing to the entry-port after another growl from the bows. Whitaker gave the boat-hook to Malloch, and sprang up, one hand on the man-ropes, the other with the revolver cocked. He fired at the dog, hitting him somewhere, but only enough to raise his temper thoroughly. The ruffian, however, got on a level with the gunwale, dodging from the springs that King made, and taking sure aim, when suddenly he lowered himself a little again, asking me if there were people in the barque ahead. I told him No, which I was but too certain of. She had now swung stern on-end to us, where all that could be seen was a couple of boats in the shade of her bilge, one of them large, but not so much as an oar visible.

"What the mischief's yonder, then?" whispered he, hanging over us at sight of it; "a man-o'-war cutter by all that's blasted! There's somebody in it, too, that the brute's been scenting at; hold on, you fool you!" yelled he to Malloch, who had started, and missed his catch with the boat-hook.

The skiff had surged off too far for the young blackguard to hook on again; he tried the oar abaft, then missed the end of a rope Whitaker threw to him. King all the while was roaring and jumping overhead. Before I could lend a hand at Malloch's orders, a man lifted his head sleepily out of the cutter's bow, and hailed us.

"Answer him right, boy," hissed Whitaker between his teeth, "or else——"

I said nothing, whereupon Malloch sprang on me, trying to keep me down while he got his knife out; though his legs being shaky in the boat, he had enough to do. I dug into them, and worked at his hair as well, knowing it was all safe if I would bear up a minute or two, for I had just seen the whole six oars of the cutter toss up and flash in the water, with the light of a dark-lantern turned to us. I knew nothing more for a little, the senses having been nearly choked out of me; but when I came to myself, both the villains were prisoners, with a quartermaster of the American corvette in charge, and an armed boat's crew, most of whom proved to be English man-o'-warsmen, all quite hearty as regarded me. Besides, there were a couple of townsmen who had been privately employed for the Vigilance Committee, by the advice, it turned out, of Col. Rigg. It seemed they had had their eye quietly on the brig that was to sail, and