

of him ; told him that they had got a monkey already, and disagreeable things of that kind ; and one sulky old black cook dabbed a dirty dishclout into his face, and threatened to send a bucket of water over him, if he didn't make tracks tarnation slick out of *his* galley. Jack did not try an American ship again after that.

Just as he was giving up hope, Jack got his ship.

A red-faced man came reeling down to a boat that was waiting to pull him to a ship which was being warped out of dock. He overheard Jack speaking to a captain, and sang out, "Want to go to sea, eh? Come along wi' me; I want a boy, an' one's as good as another."

Jack did not much like the look of the man, but he was ashamed to hold back. He scrambled down into the boat, and presently was scrambling up the side of the *Onyx*, 960 tons, bound for Port Natal. The *Onyx* was not A 1, and she *didn't* carry "a cow and an experienced surgeon." As soon as the captain got on board, he tumbled into his cabin to sleep off his drink. Jack enjoyed the bustle of the river as they were being towed down to Gravesend, but felt rather uncomfortable because no one gave him anything to do.

"If you please, sir, I've come on board to work," he said to the second mate.

"Oh, have you? Where did *you* sign articles? I thought you was the skipper's kid. Don't distress yourself, *he'll* find you plenty to do; we've none too many hands on board. Make yourself happy whilst you can; it's a poor soul that never rejoices."

This was the nearest approach to his idea of sailors' talk which Jack had heard, and his heart warmed accordingly to Mr. Croggan. When the *Onyx* brought up for the night at Gravesend, he asked Mr. Croggan where he was to turn in—Jack was just going to say "go to bed," but remembered the proper phrase in time.

"Why, where did you put your chest?" asked Mr. Croggan; and when he learnt how Jack had come to sea, he gave a long whistle, and said, "You—poor—little—devil; why, what a born idiot you must be!"

Jack slept that night on the floor of the deck-house, which the second mate and the carpenter shared, and thought himself very lucky to get such shelter, for the rain thumped down on the roof like marbles. The next morning the *Onyx* took her pilot, weighed anchor, and beat out to sea. Captain Mitchell came on deck in the vile temper which was "his usual," as the Scotch say, unless when stupified by drink.

"Why didn't you bring me my coffee?" he growled to Jack, and then he boxed Jack's

ears with his clenched fists. The first mate, Mr. Munnens, was not much better tempered than the skipper. The carpenter and two or three of the foremast men were hearty fellows, but the rest of the crew were blackguards.

Off Margate the pilot insisted on bringing up, although the skipper wanted to crack on. When Jack looked at the Margate lamps, twinkling through the rushing rain, and over the wild black waters, he almost wished himself back at Elm House. *How* he longed to be at *home!* The watch were clustered round the galley, out of which the howling wind blew a long line of red sparks; the rest of the men were under cover in the fore-castle; Mr. Croggan, swathed in oilskins, was tramping to and fro upon the poop; but Jack, wet to the skin, was shivering, waiting for orders, outside the door of the cabin in which the skipper, and the first mate, and the pilot were taking their grog. Every now and then a damp sheep dangling on the gallows came thump against Jack's face, and loneliness had so taken the pluck out of him, that he felt half inclined to cry. There was nothing dignified in his distresses. He had found out that he was nobody on board; that if he had a moment to spare from the captain's work, he was at the beck and call of everybody, and would be expected to do all the dirtiest jobs. As he thought of what he had already done, he grew sick again; and because he was hanging over the side, instead of waiting to receive the captain's orders to fetch some more hot water from the galley, he got another hiding. Poor Jack did not feel much like the gallant captain of the "flying, fighting *Arethusa*," when he crept into the dog-kennel of a bunk that had been assigned him, together with a few rough slop-clothes that had been thrown at his head, as a bare bone might be pitched to a mangy, stray, mongrel cur. The next morning the cable parted, the remnant fragment thumping against the bows with a dull thud, distinguishable even in the roaring of the storm. The ship swung round, and floundered broadside towards the land. Sea-sick Jack almost hoped that she might drive ashore. Sea-sick as he was, he could not help seeing and wondering at the same hope in the half-drunken skipper's eyes. But the pilot, and the mates, and the men rushed forward like race-horses; another cable was paid out, and the *Onyx* was brought up in water just deep enough to float her.

"What are you skulking for there, you young lubber?" was Captain Mitchell's *Te Deum*, and Jack received his thank-offering in a rope's-ending. The skipper swore fiercely at the luggers that swooped down