



CHESSY CHALK AND HER BABY.

PEOPLE are very hearty with one another at the end of a voyage, and very civil at the beginning; but in the meantime, on board a passenger ship, everybody, as a rule, quarrels with everybody else—quarrels, and makes friends again, half a dozen times over. But Chessy Chalk and her baby never quarrelled with anybody, from the time the *Gold Finder* left the jetty of the London Docks to the time when she let go her anchor in Hobson's Bay; and still more wonderful, nobody on board the *Gold Finder* ever quarrelled with them. Chessy and her baby, on the other hand, were constant pets with all the passengers, officers, and crew. Everybody on board had a kind look and word for them, and was willing to do them a good turn. A coarse, wild lot of both sexes, and a good many grades, we had on board; for the *Gold Finder* sailed for Melbourne some eighteen years ago, when people of all sorts were making a mad rush out of England, in the hope of becoming Rothschilds a week after landing in Australia; and eager as we were to reach the Golden Land, the *Gold Finder's* rate of sailing was not likely to improve our tempers. She had been advertised—before she was off the stocks at Sunderland—"as that first-rate A 1, Australian clipper, with unrivalled accommodation for passengers, to sail from the London Docks immediately," but she had been laid down for the coal trade, had bows as bulgy as the cheeks of the boy in the Spelling Book who was so fat that he could not see out of his eyes; and when, on rare occasions, she made eight knots an hour, the skipper, who had been all his life before in the coasting coal trade, bragged about her "flying!" If her accommodation for passengers *was* unrivalled, I pity the people who sailed in other vessels; but, cooped up though we were, we

should not have cared about *that*, if the *Gold Finder*, after keeping us waiting for five weeks, had only showed a little "go" when she did get to sea. But ship after ship overhauled us, and it became a grim standing joke on board that the *Gold Finder* would get to Port Phillip just when there was no more gold left to find. Under these circumstances it is wonderful that even pretty, bright-eyed Chessy and her plump baby-boy never got even a cross look. Most of the other children were voted little nuisances, because they squalled so, and were always getting under somebody's feet, just as if they had been so many blind puppies; but even their offended mothers did not seem to be jealous of pretty, gentle Chessy. Who gave her that name, or how we came to know that she was called so, I cannot say; but when I joined the ship at Gravesend, the name was already public property, and its bearer a general favourite. Baby's grandmother came off in a boat from the Terrace Pier, to give her little pet another last kiss.

"I want to see Mrs. Chalk," said the sobbing old lady, as she was helped over the side, and in an instant a score or two of voices sang out—

"Pass the word for Chessy Chalk."

Rough as the shouters were, they meant no rudeness. Although she was a matron, Chessy looked such a mere girl that it seemed absurd to call her *Mrs.* Chalk. The baby had been christened Adolphus, after his father, who had been in such a hurry to get to the gold-fields that he had rushed out in the first Australian ship in which he could secure a single bunk; and Chessy was very fond of calling the baby 'Dolphy. But the grown-up Adolphus was not respected on board the *Gold Finder*. Rough lot as we had on board, they thought it a shame that a man should leave such a wife and child to come out by