

sheets. At this the sailor made no further delay, but jumped in, and stepped forward to the bow.

While shoving off, I had to request the passenger to shift amidships, which he did. The skiff was then in good trim, and I sculled readily in the slack water across the harbour, after which I knew we should have the benefit of the young ebb. This began to make a ripple outside; whereupon the sailor, who had sat looking ahead, making an occasional jokey remark to either of us, turned and said he might as well help a bit. He then asked me to hand him along the other oar, and if the gent amidships, as he called him, was not above pulling a little, perhaps he would take mine. No sooner did I mention how the case stood, than it was clear he could do nothing with the one oar, and this somehow annoyed him uncommonly. He appeared to get quite sober suddenly, gave me a keen glance, and stopped his talk, after looking about the bottom of the boat to make sure. I had a loose piece of tarpaulin in it, besides the boat-hook and a stretcher, on which I used sometimes to put it up by way of a lugsail, but not the least air was then stirring. On the whole I felt by no means sorry at finding the matter entirely in my hands.

My attention had been drawn to the younger of the two, who sat right before me in the glare off the bay before sundown; his back being to the other. What little he had said was too husky or else too sulky to strike me; and though he kept turning his face towards the brig with her signal up, there was no mistaking despite of his digger's beard and hat, the look of his legs as he sat, in particular when cramped up. It was young Malloch to a certainty; in fact he left no doubt on this point, by giving a half-start at first full view of me opposite him, after which he shifted round as much as possible, with his hand up about his face. Startled as I felt for a moment it was evident he was unaware that I knew him. I was as anxious to be quit of the job as he could be; and finding the ebb begin to tell in my favour, I now made the best of it. The various boats on their return for town had to head-up, which made it easy to cross them, or to drop down on the brig if none suited; and meanwhile I could see the *Cornucopia* still busy with the riggers, allowing full time either way. Scarce had we come in full view from her, when the foremost wherry was hailed off the ship's deck, and the steward with his companion, our steerage-passenger, stepped into it. They met us well out, and the steward finding how

I was situated, explained that he was required ashore for an hour or so, and had waited till he saw the skiff come out. But he said it was all right, and not to put the brig's people about for all the difference, as one of the riggers had undertaken to turn my dog loose if they left before I came. On this I pushed ahead, trying more than one of the other shore-boats. They did not care about the job, however, or asked premium fares paid down, which it was clear were not forthcoming; so that I had nothing for it, but to pass my own ship for the brig's berth. As we did so, the riggers hailed me, but I could not make out what they said; and directly afterwards I heard King give tongue on deck as usual when let free, showing that the men had left on the up-stream side for harbour, but doubtless making the ship quite safe.

The noise the brig made was guidance enough, as they were getting up anchor by that time, if not on the very point of tiding off. I could not have said why, but a kind of shiver ran through me at the idea of missing her; and next moment the man in the boat's bow gave a meaning sort of cough, at which I saw the other turn his head towards him for the first time. The sailor then told me to hold on and take it easy; they were going to be too late, he said. The young man hereupon bade him cut that short, naming him in the clumsiest style. What frightened me most was his calling him "Sam." I felt as sure that it was the notorious Whitaker, as if they had told me straight out.

"The short of it is, then," said he to me, "never mind the *Queen o' the South*—the *Cornycopay* 'll suit quite as well."

Young Malloch at this dropped all pretence, seeing I had recognised him. He did not just face me, but his mate's black look was nothing to the cold-blooded expression in that yellow half-breed eye of his.

"Oh cut that, can't ye?" he said again; "take the boat in hand yourself; drop both him and his infernal sculling and get through with the thing. We'll have time to catch the brig after," said he.

Whitaker fairly grinned as he looked round from the boat to the dead calm on the water, and back again; they would have gone adrift to no purpose whatever without me.

"Harkee, boy," he told me with an off-hand leer, "you're in luck as well as ourselves, though the gent here don't see it yet. I wouldn't have answered for ye otherwise," he said, "but as the case stands, just you scull round for the ship, do what you're bid aboard of her, and you've got no more