

other side of the river it is rocky, with low cliffs here and there. We were anchored pretty close inshore to protect the boats of the combined fleets when they went for water, and from our mast-heads we could see far up the valley. Posted on commanding knolls were the Cossack videttes, while among the distant trees we sometimes saw troops moving to or from the farmhouses they occupied. Few ships condensed water at that time, and it was considered a wonderful discovery; the whole fleet got their water by sending their boats to the Katcha.

The gale began in the forenoon, rising steadily and rapidly, and soon one little merchant vessel after another broke adrift. The French transports during the war were mostly small, and several were with the fleet. We watched one of them drag her anchor; a second was let go and more cable veered; still she dragged dangerously close to another brig; the furious howling wind swept sheets of spray over both ships, while captains and crews danced and gesticulated as only Frenchmen could. Then came the smash, and in a moment both ships were drifting to leeward with shattered spars and tattered sails. Nothing could be done to help them; in twenty minutes they struck at the foot of the low cliffs; in half an hour they were complete wrecks.

Many of these small vessels met the same fate, and many lives were lost, but all the men-of-war held on: the old sailing line-of-battle ships had four anchors down, and their hemp cables out. We're wiser than to use hemp cables in these iron days, but at that time every ship had one supplied to her, probably for the sake of "auld lang syne." The flag-ship was the old *Britannia*, carrying Admiral Dundas's flag, and she was curvetting to every sea with her four cables ahead as rigid as iron bars. That's not the same as the new *Britannia*, where they dry-nurse the young salts in Dartmouth Ocean.

Meanwhile the steamers of the fleet had got up steam, and were moving their engines slowly ahead to ease the strain on the cables. We were anchored so close in-shore that as the gale increased and the sea rose we were almost among the breakers, and now and then a wave broke over the bows and swept right aft along the quarter-deck. Abreast of us was anchored the *Sampson*, a paddle-wheel frigate: presently we saw a French barque break from her anchors, and drift down, broadside-on, athwart her hawse. Every moment we expected to see her part her cables: all hands came on deck; from his station on the bridge Captain Lewis T. Jones gave the order for the engines to move

faster to meet the increased strain. The barque lay for a few seconds heaving up and down, when a huge sea lifted her under the *Sampson's* bowsprit, which broke loose from the gammoning and bobstays, and for an instant stood erect in the air; then, with a crash that could be heard even through the fierceness of the blast, it fell back upon the foremast: instantly the foremast fell back between the two funnels upon the mainmast; the mainmast fell flat upon the mizenmast, and the mizenmast fell over the stern: the French barque, surging clear of the *Sampson*, swept on before the blast, and met her doom on the rocks. But the *Sampson* held on safely to her anchors: though her decks were crowded with men, but one of her crew was injured, and some of the Frenchmen saved their lives by scrambling on board of her.

But now with a violent jerk both our own cables parted: the ship's head fell off in-shore: three or four heavy seas rolled in over the fore-castle, and dashed down the engine-room hatches. "Go ahead full speed!" shouted the Captain: but the great cranks remained motionless. Again was the order given, and repeated below, but without result. And now the ship was indeed among the breakers, drifting every moment nearer to the shoal water at the river's mouth: some even took off coat and boots to be ready for a swim, when at length slowly and uncertainly the great wheels began to revolve, and the *Black Cat* to answer her helm. The heavy seas we shipped penetrated to the engine-room, which was soon knee-deep in water, but the engineers and stokers stood gallantly to their posts, even throwing the coal on to the fires with their hands: still the steam-gauge showed no rise: the water continued gaining on them, and at length threatened to extinguish the fires. At this moment, with great presence of mind, one of the engineers knelt down, and by main force lifted an iron flooring-plate, so allowing the water to escape into the bilge: he saved the ship, and was rewarded by a step of promotion.

And now the great power of the *Black Cat's* magnificent engines began to tell, as even against the force of that mighty hurricane and those huge rollers her bows came slowly up to the wind, and she steamed out in the teeth of the furious gale.

I was standing on the paddle-box with the captain and master, when suddenly a sea lifted from its bed the paddle-box boat I was leaning against, landing her a couple of feet outwards, so as the wheel revolved the floats struck the flaps of my monkey-jacket. I must have fallen into the wheel had not the master caught me by the scruff of the neck