

THE EVENING NEWS.

Saturday, May 20, 1871.

SEARCHING FOR A HERD.

"Hard up, hard up!" I shouted to the helmsman. "Call all hands to save ship. Let go the royal halyards and stow'sails tacks fore and aft. Brace the crew'sack yards round." By this time I had got down off the masthead, and hurried aft. "Let go the sea main braces one of you," main tack and sheet, too, somebody!" All this had occupied less than half a minute, and I now met the helmsman with his startled and anxious face.

"Davis, call the captain. Tell him we are right on the top of it." Two minutes more, and we were in a pretty pickle. The helm had been put hard up, and the ship sprang round on her heel like a top. She was now fast aback by the lee, and going stern first toward the island. The men had been too slow in their movements, and before the yards could be braced round they had taken aback. The state of confusion was fearful. I got upon the poop. All the crew were on the deck, pulling on one rope, some on another, and all of them talking, many frightened and bewildered. This would never answer.

"Silence, fore and aft! What the deuce are you all doing? Attend to the word of command. Mr. Green, bring your watch into the poop and turn this man's way round. Do you hear there, starboard watch on the poop. Port watch, haul in the port crew'sack braces." The captain rushed on deck in his shirt-tails. Most of the men were so busy with their own work, that the wind blew freshly and the sails fluttered. It was a good thing I retained my presence of mind, for the captain's three-part lost his "Good heavens, W—, what's the matter?" he cried. "Where is it? I can't see a thing, that confounded moonlight muddles my eyes. I can't do anything just now. You had better go on with it, as you know the position of things."

"There's the land, sir," I said, "that black streak; and there's the broken water." And unconsciously close it was to us. The captain looked bewildered. "What's the helm, my lad?" I said to the man at the wheel. "Mr. Green," I continued, "you see how she is. If you will take charge, I'll go down on the main deck and get the head yards to rights; the bowsprit is making a regular windmill, and with all the lee stuns'll set and the swinging boom out, it's an awkward job."

"All right, W—," he replied; "I've got my eyesight now; I'll look after her." The scene in the cuddy, as I afterward learned, was a terrible one. When the starting cry was echoed along the decks and through the cabin, all the crew save those who were on duty, came to the deck, and all, expected immediate shipwreck, and death as a natural consequence. In these moments of sudden peril on board ship, and especially if they occur at night, passengers invariably give way to excess of terror. It is but natural. The conventionalities of life are thrown to the winds, and all the elements of the human mind seem to be in a state of confusion. The women rushed from their beds in their night-dresses shrieking, sobbing, talking wildly. They did not care to go on deck, but huddled themselves in a group in the cuddy. So led to the confusion, the lamp had gone out, and they were in darkness. George Armstrong had hurried back from the poop at first, in search of his wife. Believing that she had fallen overboard, he ignored ceremony and went into her cabin. She had just laid her head. There was no light, but instinct told her who was coming to the room.

"Oh George, George! what is the danger?" For answer, George Armstrong took his wife by the hand, and led her to the strong arms. It was no time for consulting parli.

"My dearest," he said, "a few moments more and all is over. I open to you, the ship's bottom is in danger of being knocked out; in which case we must all perish."

"She was dreadfully agitated. And in that moment of agony, he believed, he led the last, reluctant, was thrown away. With the fear of death before us, we dare not permit in us; and George Armstrong heard how passionately she loved him."

"And they made a compact, each with each, that if by God's mercy they should come unscathed out of this peril, they would become one another's life-long friends. The heart, dropped by his breast and rested there, as she made the solemn promise."

"Then he rushed up on deck and found some of the passengers helping the crew to brace the sails. The Armstrongs all to with his great strength, doing more than any two in the crew. It was an awful job getting the ship to bridle. Five or six men struck before we had braced down to topmasts and jib and the watch sent below. However, we were saved."

"Drifting away to the southwest till after breakfast, we stood by the island, running close in, and taking a good start at it. The weather was bright and genial, the sea alone holed. A light breeze sprang up, and was some appearance of wild vegetation. Clumps of trees clustered here and there, green bushes also in contrast with which the shining sandy beach looked quite outlandish, as the water splashed gently upon it;—for we were on the lee side of the island now, and, of course in smooth water. There was some talk of borrowing a boat and landing, but the men were too exhausted to do so. The day passed uneventfully, and we were quickly packed on the Sunday and in an hour's time George Island was out of sight astern."

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