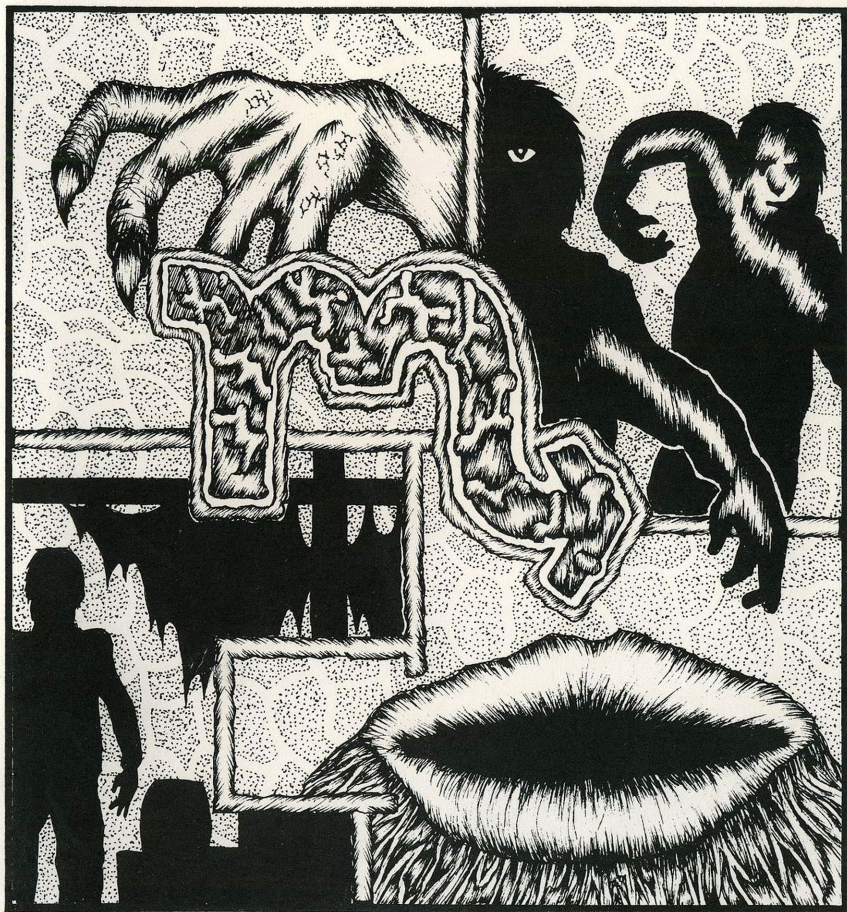


# *Spectral Manifestations*



WILLIAM HOPE HODGSON





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WILLIAM HOPE HODGSON

*Introduction by Ian Bell*

*Illustrations by Jon Knapp*

BELLKNAPP BOOKS

1984

THE GHOST PIRATES A CHAUNTY AND ANOTHER STORY

first published in New York, Paul R. Reynolds, 1909

CARNACKI, THE GHOST FINDER AND A POEM

first published in London, no publisher given, 1910

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## *Introduction*

Sixty-six years after his death, and seventy-seven years since the publication of his first novel, William Hope Hodgson is now recognized as an important figure in the development of science fiction and fantasy: 'one of the first authors involved in the "translation" of the classical materials of the horror story into the substance of the scientific imagination.' (Stableford, 1979, p. 288). First editions of Hodgson's novels and collections, which originally brought the author critical acclaim but little or no financial reward, today command premium prices, and his fiction has been reprinted in paperback on both sides of the Atlantic. Like certain other early science fiction and fantasy writers, Hodgson has become more famous posthumously than he ever was during his own lifetime.

My first (indirect) encounter with the work of William Hope Hodgson came, in the mid-1970s when I was still at school, while reading the paperback edition of Brian Aldiss' excellent history of science fiction, *BILLION YEAR SPREE*. Aldiss' descriptions of, and quotations from, Hodgson's *THE HOUSE ON THE BORDERLAND* and *THE NIGHT LAND* — 'two novels which have embedded in them visions as colossal and impressive as any mentioned in this volume.' (1975, p. 194) — made a strong initial impression upon me. However, it was not until recent years, with the publication by Sphere of uniform paperback editions of Hodgson's four novels and 'Carnacki' stories, that I actually read the works in question and discovered for myself the author's distinctive visionary qualities.

The experience of reading Hodgson's fiction naturally left me wanting to know more about the man himself, and this inevitably led me to the lengthy and illuminating 'critical biography' which Sam Moskowitz contributed to the collection *OUT OF THE STORM*. Aside from giving much fascinating information about Hodgson's eventful, but tragically short, life, Moskowitz also provides a detailed and comprehensive publication history. One piece of bibliographical information which particularly caught my attention was Moskowitz's statement that 'A strange Carnacki volume had been published in pamphlet form in the United States in 1910...titled *CARNACKI, THE GHOST*



FINDER, AND A POEM. An excellent condensation of all of the Carnacki stories' (1975, p. 90). As I had been previously unaware of this item, on my next visit to the Bodleian Library, Oxford, I consulted their set of THE BRITISH LIBRARY GENERAL CATALOGUE OF PRINTED BOOKS TO 1975. Therein I found the Carnacki volume listed, although it was obviously a British 'edition', since the place of publication given was London rather than New York. At the same time, I noticed that there was a listing for another Hodgson item entitled THE GHOST PIRATES, A CHAUNTY, AND ANOTHER STORY, published in New York in 1909. The entry had the word 'abridged' (handwritten, in brackets) appended to it, immediately below 'THE GHOST PIRATES' part of the title, and it was thus obvious that this item was of a similar nature to the Carnacki volume. I then checked with the Bodleian Library's own catalogue, but found that neither of the Hodgson items was listed within it.

The 'discovery' of the two Hodgson volumes, allied to my own (limited) experience of book production gained on a book publishing course at Oxford Polytechnic, led me to consider seriously the possibility of publishing them in some form or another. This led, in time, to the publication of the present booklet, which is a selection from the original volumes. The texts reprinted on the following pages, namely the author's own abridged and condensed versions of THE GHOST PIRATES and CARNACKI, THE GHOST FINDER, have been prepared by me from electrostatic copies of the volumes held in the British Library. For the benefit of collectors, the original edition of THE GHOST PIRATES A CHAUNTY AND ANOTHER STORY (British Library copy received 8 September 1909) comprises 68 pages and contains, in addition to the abridgement of THE GHOST PIRATES (pp. 5-43), the sailor's song 'The Hell! Oo! Chaunty' (pp. 47-50) and the Carnacki story 'The Thing Invisible' (pp. 53-68). The latter is subtitled 'Thomas Carnacki, the famous investigator of "real" ghost stories, tells here one of the most thrilling of his experiences.' I may be mistaken, but I believe that this is the only occasion when Carnacki is referred to by his christian name. The original edition of CARNACKI, THE GHOST FINDER AND A POEM (British Library copy received 19 January 1910) comprises only 14 pages and contains, in addition to the condensation of CARNACKI, THE GHOST FINDER (pp. 3-13), the poem 'Lost' (p. 14). The former is a summary of only four of the Carnacki stories, namely 'The House Among the Laurels', 'The Gateway of the Monster', 'The Horse of the Invisible', which is not 'retitled "The



Thing Invisible" (Currey, 1979, p. 242), and 'The Whistling Room'.

It should be made clear at this point that the revised texts presented in this booklet are entirely the work of the author, William Hope Hodgson. The only changes made by me (in my capacity as editor) were the correction of obvious typographical errors, and some minor alterations in punctuation. The illustrations are the work of Jon Knapp, a talented artist friend of mine. In my estimation, they complement the text admirably.

Finally, I would like to express my grateful thanks to Mike Ashley for his invaluable advice on this project.

Ian Bell  
Chalgrove  
August 1984

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# *The Ghost Pirates*

## THE FIGURE OUT OF THE SEA

He began without any circumlocution.

"I joined the 'Mortzestus' in 'Frisco. I heard, before I signed on, that there were some funny yarns floating round about her; but I was pretty nearly on the beach, and too jolly anxious to get away to worry about trifles. Besides, by all accounts, she was right enough, so far as grub and treatment went. When I asked fellows to give it a name, they generally could not. All they could tell me was that she was unlucky, and made thundering long passages, and had more than a fair share of dirty weather. Also that she had twice had the sticks blown out of her, and her cargo shifted. Besides all these, a heap of other things that might happen to any packet, and would not be comfortable to run into. Still, they were the ordinary things, and I was willing enough to risk them, to get home. All the same, if I had been given the chance, I should have shipped in some other vessel, as a matter of preference.

"When I took my bag down, I found that they had signed on the rest of the crowd. You see, the 'home lot' cleared out when they got into 'Frisco; that is, all except one young fellow, a cockney, who had stuck by the ship in port. He told me afterwards, when I got to know him, that he intended to draw a payday out of her, whether anyone else did or not.

"The first night I was in her I found that it was common talk among the other fellows that there was something queer about the ship. They spoke of her as if it were an accepted fact that she was haunted; yet they all treated the matter as a joke, all, that is, except the young cockney—Williams—who, instead of laughing at their jests on the subject, seemed to take the whole matter seriously.

"This made me rather curious. I began to wonder whether there was, after all, some truth underlying the vague stories I had heard; and I took the first opportunity to ask him whether he had any reasons for believing that there was any truth in the yarns about the ship.

"At first he was inclined to be a bit offish; but presently he came 'round and told me that he did not know of any particular inci-



dent which could be called unusual in the sense in which I meant. Yet, at the same time, there were lots of little things which, if you put them together, made you think a bit. For instance, she always made such long passages and had so much dirty weather—nothing but that, and calms and head winds. Then other things happened—sails that he knew himself had been properly stowed were always blowing adrift at night. And then he said a thing that surprised me.

"'There's too many bloomin' shadders about this 'ere packet; they gets onto yer nerves like nothin' as ever I seen before in me nat'ral.'

"He blurted it all out in a heap, and I turned 'round and looked at him.

"'Too many shadders!' I said. 'What on earth do you mean?' But he refused to explain himself, or tell me anything further—just shook his head stupidly when I questioned him. He seemed to have taken a sudden, sulky fit. I felt certain that he was acting dense purposely. I believe the truth of the matter is that he was, in a way, ashamed of having let himself go like he had in speaking out his thoughts about 'shadders.' That type of man may think things at times; but he doesn't often put them into words. Anyhow, I saw it was no use asking any further questions, so I let the matter drop there. Yet, for several days afterward, I caught myself wondering at times what the fellow had meant by 'shadders.'

"We left 'Frisco next day, with a fine, fair wind that seemed a bit like putting the stopper on the yarns I'd heard about the ship's ill luck. And yet—"

He hesitated a moment, and then went on again:

"For the first couple of weeks out nothing unusual happened, and the wind still held fair. I began to feel that I had been rather lucky, after all, in the packet into which I had been shunted. Most of the other fellows gave her a good name, and there was a pretty general opinion growing among the crowd that it was all a silly yarn about her being haunted. And then, just when I was settling down to things, something happened that opened my eyes no end.

"It was in the 8-to-12 watch, and I was sitting on the steps on the starboard side leading up to the fo'cas'le head. The night was fine and there was a splendid moon. Away aft I heard the timekeeper strike four bells, and the lookout—an old fellow named Jaskett, answered him. As he let go the bell lanyard, his eye caught sight of me, where I sat, quietly smoking. He leant over the rail, and looked



down at me.

"That you, Jessop?" he asked.

"I believe it is," I replied.

"We'd 'ave our gran'mothers an' all the rest of our petticoated relash'ns comin' to sea, if 'twere always like this," he remarked, reflectively—indicating, with a sweep of his pipe and hand, the calmness of the sea and sky.

"I saw no reason for denying that, and he continued:

"If this ole packet is 'aunted, as some on 'em seems to think, well, all as I can say is, let me 'ave the luck to tumble across another of the same sort. Good grub, an' duff fer Sundays, an' a decent crowd of 'em aft, an' everythin' comfertable like, so as yer can feel yer knows where yer are. As fer 'er bein' 'aunted, that's all nonsense. I've comed 'cross lots of 'em before as was said to be 'aunted, an' so some on 'em was; but 'twasn't with ghostesses. One packet I was in they was that bad yer couldn't sleep a wink in yer watch below, until yer'd 'ad every stitch out yer bunk an' 'ad a reg'lar 'unt. Sometimes——"

"At that moment the relief, one of the ordinary seamen, went up the other ladder onto the fo'cas'le head, and the old chap turned to ask him 'why the 'ell' he'd not relieved him a bit smarter. The ordinary made some reply, but what it was I did not catch, for, abruptly, away aft, my rather sleepy gaze had lighted on something altogether extraordinary and outrageous. It was nothing less than the form of a man stepping inboard over the starboard rail, a little abaft the main rigging. I stood up and caught at the handrail and stared.

"Behind me, someone spoke. It was the lookout, who had come down off the fo'cas'le head, on his way aft to report the name of his relief to the second mate.

"What is it, mate?" he asked, curiously, seeing my intent attitude.

"The thing—whatever it was—had disappeared into the shadows on the lee side of the deck.

"Nothing!" I replied, shortly, for I was too bewildered then at what my eyes had just shown me to say any more. I wanted to think.

"The old shellback glanced at me; but only muttered something, and went on his way aft.

"For a minute, perhaps, I stood there, watching; but could see nothing. Then I walked slowly aft, as far as the after end of the

deckhouse. From there I could see most of the main deck; but nothing showed, except, of course, the moving shadows of the ropes and spars and sails, as they swung to and fro in the moonlight.

"The old chap who had just come off the lookout had returned forward again, and I was alone on that part of the deck. And then, all at once, as I stood peering into the shadows to leeward, I remembered what Williams had said about there being too many 'shadders.' I had been puzzled to understand his real meaning then. I had no difficulty now. There were too many shadows. Yet, shadows or no shadows, I realized that, for my own peace of mind, I must settle, once and for all, whether the thing I had seemed to see stepping aboard out of the ocean had been a reality or simply a phantom, as you might say, of my imagination. My reason said it was nothing more than imagination, a rapid dream—I must have dozed; but something deeper than reason told me that this was not so. I put it to the test, and went straight in amongst the shadows. There was nothing.

"I grew bolder. My common sense told me I must have fancied it all. I walked over to the mainmast, and looked behind the pinrail that partly surrounded it, and down into the shadow of the pumps; but here again was nothing. Then I went in under the break of the poop. It was darker under there than out on deck. I looked up both sides of the deck and saw that they were bare of anything such as I looked for. The assurance was comforting. I glanced at the poop ladders, and remembered that nothing could have gone up there without the second mate or the timekeeper seeing it. Then I leant my back up against the bulkhead, and thought the whole matter over, rapidly sucking at my pipe and keeping my glance about the deck. I concluded my think, and said 'No!' out loud. Then something occurred to me, and I said 'Unless——' and went over to the starboard bulwarks, and looked over and down into the sea; but there was nothing but sea; and so I turned and made my way forward. My common sense had triumphed, and I was convinced that my imagination had been playing tricks with me.

"I reached the door on the port side leading into the fo'cas'le, and was about to enter, when something made me look behind. As I did so I had a shaker. Away aft, a dim, shadowy form stood in the wake of a swaying belt of moonlight that swept the deck a bit abaft the mainmast.

"It was the same figure that I had just been attributing to my fancy. I will admit that I felt more than startled; I was quite a





*'aft, a dim, shadowy form stood in the moonlight'*



bit frightened. I was convinced now that it was no mere imaginary thing. It was a human figure. And yet, with the flicker of the moonlight and the shadows chasing over it, I was unable to say more than that. Then, as I stood there, irresolute and funky, I got the thought that someone was acting the goat, though for what reason or purpose I never stopped to consider. I was glad of any suggestion that my common sense assured me was not impossible; and, for the moment, I felt quite relieved. That side to the question had not presented itself to me before. I began to pluck up courage. I accused myself of getting fanciful; otherwise I should have tumbled to it earlier. And then, funnily enough, in spite of all my reasoning, I was still afraid of going after to discover who that was standing on the lee side of the main deck. Yet I felt that, if I shirked it, I was only fit to be dumped overboard; and so I went, though not with any great speed, as you can imagine.

"I had gone half the distance, and still the figure remained there, motionless and silent—the moonlight and the shadows playing over it with each roll of the ship. I think I tried to be surprised. If it were one of the fellows playing the fool, he must have heard me coming, and why didn't he scoot while he had the chance? And where could he have hidden himself before? All these things I asked myself, in a rush, with a queer mixture of doubt and belief; and, you know, in the meantime, I was drawing nearer. I had passed the house, and was not twelve paces distant when, abruptly, the silent figure made three quick strides to the port rail and climbed over it into the sea.

"I rushed to the side and stared over; but nothing met my eyes except the shadow of the ship, sweeping over the moon-lit sea.

"How long I stared down blankly into the water it would be impossible to say; certainly for a good minute. I felt blank—just horribly blank. It was such a beastly confirmation of the unnaturalness of the thing I had concluded to be a sort of brain fancy. I seemed, for that little time, deprived, you know, of the power of coherent thought. I suppose I was dazed—mentally stunned, in a way.

"As I have said, a minute or so must have gone, while I had been staring into the dark of the water under the ship's side. Then I came suddenly to my ordinary self. The second mate was singing out: 'Lee fore brace.'

"I went to the braces, like a chap in a dream.

## THE SEARCH FOR STUBBINS

"And then, on the fourth night, something fresh happened, for about two bells that night the fore t'gallant sheet carried away, and Williams and I went up to fix it. We did this, and I went down to give a hand with the haulyards, whilst Williams stayed up to light up the gear. And then, suddenly, when the yard was nearly mastheaded, Williams started to sing out something queer, and a minute later he came down with a crash, and smashed upon the deck.

"Jove! We were shaken, and the second sent Tammy (our first-voyage 'prentice) up to take the wheel, to be out of the way. When we'd cleared up the ropes and things we went into the fo'cas'le, and had a long yarn about it; but no one, 'cept, perhaps, Stubbins, seemed to have any idea of the way to look at things. And so the conversation slacked off. We were all so moody and shaken.

"Presently I heard the second whistling for someone to relieve the wheel, and when I got aft I found he'd kicked Tammy away from the wheel, because Tammy thought he'd seen a man climbing aboard out of the sea, and had, consequently, bunked away from the wheel. I had a long talk with Tammy, over the wheel-box, after the second mate had gone forrard to the break, and he told me all about it, and I explained to him that I was growing pretty certain that the ship was open to be boarded by these strange shadow-men; and then the second mate came aft again, and we had to shut up.

"We buried Williams next day, about midday. And after that came the mist, which I always hold brought a queer, invisible atmosphere about the ship, which made other ships invisible to us and, I believe, even the natural sea, though all looked to us as usual, except that we could not see other vessels any longer, though I found out afterwards, as you know, that they could see us. When I say we couldn't see other ships, I mean only in odd flashes, and then gone in a minute. I know I got kicked away from the wheel and off the lookout for seeing another vessel and lights, which no one else could see. Though I wasn't the only one.

"It was on the following night that something further happened. Just at the beginning of the middle watch one of the men, called Svensen, fell from aloft and killed Jock, who was passing underneath. And then we heard Jacobs, who had been aloft with Svensen, singing out like mad on the royal yard. When we got up to him he seemed to be fighting with someone or something; but what it was we couldn't see. And he went quiet when we got to him, and so we got him down



on deck and into his bunk. After that we took in the main royal, and the second mate came with us, to keep us company, because he knew there was something very wrong aloft.

"When we got down again the Old Man sung out to call all hands, and we set to to shorten her down; but up aloft we were all attacked by invisible things that pulled at us, and the whole crowd simply bunked down on deck.

"When the attack began, Jaskett was just below me in the fore-rigging; but whether I slid over him, or he gave way, I don't know one bit. I only know that I reached the decks, at last, among a crowd of shouting, half-mad sailor men.

"In a confused way, I was conscious that the skipper and the mates were down among us, trying to get us into some state of calmness. Eventually they succeeded, and we were told to go aft to the saloon door, which we did in a body. Here the skipper himself served out a large tot of rum to each of us. Then, at his orders, the second mate called the roll.

"He called over the mate's watch first, and everyone answered. Then he came to ours, and he must have been agitated, for the first name he sung out was Jock's.

"Among us there came a moment of dead silence, and I noticed the wail and moan of the wind aloft, and the flap, flap of the three unfurled t'gallan's'ls.

"The second mate called the next name, hurriedly.

"'Jaskett,' he sung out.

"'Sir,' Jaskett answered.

"'Quoin.'

"'Yes, sir.'

"'Jessop.'

"'Sir,' I replied.

"'Stubbins.'

"There was no answer.

"'Stubbins,' again called the second mate.

"Again there was no reply.

"'Is Stubbins here? Anyone!' the second's voice sounded sharp and anxious.

"There was a moment's pause. Then one of the men spoke.

"'He's not here, sir.'

"'Who saw him last?' the second asked.

"Plummer stepped forward into the light that streamed through

the saloon doorway. He had on neither coat nor cap, and his shirt seemed to be hanging about him in tatters.

"'It were me, sir,' he said.

"The Old Man, who was standing next to the second mate, took a pace towards him, and stopped and stared; but it was the second who spoke.

"'Where?' he asked.

"'E were just above me, in ther crosstrees, when, when——' the man broke off short.

"'Yes—yes!' the second mate replied. Then he turned to the skipper.

"'Someone will have to go up, sir, and see——' he hesitated.

"'But——' said the Old Man, and stopped.

"The second mate cut in:

"'I shall go up, for one, sir,' he said, quietly.

"Then he turned back to the crowd of us.

"'Tammy!' he sung out. 'Get a couple of lamps out of the lamp-locker.'

"'Aye, aye, sir,' Tammy replied, and ran off.

"'Now,' said the second mate, addressing us. 'I want a couple of men to jump aloft along with me, and take a look for Stubbins.'

"Not a man replied. I would have liked to step out and offer, but the memory of that horrible clutch was with me, and for the life of me I could not summon up the courage.

"'Come—come, men!' he said. 'We can't leave him up there. We shall take lanterns. Who'll come now?'

"I walked out to the front. I was in a horrible funk; but, for very shame, I could not stand back any longer.

"'I'll come with you, sir,' I said, not very loud, and feeling fairly twisted up with nervousness.

"'That's more the tune, Jessop!' he replied, in a tone that made me glad I had stood out.

"At this point Tammy came up with the lights. He brought them to the second, who took one, and told him to give the other to me. The second mate held his light above his head, and looked 'round at the hesitating men.

"'Now, men,' he sung out, 'you're not going to let Jessop and me go up alone? Come along, another one or two of you. Don't act like a damned lot of cowards!'

"Quoin stood out and spoke for the crowd.



"I dunno as we're actin' like cowards, sir; but just look at 'im!" And he pointed at Plummer, who still stood full in the light from the saloon doorway.

"What sort of a thing is it as 'as done that, sir?" he went on. 'An' then yer arskus us ter go up agen! It aren't likely as we're in a 'urry.'

The second mate looked at Plummer, and surely, as I have before mentioned, the poor beggar was in a state; his ripped-up shirt was fairly flapping in the breeze that came through the doorway.

The second looked; yet he said nothing. It was as though the realization of Plummer's condition had left him without a word more to say. It was Plummer himself who finally broke the silence.

"I'll come with yer, sir," he said. 'Only yer ought ter 'ave more light than them two lanterns. 'Twon't be no use, unless we 'as plenty 'er light.'

The man had grit; I was astonished at his offering to go, after what he must have gone through. Yet I was to have even a greater astonishment; for, abruptly, the skipper—who all this time had scarcely spoken—stepped forward a pace, and put his hand on the second mate's shoulder.

"I'll come with you, Mr. Tulipson," he said.

The second mate twisted his head 'round, and stared at him a moment in astonishment. Then he opened his mouth.

"No, sir; I don't think—" he began.

"That's sufficient, Mr. Tulipson," the Old Man interrupted. 'I've made up my mind.'

He turned to the first mate, who had stood by without a word.

"Mr. Grainge," he said, 'take a couple of the 'prentices down with you and pass out a box of blue-lights and some flare-ups.'

The mate answered something, and hurried away into the saloon with the two 'prentices in his watch. Then the Old Man spoke to the men.

"Now, men," he began, 'this is no time for dilly-dallying. The second mate and I will go aloft, and I want about half a dozen of you to come along with us, and carry lights. Plummer and Jessop here have volunteered. I want four or five more of you. Step out, now, some of you!'

There was no hesitation whatever now, and the first man to come forward was Quoin. After him followed three of the mate's crowd, and then old Jaskett.

"That will do—that will do," said the Old Man.

"He turned to the second mate.

"Has Mr. Grainge come with those lights yet?" he asked, with a certain irritability.

"Here, sir," said the first mate's voice, behind him in the saloon doorway. He had the box of blue-lights in his hands, and behind him came the two boys, carrying the flares.

"The skipper took the box from him, with a quick gesture, and opened it.

"Now, one of you men come here," he ordered.

"One of the men in the mate's watch ran to him.

"He took several of the lights from the box and handed them to the man.

"See here," he said, 'when we go aloft, you get into the fore-top, and keep one of these going all the time. Do you hear?'

"Yes, sir," replied the man.

"You know how to strike them?" the skipper asked, abruptly.

"Yes, sir," he answered.

"The skipper sung out to the second mate:

"Where's that boy of yours—Tammy—Mr. Tulipson?"

"Here, sir," said Tammy, answering for himself.

"The Old Man took another light from the box.

"Listen to me boy!" he said. 'Take this, and stand by on the forrard deckhouse. When we go aloft, you must give us a light until the man gets his going in the top. You understand?'

"Yes, sir," answered Tammy, and took the light.

"One minute!" said the Old Man, and stooped and took a second light from the box. 'Your first light may go out before we're ready. You'd better have another in case it does.'

"Tammy took the second light and moved away.

"Those flares all ready for lighting there, Mr. Grainge?" the captain asked.

"All ready, sir," replied the mate.

"The Old Man pushed one of the blue-lights into his coat pocket and stood upright.

"Very well," he said. 'Give each of the men one apiece. And just see that they all have matches.'

"He spoke to the men particularly:

"As soon as we are ready, the other two men in the mate's watch will get up into the cranelines and keep their flares going there.



Take your paraffin tins with you. When we reach the upper topsail, Quoin and Jaskett will get out onto the yardarms and show their flares there. Be careful to keep your lights away from the sails. Plummer and Jessop will come up with the second mate and myself. Does every man clearly understand?'

"'Yes, sir,' said the men, in a chorus.

"A sudden idea seemed to occur to the skipper, and he turned and went through the doorway into the saloon. In about a minute he came back, and handed something to the second mate that shone in the light from the lanterns. I saw that it was a revolver, and he held another in his other hand; this I saw him put into his side pocket.

"The second mate held the pistol a moment, looking a bit doubtful.

"'I don't think, sir——' he began. But the skipper cut him short.

"'You don't know!' he said. 'Put it in your pocket.'

"Then he turned to the first mate.

"'You will take charge of the deck, Mr. Grainge, while we're aloft,' he said.

"'Aye, aye, sir,' the mate answered, and sung out to one of his 'prentices to take the blue-light box back into the cabin, and led the way forrard. As we went the light from the two lanterns shone upon the decks, showing the litter of the t'gallant gear. The ropes were foul of one another in a regular bunch o' buffers. This had been caused, I suppose, by the crowd trampling over them in their excitement when they reached the deck. And then, suddenly, as though the sight had waked me up to a more vivid comprehension, you know, it came to me, new and fresh, how damned strange was the whole business. I got a little touch of despair and asked myself what was going to be the end of all these beastly happenings.

"Abruptly I heard the skipper shouting, away forrard. He was singing out to Tammy to get up onto the house with his blue-light. We reached the forerigging, and the same instant the strange, ghastly flare of Tammy's blue-light burst out into the night, causing every rope, sail and spar to jump out weirdly.

"I saw now that the second mate was already in the starboard rigging, with his lantern. He was shouting to Tammy to keep the drip from his light clear of the staysail, which was stowed upon the house. Then, from somewhere on the port side, I heard the skipper shout to us to hurry.

"'Smartly, now, you men!' he was saying. 'Smartly, now.'

"The man who had been told to take up a station in the foretop

was just behind the second mate. Plummer was a couple of ratlines lower.

"I caught the Old Man's voice again.

"Where's Jessop with that other lantern?' I heard him shout.

"Here, sir,' I sung out.

"Bring it over this side,' he ordered. 'You don't want the two lanterns on one side.'

"I ran 'round the fore side of the house. Then I saw him. He was in the rigging and making his way smartly aloft. One of the mate's watch and Quoin were with him. This I saw as I came 'round the house. Then I made a jump, gripped the sheerpole, and swung myself up onto the rail. And then, all at once, Tammy's blue-light went out, and there came what seemed by contrast a pitchy darkness. I stood where I was—one foot on the rail and my knee upon a sheerpole. The light from my lantern seemed no more than a sickly yellow glow against the gloom; and higher, some forty of fifty feet, and a few ratlines below the futtock rigging on the starboard side there was another glow of yellowness in the night. Apart from these, all was blackness. And then from above—high above—there wailed down through the darkness a weird, sobbing cry. What it was, I don't know; but it sounded horrible.

"The skipper's voice came down jerkily.

"Smartly with that light, boy!' he shouted. And the blue glare blazed out again, almost before he had finished speaking.

"I stared up at the skipper. He was standing where I had seen him before the light went out, and so were the two men. As I looked, he commenced to climb again. I glanced across to starboard. Jaskett and the other man in the mate's watch were about midway between the deck of the house and the foretop. Their faces showed extraordinarily pale in the dead glare of the blue-light. Higher I saw the second mate in the futtock rigging, holding his light up over the edge of the top. Then he went further and disappeared. The man with the blue-lights followed, and also vanished from view. On the port side, and more directly above me, the skipper's feet were just stepping out of the futtock shrouds. At that I made haste to follow.

"Then, suddenly, when I was close under the top, there came from above me the sharp flare of a blue-light, and almost in the same instant Tammy's went out. I glanced down at the decks. They were filled with flickering, grotesque shadows cast by the dripping light



above. A group of the men stood by the port galley door—their faces upturned and pale and unreal under the gleam of the light. Then I was in the futtock rigging, and a moment afterwards standing in the top, beside the Old Man. He was shouting to the men who had gone out on the cranelines. It seemed that the man on the port side was bungling; but at last—nearly a minute after the other man had lit his flare—he got his going. In that time the man in the top had lit his second blue-light, and we were ready to get into the topmast rigging. First, however, the skipper leant over the after side of the top, and sung out to the first mate to send a man up onto the fo'cas'le head with a flare. The mate replied, and then we started again, the Old Man leading.

"Fortunately, the rain had ceased, and there seemed to be no increase in the wind; indeed, if anything, there appeared to be rather less; yet what there was drove the flames of the flare-ups out into occasional, twisting serpents of fire at least a yard long.

"About half-way up the topmast rigging the second mate sung out to the skipper to know whether Plummer should light his flare; but the Old Man said he had better wait until we reached the crosstrees, as then he could get out, away from the gear, to where there would be less danger of setting fire to anything.

"We neared the crosstrees, and the Old Man stooped and sung out to me to pass him the lantern by Quoin. A few ratlines more and both he and the second mate stopped almost simultaneously, holding their lanterns as high as possible, and peered into the darkness.

"See any signs of him, Mr. Tulipson?' the Old Man asked.

"No, sir,' replied the second. 'Not a sign.'

"He raised his voice.

"Stubbins!' he sung out. 'Stubbins! Are you there?'

"We listened; but nothing came to us beyond the blowing moan of the wind, and the flap, flap of the belling t'gallant above.

"The second mate climbed over the crosstrees, and Plummer followed. The man got out by the royal backstay and lit his flare. By its light we could see plainly; but there was no vestige of Stubbins, so far as the light went.

"Get out onto the yardarms with those flares, you two men!' shouted the skipper. 'Be smart, now! Keep them away from the sail!'

"The men got onto the footropes—Quoin on the port and Jaskett on the starboard side. By the light from Plummer's flare I could see them clearly as they lay out upon the yard. It occurred to me

that they went gingerly—which is no surprising thing. And then, as they drew near to the yardarms, they passed beyond the brilliance of the light, so that I could not see them clearly. A few seconds passed, and then the light from Quoin's flare streamed out upon the wind; yet nearly a minute went by, and there was no sign of Jaskett's.

"Then out from the semi-darkness at the starboard yardarm there came a curse from Jaskett, followed almost immediately by a noise of something vibrating.

"'What's up?' shouted the second mate. 'What's up, Jaskett?'

"'It's ther footrope. Sir—r—r!' He drew out the last word into a sort of gasp.

"The second mate bent quickly with the lantern. I craned round the after side of the topmast and looked.

"'What is the matter, Mr. Tulipson?' I heard the Old Man singing out.

"Out on the yardarm, Jaskett began to shout for help, and then, all at once, in the light from the second mate's lantern, I saw that the starboard footrope on the upper topsail yard was being violently shaken—savagely shaken, is perhaps a better word. And then, almost in the same instant, the second mate shifted the lantern from his right to his left hand. He put the right into his pocket and brought out his gun with a jerk. He extended his hand and arm, as though pointing at something a little below the yard. Then a quick flash spat out across the shadows, followed immediately by a sharp, ringing report. In the same moment I saw that the footrope ceased to shake.

"'Light your flare! Light your flare, Jaskett!' the second shouted. 'Be smart, now!'

"Out at the yardarm there came the splutter of a match, and then, straightaway, a great spurt of fire as the flare took light.

"'That's better, Jaskett. You're all right now!' the second mate called out to him.

"'What was it, Mr. Tulipson?' I heard the skipper ask.

"I looked up, and saw that he had sprung across to where the second mate was standing. The second mate explained to him; but he did not speak loud enough for me to catch what he said.

"I had been struck by Jaskett's attitude, when the light of his flare had first revealed him. He had been crouched with his right knee cocked over the yard and his left leg down between it and the



footrope, while his elbows had been crooked over the yard for support as he was lighting the flare. Now, however, he had slid both feet back onto the footrope, and was lying on his belly over the yard, with the flare held a little below the head of the sail. It was thus, with the light being on the fore side of the sail, that I saw a small hole a little below the footrope, through which a ray of light shone. It was undoubtedly the hole which the bullet from the second mate's revolver had made in the sail. Then I heard the Old Man shouting to Jaskett:

"Be careful with that flare, there!" he sung out. "You'll be having that sail scorched!"

"He left the second mate, and came onto the port side of the mast.

"To my right Plummer's flare seemed to be dwindling. I glanced up at his face through the smoke. He was paying no attention to it; instead he was staring up above his head.

"Shove some paraffin onto it, Plummer," I called to him. "It'll be out in a minute."

"He looked down quickly to the light, and did as I suggested. Then he held it out at arm's length, and peered up again into the darkness.

"See anything?" asked the Old Man, suddenly observing his attitude.

"Plummer glanced at him, with a start.

"It's ther r'yal, sir," he explained. "It's all adrift."

"What!" said the Old Man.

"He was standing a few ratlines up the t'gallant rigging, and he bent his body outwards to get a better look.

"Mr. Tulipson!" he shouted. "Do you know that the royal's all adrift?"

"No sir," answered the second mate. "If it is, it's more of this devilish work!"

"It's adrift, right enough," said the skipper, and he and the second went a few ratlines higher, keeping level with one another.

"I had now got above the crosstrees, and was just at the Old Man's heels.

"Suddenly he shouted out:

"There he is! Stubbins—Stubbins!"

"Where, sir?" asked the second, eagerly. "I can't see him!"

"There—there!" replied the skipper, pointing.

"I leant out from the rigging and looked up along his back in

the direction his finger indicated. At first I could see nothing; then, slowly, you know, there grew upon my sight a dim figure crouching upon the bunt of the royal, and partly hidden by the mast. I stared, and gradually it came to me that there was a couple of them, and, further out upon the yard, a hump that might have been anything, and was only visible indistinctly amid the flutter of the canvas.

"Stubbins!" the skipper sung out. "Stubbins, come down out of that! Do you hear me?"

"But no one came, and there was no answer.

"There's two——" I began; but he was shouting again:

"Come down out of that! Do you damned well hear me?"

"Still there was no reply.

"I'm hanged if I can see him at all, sir!" the second mate called out from his side of the mast.

"Can't see him!" said the Old Man, now thoroughly angry. "I'll soon let you see him!"

"He bent down to me with the lantern.

"Catch hold, Jessop," he said, which I did.

"Then he pulled the blue-light from his pocket, and as he was doing so, I saw the second peek round the back side of the mast at him. Evidently, in the uncertain light, he must have mistaken the skipper's action; for, all at once, he shouted out in a frightened voice:

"Don't shoot, sir! For God's sake, don't shoot!"

"Shoot be damned!" exclaimed the Old Man. "Watch!"

"He pulled off the cap of the light.

"There's two of them, sir," I called again to him.

"What!" he said in a loud voice, and at the same instant he rubbed the end of the light across the cap, and it burst into fire.

"He held it up so that it lit the royal yard like day, and straightaway a couple of shapes dropped silently from the royal on to the t'gallant yard. At the same moment, the humped something, midway out upon the yard, rose up. It ran in to the mast, and I lost sight of it.

"——God!" I heard the skipper gasp, and he fumbled in his side pocket.

"I saw the two figures who had dropped on to the t'gallant run swiftly along the yard—one to the starboard and the other to the port yardarms.

"On the other side of the mast, the second mate's pistol cracked



out twice, sharply. Then, from over my head the skipper fired twice and then again; but with what effect, I could not tell. Abruptly, as he fired his last shot, I was aware of an indistinct Something gliding down the starboard royal backstay. It was descending full upon Plummer who, all unconscious of the thing, was staring towards the t'gallant yard.

"'Look out above you, Plummer!' I almost shrieked.

"'What? where?' he called, and grabbed at the stay, and waved his flare excitedly.

"Down on the upper topsail yard, Quoin's and Jaskett's voices rose simultaneously, and in the identical instant their flares went out. Then Plummer shouted, and his light went utterly. There were left only the two lanterns, and the blue-light held by the skipper; and that, a few seconds afterwards, finished and died out.

"The skipper and the second mate were shouting to the men upon the yard, and I heard them answer, in shaky voices. Out on the crosstrees I could see by the light from my lantern that Plummer was clinging in a dazed fashion to the backstay.

"'Are you all right, Plummer?' I called.

"'Yes,' he said, after a little pause; and then he swore.

"'Come in off that yard, you men!' the skipper was singing out.

'Come in! Come in!'

"Down on deck I heard someone calling, but could not distinguish the words. Above me, pistol in hand, the skipper was glancing about, uneasily.

"'Hold up that light, Jessop,' he said. 'I can't see!'

"Below us, the men got off the yard, into the rigging.

"'Down on deck with you!' ordered the Old Man. 'As smartly as you can!'

"'Come in off there, Plummer!' sung out the second mate. 'Get down with the others!'

"'Down with you, Jessop!' said the skipper, speaking rapidly. 'Down with you!'

"I got over the crosstrees, and he followed. On the other side, the second mate was level with us. He had passed his lantern to Plummer, and I caught the glint of his revolver in his right hand. In this fashion we reached the top. The man who had been stationed there with the blue-lights had gone. Afterwards, I found that he went down on deck as soon as they were finished. There was no sign of the man with the flare on the starboard craneline. He also, I

learnt later, had slid down one of the backstays on to the deck, only a very short while before we reached the top. He swore that a great black shadow of a man had come suddenly upon him from aloft. When I heard that, I remembered the thing I had seen descending upon Plummer. Yet the man who had gone out upon the port craneline—the one who had bungled with the lighting of his flare—was still where we had left him, though his light was burning now but dimly.

"'Come in out of that, you!' the Old Man sung out. 'Smartly now, and get down on deck!'

"Aye, aye, sir," the man replied, and started to make his way in.

"The skipper waited until he had got into the main rigging, and then he told me to get down off the top. He was in the act of following, when, all at once, there rose a loud outcry on deck, and then came the sound of a man screaming.

"'Get out of my way, Jessop!' the skipper roared, and swung himself down alongside of me.

"I heard the second mate shout something from the starboard rigging. Then we were all racing down as hard as we could go. I had caught a momentary glimpse of a man running from the doorway on the port side of the fo'cas'le. In less than half a minute we were upon the deck, and among a crowd of the men who were grouped around something. Yet, strangely enough, they were not looking at the thing among them, but away aft at something—in the darkness.

"'It's on the rail!' cried several voices.

"'Overboard!' called somebody, in an excited voice. 'It's jumped over the side!'

"'Ther' wer'n't nothin'!' said a man in the crowd.

"'Silence!' shouted the Old Man. 'Where's the mate? What's happened?'

"'Here, sir,' called the first mate, shakily, from near the centre of the group. 'It's Jacobs, sir. He—he—'

"'What!' said the skipper. 'What!'

"'He—he's—he's dead—I think!' said the first mate, in jerks.

"'Let me see,' said the Old Man, in a quieter tone.

"The men had stood to one side to give him room, and he knelt beside the man upon the deck.

"'Pass the lantern here, Jessop,' he said.

"I stood by him, and held the light. The man was lying face downwards on the deck. Under the light from the lantern, the skipper turned him over and looked at him.



"'Yes,' he said, after a short examination. 'He's dead.'

"He stood up and regarded the body a moment, in silence. Then he turned to the second mate, who had been standing by during the last couple of minutes.

"'Three!' he said, in a grim undertone.

"The second mate nodded, and cleared his voice.

"He seemed on the point of saying something; then he turned and looked at Jacobs, and said nothing.

"'Three,' repeated the Old Man. 'Since eight bells!'

"He stopped and looked again at Jacobs.

"'Poor devil! Poor devil!' he muttered.

"The second mate grunted some of the huskiness out of his throat, and spoke.

"'Where must we take him?' he asked, quietly. 'The two bunks are full.'

"'You'll have to put him down on the deck by the lower bunk,' replied the skipper.

"As they carried him away, I heard the Old Man make a sound that was almost a groan. The rest of the men had gone forward, and I do not think he realized that I was standing by him.

"'My God! O, my God!' he muttered, and began to walk slowly aft.

"He had cause for groaning. There were three dead, and Stubbins had gone utterly and completely. We never saw him again.

#### THE SHADOW IN THE SEA

"When eight bells went, at four o'clock, and the other watch came on deck to relieve us, it had been broad daylight for some time. Before we went below, the second mate had the three t'gal-lants set; and now that it was light, we were pretty curious to have a look aloft, especially up the fore; and Tom, who had been up to overhaul the gear, was questioned a lot, when he came down, as to whether there were any signs of anything queer up there. But he told us there was nothing unusual to be seen.

"At eight o'clock, when we came on deck for the 8-to-12 watch, I saw the sailmaker coming forward along the deck from the second mate's old berth. He had his rule in his hand, and I knew he had been measuring the poor beggars in there for their burial outfit. From breakfast time until near noon he worked, shaping out three canvas wrappers from some old sailcloth. Then, with the aid of the second mate and one of the hands, he brought out the three dead



chaps, upon the after hatch, and there sewed them up, with a few lumps of holy stone at their feet. He was just finishing when eight bells went, and I heard the Old Man tell the second mate to call all hands aft for the burial. This was done, and one of the gangways unshipped.

"We had no decent grating big enough, so they had to get off one of the hatches, and use it instead. The wind had died away during the morning, and the sea was almost a-calm—the ship lifting ever so slightly to an occasional glassy heave. The only sounds that struck on the ear were the soft, slow rustle and occasional shiver of the sails, and the continuous and monotonous creak, creak of the spars and gear at the gentle movements of the vessel. And it was in this solemn half-quietness that the skipper read the burial service.

"They had put the Dutchman first upon the hatch (I could tell him by his stumpiness), and when at last the Old Man gave the signal, the second mate tilted his end, and he slid off, and down into the dark.

"'Poor old Dutchie,' I heard one of the men say, and I fancy we all felt a bit like that.

"Then they lifted Jacobs on to the hatch, and when he had gone, Jock. When Jock was lifted, a sort of sudden shiver ran through the crowd. He had been a favourite in a quiet way, and I know I felt, all at once, just a bit queer. I was standing by the rail, upon the after bollard, and Tammy was next to me; while Plummer stood a little behind. As the second mate tilted the hatch for the last time, a little, hoarse chorus broke from the men:

"'S'long, Jock! So long, Jock!'

"And then at the sudden plunge, they rushed to the side to see the last of him as he went downwards. Even the second mate was not able to resist this universal feeling, and he, too, peered over. From where I had been standing, I had been able to see the body take the water, and now, for a brief couple of seconds, I saw the white of the canvas, blurred by the blue of the water, dwindle and dwindle in the extreme depth. Abruptly, as I stared, it disappeared—too abruptly, it seemed to me.

"'Gone!' I heard several voices say, and then our watch began to go slowly forward, while one or two of the other started to replace the hatch.

"Tammy pointed, and nudged me.

"'See, Jessop,' he said. 'What is it?'



"'What?' I asked.

"'That queer shadow,' he replied. 'Look!'

"And then I saw what he meant. It was something big and shadowy, that appeared to be growing clearer. It occupied the exact place—so it seemed to me—in which Jock had disappeared.

"'Look at it!' said Tammy again. 'It's getting bigger!'

"He was pretty excited and so was I.

"I was peering down. The thing seemed to be rising out of the depths. It was taking shape. And as I realized what the shape was, a queer, cold bunk took me.

"'See,' said Tammy. 'It's just like the shadow of a ship!'

"And it was. The shadow of a ship rising out of the unexplored immensity beneath our keel. Plummer, who had not yet gone forrard, caught Tammy's last remark, and glanced over.

"'What's 'e mean?' he asked.

"'That!' replied Tammy, and pointed.

"I jabbed my elbow into his ribs; but it was too late. Plummer had seen. Curiously enough, though, he seemed to think nothing of it.

"'That ain't nothin', 'cept ther shadder er ther ship,' he said.

"Tammy, after my hint, let it go at that. But when Plummer had gone forrard with the others, I told him not to go telling everything round the decks, like that.

"'We've got to be thundering careful!' I remarked. 'You know what the Old Man said last watch!'

"'Yes,' said Tammy. 'I wasn't thinking; but I'll be more careful next time.'

"A little away from me, the second mate was still staring down into the water. I turned and spoke to him.

"'What do you make it out to be, sir?' I asked.

"'God knows!' he said, with a quick glance round to see whether any of the men were about.

"He got down from the rail, and turned to go up on to the poop. At the top of the ladder, he leant over the break.

"'You may as well ship that gangway, you two,' he told us. 'And mind, Jessop, keep your mouth shut about this.'

"'Aye, aye, sir,' I answered.

"'And you too, youngster!' he added, and went aft along the poop.

"Tammy and I were busy with the gangway, when the second came back. He had brought the skipper.

"'Right under the gangway, sir,' I heard the second say, and he

pointed down into the water.

"For a little while, the Old Man stared. Then I heard him speak.

"'I don't see anything,' he said.

"At that the second mate bent more forward and peered down. So did I; but the thing, whatever it was, had gone completely.

"'It's gone, sir,' said the second. 'It was there right enough when I came for you.'

"About a minute later, having finished shipping the gangway, I was going forrard, when the second's voice called me back.

"'Tell the captain what it was you saw just now,' he said in a low voice.

"'I can't say exactly, sir,' I replied. 'But it seemed to me like the shadow of a ship, rising up through the water.'

"'There, sir,' remarked the second mate to the Old Man. 'Just what I told you.'

"The skipper stared at me.

"'You're quite sure?' he asked.

"'Yes, sir,' I answered. 'Tammy saw it too.'

"I waited a minute. Then they turned to go aft. The second was saying something.

"'Can I go, sir?' I asked.

"'Yes, that will do, Jessop,' he said, over his shoulder. But the Old Man came back to the break, and spoke to me.

"'Remember, not a word of this forrard!' he said.

"'No, sir,' I replied, and he went back to the second mate; while I walked forrard to the fo'cas'le to get something to eat.

"'Your whack's in the kid, Jessop,' said Tom, as I stepped in over the washboard. 'An' I got your limejuice in my pannikin.'

"'Thanks,' I said, and sat down.

"As I stowed away my grub, I took no notice of the chatter of the others. I was too stuffed with my own thoughts. That shadow of a vessel rising, you know, out of the profound depths, had impressed me tremendously. It had not been imagination. Three of us had seen it—really four; for Plummer distinctly saw it, though he failed to recognize it as anything extraordinary.

"As you can understand, I thought a lot about this shadow of a vessel. But, I am sure, for a time, my ideas must just have gone in an everlasting, blind circle. And then I got another thought; for I got thinking of the figures I had seen aloft in the early morning; and I began to imagine fresh things. You see, the first thing that



had come up over the side had come out of the sea. And it had gone back. And now there was this shadow vessel-thing—ghost-ship I called it. It was a damned good name, too. And the dark, noiseless men—I thought a lot on these lines. Unconsciously, I put a question to myself, aloud:

"'Were they the crew?'

"'Eh?' said Jaskett, who was on the next chest.

"I took hold of myself, as it were, and glanced at him, in an apparently careless manner.

"'Did I speak?' I asked.

"'Yes, mate,' he replied, eyeing me, curiously. 'Yer said sumthin' about a crew.'

"'I must have been dreaming,' I said; and rose up to put away my plate.

### THE GREAT GHOST SHIP

"Next morning, when we were called again, at a quarter to four, the man who had roused us out, had some queer information.

"'Toppin's gone—clean vanished! he told us as we began to turn out. 'I never was in such a damned, hair-raisin' hooker as this here. It ain't safe to go about the bloomin' decks.'

"'oo's gone?' asked Plummer, sitting up suddenly and throwing his legs over his bunk-board.

"'Toppin, one of the 'prentices,' replied the man. 'We've been huntin' all over the bloomin' show. We're still at it—but we'll never find him,' he ended with a sort of gloomy assurance.

"'Oh, I dunno,' said Quoin. 'P'raps 'e's snoozin' somewheres 'bout.'

"'Not him,' replied the man. 'I tell you we've turned everythin' upside down. He's not aboard the bloomin' ship.'

"'Where was he when they last saw him?' I asked. 'Someone must know something, you know!'

"'Keepin' time up on the poop,' he replied. 'The Old Man's nearly shook the life out of the mate and the chap at the wheel. And they say they don't know nothin'.'

"'How do you mean?' I inquired. 'How do you mean, nothing?'

"'Well,' he answered. 'The youngster was there one minute, and then the next they knew, he'd gone. They've both sworn black an' blue that there wasn't a whisper. He's just disappeared off of the face of the bloomin' earth.'

"I got down on to my chest, and reached for my boots.

"Before I could speak again, the man was saying something fresh.

"See here, mates," he went on. "If things is goin' on like this, I'd like to know where you an' me'll be befor' long!"

"We'll be in 'ell," said Plummer.

"I dunno as I like to think 'bout it," said Quoin.

"We'll have to think about it!" replied the man. "We've got to think a bloomin' lot about it. I've talked to our side, an' they're game."

"Game for what?" I asked.

"To go an' talk straight to the bloomin' captin," he said, wagging his finger at me. "It's make tracks for the nearest bloomin' port, an' don't you make no bloomin' mistake."

"I opened my mouth, to tell him that the probability was we should not be able to make it, even if he could get the Old Man to see the matter from his point of view. Then I remembered that the chap had no idea of the things I had seen and thought out; so, instead, I said:

"Supposing he won't?"

"Then we'll have to bloomin' well make him," he replied.

"And when you got there," I said. "What then? You'd be jolly well locked up for mutiny."

"I'd sooner be locked up," he said. "It don't kill you!"

"There was a murmur of agreement from the others, and then a moment of silence, in which, I know, the men were thinking.

"Jaskett's voice broke into it.

"I never thought at first as she was 'aunted—" he commenced; but Plummer cut in across his speech.

"We mustn't 'urt anyone, yer know," he said. "That'd mean 'angin', an' they ain't been er bad crowd."

"No," assented everyone, including the chap who had come to call us.

"All the same," he added. "It's got to be up helm an' shove her into the nearest bloomin' port."

"Yes," said everyone, and then eight bells went, and we cleared out on deck.

"Presently, after roll-call—in which there had come a queer, awkward little pause at Toppin's name—Tammy came over to me. The rest of the men had gone forrard, and I guessed they were talking over mad plans for forcing the skipper's hand, and making him put



into port—poor beggars!

"I was leaning over the port rail, by the fore brace-block, staring down into the sea, when Tammy came to me. For perhaps a minute he said nothing. When at last he spoke, it was to say that the shadow vessels had not been there since daylight.

"'What,' I said, in some surprise. 'How do you know?'

"'I woke up when they were searching for Toppins,' he replied. 'I've not been asleep since. I came here, right away.' He began to say something further; but stopped short.

"'Yes,' I said encouragingly.

"'I didn't know—' he began, and broke off. He caught my arm. 'Oh, Jessop!' he exclaimed. 'What's going to be the end of it all! Surely something can be done?'

"I said nothing. I had a despairing feeling that there was very little we could do to help ourselves.

"'Can't we do something?' he asked, and shook my arm. 'Anything's better than this! We're being murdered!'

"Still, I said nothing; but stared moodily down into the water. I could find nothing convincing to tell him.

"'Do you hear!' he said. He was almost crying.

"'Yes, Tammy,' I replied. 'But I don't know! I don't know!'

"'You don't know!' he exclaimed. 'You don't know! Do you mean we're just to give in, and be murdered one after another?'

"'We've done all we can,' I replied. 'I don't know what else we can do, unless we go below and lock ourselves in, every night.'

"'That would be better than this,' he said. 'There'll be no one to go below, or anything else, soon!'

"'But what if it came on to blow?' I asked. 'We'd be having the sticks blown out of her.'

"'What if it came on to blow now?' he returned. 'No one would go aloft, if it were dark. Beside, we could shorten her right down first. I tell you, in a few days there won't be a chap alive aboard this packet, unless they jolly well do something!'

"'Don't shout,' I warned him. 'You'll have the Old Man hearing you.' But the young beggar was wound up, and would take no notice.

"'I will shout,' he replied. 'I want the Old Man to hear. I've a good mind to go up and tell him.'

"He started on a fresh tack.

"'Why don't the men do something!' he began. 'They ought to damn well make the Old Man put us into port! They ought—'

"'For goodness' sake shut up, you little fool!' I said. 'What's the good of talking a lot of damned rot like that? You'll be getting yourself into trouble.'

"'I don't care,' he replied. 'I'm not going to be murdered.'

"'Look here,' I said. 'I told you before that we shouldn't be able to see the land, even if we made it.'

"'You've no proof,' he answered. 'It's only your idea.'

"'Well,' I replied. 'Proof, or no proof, the skipper would only pile her up, if he tried to make the land, with things as they are now.'

"'Let him pile her up,' he answered. 'Let him jolly well pile her up! That would be better than staying out here to be pulled overboard, or chucked down from aloft!'

"'Look here, Tammy—' I began; but just then the second mate sung out for him, and he had to go. When he came back, I had started to walk to and fro, across the fore side of the mainmast. He joined me, and after a minute he started his wild talk again.

"'Look here, Tammy,' I said once more. 'It's no use your talking like you've been doing. Things are as they are, and it's no one's fault, and nobody can help it. If you want to talk sensibly, I'll listen; if not, then go and gas to someone else.'

"With that I returned to the port side, and got up on the spar again, intending to sit on the pinrail, and have a bit of a talk with him. Before sitting down, I glanced over into the sea. The action had been almost mechanical; yet, after a few instants, I was in a state of the most intense excitement, and without withdrawing my gaze, I reached out and caught Tammy's arm to attract his attention.

"'My God!' I muttered. 'Look!'

"'What is it?' he asked, and bent over the rail beside me. And this is what we saw: A little distance below the surface there lay a pale-coloured, slightly-domed disk. It seemed only a few feet down. Below it we saw quite clearly, after a few moments staring, the shadow of a royal yard, and below it the gear and standing-rigging of a great mast. Far down among the shadows, I thought, presently, that I could make out the immense, indefinite stretch of vast decks.

"Tammy gave out a short exclamation, as though an idea had come to him; and got down off the spar, and ran forrard on to the fo'-cas'le head. He came running back, after a short look into the sea,



to tell me that there was the truck of another great mast coming up there, a bit off the bow, to within a few feet of the surface of the sea.

"In the meantime, you know, I had been staring like mad down through the water at the huge, shadowy mast just below me. I had traced out bit by bit, until now I could clearly see the jackstay, running along the top of the royal mast; and, you know, the royal itself was set.

"But, you know, what was getting at me, more than anything, was a feeling that there was movement down in the water there, among the rigging. I thought I could actually see, at times, things moving and glinting faintly and rapidly to and fro in the gear. And once, I know, I was practically certain that something was on the royal yard, moving in to the mast; as though, you know, it might have come up the leech of the sail. And this way I got a beastly feeling that there were things swarming down there.

"Unconsciously, I must have leant further and further out over the side, staring; and, suddenly—good Lord! how I yelled!—I overbalanced. I made a sweeping grab, and caught the fore brace, and with that I was back in a moment upon the spar. In the same second, almost, it seemed to me that the surface of the water above the submerged truck was broken, and I am sure now I saw something a moment in the air against the ship's side—a sort of shadow in the air, though I did not realize it at the time. Anyway, the next instant, Tammy gave out an awful scream, and was head downwards over the rail in a moment. I had an idea then that he was jumping overboard. I collared him by the waist of his britches and one knee, and then I had him down on the deck and sat plump on him, for he was struggling and shouting all the time, and I was so breathless and shaken and gone to mush I could not have trusted my hands to hold him. You see, I never thought then it was anything but some influence at work on him, and that he was trying to get loose to go over the side. But I know now that I saw the shadow-man that had him. Only, at the time, I was so mixed up and with the one idea in my head, I was not really able to notice anything properly. But, afterwards, I comprehended a bit (you can understand, can't you?) what I had seen at the time without taking in.

"And even now, looking back, I know that the shadow was only like a faint-seen greyness in the daylight, against the whiteness of the decks, clinging against Tammy.



"And there was I, all breathless and sweating and quivery with my own tumble, sitting on the little, screeching beggar, and he fighting like a mad thing, so that I thought I should never hold him. And then I heard the second mate shouting, and there came running feet along the deck. Then many hands were pulling and hauling to get me off him.

"'Bl—dy coward!' sung out someone.

"'Hold him! Hold him!' I shouted. 'He'll be overboard!'

"At that, they seemed to understand that I was not ill-treating the youngster, for they stopped mishandling me and allowed me to rise, while two of them took hold of Tammy and kept him safe.

"'What's the matter with him?' the second mate was singing out. 'What's happened?'

"'He's gone off his head, I think,' I said.

"'What?' asked the second mate. But before I could answer him Tammy ceased suddenly to struggle, and flopped down upon the deck.

"'E's fainted,' said Plummer, with some sympathy. He looked at me with a puzzled, suspicious air. 'What's 'appened? What's 'e been doin'?'

"'Take him aft into the berth!' ordered the second mate, a bit abruptly. It struck me that he wished to prevent questions. He must have tumbled to the fact that we had seen something, about which it would be better not to tell the crowd.

"Plummer stooped to lift the boy.

"'No,' said the second mate. 'Not you, Plummer. Jessop, you take him.' He turned to the rest of the men. 'That will do,' he told them, and they went forrard, muttering a little.

"I lifted the boy, and carried him aft.

"'No need to take him into the berth,' said the second mate. 'Put him down on the after hatch. I've sent the other lad for some brandy.'

"When the brandy came we dosed Tammy, and soon brought him 'round. He sat up, with a somewhat dazed air. Otherwise he seemed quiet and sane enough.

"'What's up?' he asked. He caught sight of the second mate. 'Have I been ill, sir?' he exclaimed.

"'You're all right now, youngster,' said the second mate. 'You've been a bit faint. You'd better go and lie down for a bit.'

"'I'm all right now, sir,' replied Tammy. 'I don't think—'

"'You do as you're told!' interrupted the second. 'Don't always



have to be told twice. If I want you, I'll send for you.'

"Tammy stood up, and made his way, in rather an unsteady fashion, into the berth. I fancy he was glad enough to lie down.

"'Now, then, Jessop,' exclaimed the second mate, turning to me. 'What's been the cause of all this? Out with it now—smart!'

"I commenced to tell him; but almost directly he put up his hand.

"'Hold on a minute,' he said. 'There's the breeze!'

"He jumped up the port ladder, and sung out to the chap at the wheel. Then down again.

"'Starboard fore brace!' he sung out. He turned to me. 'You'll have to finish telling me afterwards,' he said.

"'Aye, aye, sir,' I replied, and went to join the other chaps at the braces.

"As soon as we were braced sharp up on the port tack, he sent some of the watch up to loose the sails. Then he sung out for me.

"'Go on with your yarn, now, Jessop,' he said.

"I told him about the great shadow vessel, and I said something about Tammy—I mean, about my not being sure now whether he had tried to jump overboard. Because, you see, I began to realize that I had seen the shadow; and I remembered the stirring of the water above the submerged truck. But the second never waited, of course, for any theories; but was away, like a shot, to see for himself. He ran to the side and looked down. I followed and stood beside him; yet, now that the surface of the water was blurred by the wind, we could see nothing.

"'It's no good,' he remarked, after a minute. 'You'd better get away from the rail before any of the others see you. Just be taking those haulyards aft to the capstan.'

"From then until eight bells, we were hard at work getting the sail upon her, and when at last eight bells went I made haste to swallow my breakfast and get a sleep.

"At midday, when we went on deck for the afternoon watch, I ran to the side; but there was no sign of the great shadow ship. All that watch, the second mate kept me working at my paunch mat, and Tammy he put on to his sinnet, telling me to keep an eye on the youngster. But the boy was right enough, as I scarcely doubted now, you know; though—most unusual thing—he hardly opened his lips the whole afternoon. Then, at four o'clock, we went below for tea.

"At four bells, when we came on deck again, I found that the light breeze which had kept us going during the day had dropped,



and we were only just moving. The sun was low down and the sky clear. Once or twice, as I glanced across the horizon, it seemed to me that I caught again the odd quiver in the air that had preceded the coming of the mist; and, indeed, on two separate occasions, I saw a thin wisp of haze drive up, apparently out of the sea. This was at some little distance on our port beam; otherwise, all was quiet and peaceful, and, though I peered into the sea, I could make out no vestige of that great shadow ship in the deep.

"It was some little time after six bells, that the order came for all hands to shorten sail for the night. We took in the royals and t'gallants, and then the three courses. It was shortly after this that a rumour went 'round the ship that there was to be no lookout that night after eight o'clock. This naturally created a good deal of talk among the men; especially as the yarn went that the fo'cas'le doors were to be shut and fastened as soon as it was dark, and that no one was to be allowed on deck.

"'oo's goin' ter take ther wheels?' I heard Plummer ask.

"I s'pose they'll 'ave us take 'em as usual,' replied one of the men. 'One of ther officers is bound ter be on the poop, so we'll 'ave company.'

"Apart from these remarks, there was a general opinion that—if it were true—it was a sensible act on the part of the skipper. As one of the men said:

"'It ain't likely as there'll be any of us missin' in ther mornin' if we stays in our bunks all ther blessed night.'

"And soon after this, eight bells went.

#### THE GHOST PIRATES

"At the moment when eight bells actually went I was in the fo'cas'le, talking to three or four of the other watch. Suddenly, away aft, I heard shouting, and then on the deck overhead came the loud thudding of someone pumping with a capstan-bar. Straightaway, I turned and made a run for the port doorway, along with the four other men. We rushed out through the doorway onto the deck. It was getting dusk, but that did not hide from me a terrible and extraordinary sight. All along the port rail there was a queer, undulating grey-ness, that moved downwards inboard, and spread over the decks. As I looked, I found that I saw more clearly, in a most extraordinary way. And, suddenly, all the moving grey-ness resolved into hundreds of strange men. In the half-light they looked unreal and impossible,



as though there had come upon us the inhabitants of some fantastic dream-world. My God! I thought I was mad. They swarmed in upon us in a great wave of murderous, living shadows. From some of the men, who must have been going aft for roll-call, there rose in the evening air a loud, awful shouting.

"Aloft!" yelled someone; but, as I looked aloft, I saw that the horrible things were swarming there in scores and scores.

"Jesus Christ!" shrieked a man's voice, cut short, and my glance dropped from aloft, to find two of the men who had come out from the fo'cas'le with me, rolling upon the deck. They were two indistinguishable masses that writhed here and there across the planks. The brutes fairly covered them. From them came muffled, little shrieks and gasps; and there I stood, and with me two other men. A man dashed past us into the fo'cas'le, with two grey men on his back, and I heard them kill him. The two men by me ran, suddenly, across the fore hatch, and up the starboard ladder onto the fo'cas'le head. Yet, almost in the same instant, I saw several of the grey men disappear up the other ladder. From the fo'cas'le head above, I heard the two men commence to shout, and this died away into a loud scuffling. At that I turned to see whether I could get away. I stared 'round hopelessly, and then, with two jumps, I was on the pigsty, and from there upon the top of the deckhouse. I threw myself flat, and waited, breathlessly.

"All at once, it seemed to me that it was darker than it had been the previous moment, and I raised my head very cautiously. Then I saw that the ship was enveloped in great billows of mist, and then, not six feet from me, I made out someone lying face downwards. It was Tammy. I felt safer, now that we were hidden by the mist, and I crawled to him. He gave a quick gasp of terror when I touched him; but when he saw who it was he started to sob, like a little child.

"Hush!" I said. 'For God's sake, be quiet!' But I need not have troubled, for the shrieks of the men being killed, down on the decks all around us, drowned every other sound.

"I knelt up and glanced round, and then aloft. Overhead I could make out dimly the spars and sails, and now, as I looked, I saw that the t'gallants and royals had been unloosed and were hanging in the buntlines. Almost in the same moment the terrible crying of the poor beggars about the decks ceased, and there succeeded an awful silence, in which I could distinctly hear Tammy sobbing. I reached out and shook him.





*'a great wave of murderous, living shadows'*



"Be quiet! Be quiet!" I whispered, intensely. 'They'll hear us!'

"At my touch and whisper he struggled to become silent, and then, overhead, I saw the six yards being swiftly mastheaded. Scarcely were the sails set when I heard the swish and flick of gaskets being cast adrift on the lower yards, and realized that ghostly things were at work there.

"For a minute or so there was silence, and I made my way cautiously to the after end of the house, and peered over. Yet, because of the mist, I could see nothing. Then, abruptly, from behind me, came a single wail of sudden pain and terror from Tammy. It ended instantly in a sort of choke. I stood up in the mist and ran back to where I had left the kid; but he had gone. I stood dazed. I felt like shrieking out loud. Above me, I heard the flaps of the courses being tumbled off the yards. Down upon the decks there were the noises of a multitude working in a weird, inhuman silence. Then came the squeal and rattle of blocks and braces aloft. They were squaring the yards.

"I remained standing. I watched the yards squared, and then I saw the sails fill suddenly. An instant afterwards the deck of the house upon which I stood became slanted forrard. The slope increased, so that I could scarcely stand, and I grabbed at one of the wire-winchcs. I wondered what was happening. Almost directly afterwards, from the decks around, rose a loud, simultaneous, hoarse crying. This grew into an intense screaming that shook my heart up. Then a breath of cold wind seemed to play in the mist, and I could see down the slope of the deck. I looked below me, towards the bows. The jibboom was plunged right into the water, and as I stared the bows disappeared into the sea. The deck of the house became a wall to me, and I was swinging from the winch, which was now above my head. I watched the ocean lip over the edge of the fo'cas'le head, and rush down onto the main deck, roaring into the empty fo'cas'le. And still all around me came the crying of the lost sailormen. I heard something strike the corner of the house above me, with a dull thud, and then I saw Plummer plunge down into the flood beneath. I remembered that he had been at the wheel. The next instant the water had leapt to my feet; there came a drear chorus of bubbling screams, a roar of waters, and I was going swiftly down into the darkness. I let go of the winch and struck out madly, trying to hold my breath. There was a loud singing in my ears. It grew louder. I opened my mouth. I felt I was dying. And then, thank God!, I was at the surface, breathing. For a moment I was blinded with the water, and my agony of breathlessness. Then, growing easier,

I brushed the water from my eyes, and so, not three hundred yards away, I made out a large ship, floating almost motionless. At first, I could scarcely believe I saw aright. Then, as I realized that indeed there was yet a chance of living, I started to swim towards you.

"You know the rest——"



## *Carnacki, the Ghost Finder*

"Now," said Carnacki reminiscently, "I'll tell you some of my experiences. In that case of 'The House Among the Laurels,' which was supposed to be haunted, and had a 'blood-drip' that warned you, I spent a night there with some Irish constabulary. Wentworth, who owned the place, was with me, and I drew a pentacle round the lot of us in the big hall and put portions of bread and jars of water and candles round it. Then I fixed up the electric pentacle and put a tent over us, and we waited with our weapons. I had two dogs out in the hall with us, and I had sealed all the doors except the main entrance, which I had hooked open. Suddenly I saw the hook of the door slowly raised by some invisible thing, and I immediately took a flashlight photograph. Then the door was slowly closed. Perhaps an hour and a half of absolute silence passed, except when once in a while the dogs would whine distressfully. Then I saw that the candle before one of the sealed doors had been put out, and then, one after another, every candle in the great hall was extinguished, except those round the pentacle.

"Another hour passed, and in all that time no sound broke the stillness. I was conscious of a sense of awful strain and oppression, as though I were a little spirit in the company of some invisible brooding monster of the unseen world who, as yet, was scarcely conscious of us. I could not get rid of this sense of a presence, and I leaned across to Wentworth and asked him in a whisper whether he had a feeling as if something was in the room. He looked very pale and his eyes kept always on the move. He glanced just once at me and nodded, then stared away round the hall again. And, when I came to think, I was doing the same thing. Abruptly, as though a hundred unseen hands had snuffed them, every candle in the barrier went dead out, and we were left in a darkness that seemed, for a little, absolute, for the fire had sunk into a low, dull mound of red, and the light from the pentacle was too weak and pale to penetrate far across the great hall. I tell you, for a moment, I just sat there as though I had been frozen solid. I felt the 'creep' go all over me, and it seemed to stop in my brain. I felt all at



once to be given a power of hearing that was far beyond the normal. I could hear my own heart thudding most extraordinarily loud. I began to feel better after a little, but I simply had not the pluck to move. Presently I began to get my courage back. I gripped at my camera and flashlight and waited. My hands were simply soaked with sweat. I glanced once at Wentworth. I could see him only dimly. His shoulders were hunched a little, his head forward, but, though it was motionless, I knew that his eyes were not. The other men were just as silent. And thus a while passed.

"A sudden sound broke across the silence. From three sides of the room there came faint noises. I recognized them at once—the breaking of sealing wax. The sealed doors were opening. I raised the camera and flashlight, and it was a peculiar mixture of fear and courage that helped me to press the button. As the great flare of light lit up the hall I felt the men all about me jump. It was thoughtless of me perhaps to have fired it without warning them, but there was no time even if I had remembered. The darkness fell again, but seemingly tenfold. Yet, in the moment of brightness, I had seen that all the sealed doors were wide open.

"Suddenly, upon the top of the tent, there sounded a drip, drip, drip, falling on the canvas. I thrilled with a queer, realizing emotion and a sense of very real and present danger—imminent. The 'blood-drip' had commenced. And the grave question was, Would the pentacles and the circles save us?

"Through some awful minutes the 'blood-drip' continued to fall in an ever-increasing rain. Beyond this noise there was no other sound. And then, abruptly, from the boardwalk farthest from the entrance there came a terrible yelling howl of agony followed, instantly, by a sickening, snicking, breaking noise and an abrupt silence. If you have ever, when out shooting, broken a rabbit's neck, you'll know the sound—in miniature. Like lightning the thought sprang into my brain: it has crossed the pentacle. For, you will remember that I had made one about each of the dogs. I thought instantly, with sickening apprehension, of our own barrier. There was something in the hall with us that had passed the barrier of the pentacle about one of the dogs. In the awful succeeding silence I positively quivered. And suddenly one of the men behind me gave out a scream, like any woman, and bolted for the door. He fumbled and had it open in a moment. I yelled to the others not to move, but they followed like sheep. I heard them kick the water jars in



their panic, and one of them stepped on the electric pentacle and smashed it. In a moment I realized that I was defenceless against the powers of the unknown world, and with one leap I followed, and we raced down the drive like frightened boys.

"Well, we cooled down in a bit and I went to the inn where I was staying and developed my photos. Then, in one of them, I saw that a wire was juggling with the hook of the entrance door, so I went back to the house and got in quietly through a back window and found a whole lot of chaps who had just come out of a secret doorway. They proved to be members of a secret society. They all escaped, but I guess I laid the ghost. You see, they were trying to keep the house empty for their own uses.

"Then in that business of 'The Gateway of the Monster' I spent a night in the haunted bedroom alone in the electric pentacle, and very nearly got snuffed out, as you'll see. I had a cat die in the room. This is what happened: I had been in the pentacle some time, just like in the last business, only quite alone, when, suddenly, I was aware of a cold wind sweeping over me. It seemed to come from the corner of the room to the left of the bed—the place where both times I had found the bedclothes tossed in a heap. Yet I could see nothing unusual—no opening—nothing. And then, abruptly, I was aware that the candles were all a-flicker in the unnatural wind. I believe I just squatted there and stared in a sort of horribly frightened, wooden way for some minutes. And then flick! flick! flick! all the candles round the outer barrier went out, and there I was locked and sealed in that room, and with no light beyond the queer weakish blue glare of the electric pentacle. Still that wind blew upon me, and then, suddenly, I knew that something stirred in the corner next to the bed. I was made conscious of it rather by some inward, unused sense than by the sight or sound, for the pale, short-radius glare of the pentacle gave but a very poor light to see by. Yet I stared and stared, and abruptly it began to grow upon my sight—a moving something, a little darker than the surrounding shadows. I lost the vague sight I had of it, and for a moment or two I glanced swiftly from side to side with a fresh new sense of impending danger. Then my attention was directed to the bed. All the coverings were being drawn steadily off with a hateful, stealthy sort of motion. I heard the slow, dragging slither of the clothes, but I could see nothing of the thing that pulled.

"The faint noises from the bed ceased once, and there was a most

intense silence. The slurring sound of the bedclothes being dragged off recommenced. And then, you know, all in a moment, the whole of the bed coverings were torn off with extraordinary violence, and I heard the flump they made as they were hurled into the corner.

"There was a time of absolute quietness then for perhaps a couple of minutes, and none can imagine how horribly I felt. Then, over by the door, I heard a faint noise—a sort of crickling sound, and then a patter or two upon the floor. A great nervous thrill swept over me, for the seal that secured the door had just been broken. Something was there. And then it seemed to me that something dark and indistinct moved and wavered there among the shadows. Abruptly, I was aware that the door was opening. I reached out for my camera, but before I could aim it the door was slammed with a terrific crash that filled the whole room with a sort of hollow thunder. There seemed such a power behind the noise, as though a vast, wanton force were 'out.' The door was not touched again, but directly afterwards I heard the basket, in which the cat lay, creak. I tell you I fairly pringled. Now, at last, I should learn definitely whether whatever was abroad was dangerous to life. From the cat there rose suddenly a hideous caterwaul that ceased abruptly, and then—too late—I snapped on the flashlight. In the great glare I saw that the basket had been overturned and the lid was wrenched open, with the cat lying half-in and half-out upon the floor. I saw nothing else. But I was full of the knowledge that I was in the presence of some being or thing that had power to destroy.

"I was half-blinded because of the flashlight. Abruptly I saw the thing I was looking for close to the 'water-circle.' It was big and indistinct and wavered curiously, as though the shadow of a vast spider hung suspended in the air just beyond the barrier. It passed swiftly round the circle and seemed to probe ever towards me, but only to draw back with extraordinary jerky movements, as might a living person if he touched the hot bar of a grate. Round and round it moved, and round and round I turned. Then, just opposite to one of the 'vales' in the pentacles, it seemed to pause, as though preliminary to a tremendous effort. It retired almost beyond the circle of the pentacle's glow and then came straight toward me, appearing to gather form and solidity as it came. I got a most terrible feeling of horror, for there seemed such a vast malign determination behind the movement that it must succeed. I was on my knees, and I fell over onto my left hand and hip in a wild endeavour to get back from



the advancing thing. With my right hand I was grabbing madly for my revolver, though, as you can imagine, my look never left the horrible thing. The brutal thing came with one great sweep straight over the garlic and the 'water-circle' right almost to the pentacle. I believe I yelled. Then, just as suddenly as it had swept over, it seemed to be hurled back by some mighty invisible force. I'd learnt something. I knew now that the grey room was haunted by a monstrous hand!

"Suddenly I saw what had so nearly given the monster an opening through the barrier. In my movements within the pentacle I must have touched one of the jars of water for, just where the thing had made its attack, the jar that guarded the 'deep' of the 'vale' had been moved to one side, and this had left one of the five 'doorways' unguarded. I put it back quickly and felt almost safe again. The 'defence' was still good and I began to hope again I should see the morning come in.

"For a long time I could not see the hand, but presently I thought I saw, once or twice, an odd wavering over among the shadows near the door. Then, as though in a sudden fit of malignant rage, the dead body of the wretched cat was picked up and beaten with dull, sickening blows against the solid floor. A minute afterwards the door was opened and slammed twice with tremendous force. The next instant, the thing made one swift, vicious dart straight at me from out of the shadows. Instinctively I started sideways from it, and so plucked my hand from upon the electric pentacle where, for a wickedly careless moment, I had placed it. The monster was hurled off from the neighbourhood of the pentacles, though, owing to my inconceivably foolish act, it had been enabled for a second time to pass the outer barriers. I can tell you I shook for a time with sheer funk. Then I moved right to the centre of the pentacles and knelt there, making myself as small and compact as possible.

"I spent the rest of that night in a haze of sick fright. At times the ghastly thing would go round and round the outer ring, grabbing in the air at me, and twice the dead cat was molested. Then the dawn came and the unnatural wind ceased. I jumped over the pentacles, and in ten seconds I was out of the room and safe. That day I found a queer ring in the corner from which the wind had come, and I knew it had something to do with the haunting, so that night I stayed in the pentacle again, having the ring with me. About eleven o'clock a queer knowledge came that something was near to me, and then an hour later I felt the wind blow up from the floor within the pentacle, and I





*'the hand, vast and nearly perfect in form'*



looked down.

"I continued to stare down. The ring was there, and suddenly I was aware that there was something queer about it—funny shadowy movements and convolutions. I stared stupidly, though alert enough to fear, and then abruptly I knew that the wind was blowing up at me from the ring. A queer, indistinct smoke became visible, seeming to pour upward through the ring. Suddenly I realized that I was in more than mortal danger, for the convoluting shadows about the ring were taking shape and the death-hand was forming within the pentacle. It was coming through, pouring through into the material world, even as a gas might pour out from the mouth of a pipe. With a mad awkward movement, I snatched the ring, intending to hurl it out of the pentacle; yet it eluded me, as though some invisible, living thing jerked it hither and thither. At last I gripped it, yet in the same instant it was torn from my grasp with incredible and brutal force. A great black shadow covered it and rose into the air and came at me. I saw that it was the hand, vast and nearly perfect in form. I gave one crazy yell and jumped over the pentacle and the ring of burning candles, and ran despairingly for the door. I fumbled idiotically and ineffectually with the key, and all the time I stared with a fear that was like insanity toward the barriers. The hand was plunging toward me; yet, even as it had been unable to pass into the pentacle when the ring was without, so, now that the ring was within, it had no power to pass out. The monster was chained, as surely as any beast would be were chains riveted upon it. I got the door open at last and locked it behind me and went to my bedroom. Next day I melted that ring, and the ghost has never been heard of since. Not bad, eh?

"Another case of mine—'The Horse of the Invisible'—was very queer. It was supposed, according to tradition, to haunt the daughter of a certain house during courtship. This began happening with the present generation, so they sent for me. After a lot of queer hauntings and attacks, I had decided to guard the girl closely and get the marriage performed quickly. On the last night, as I, with a Mr. Beaumont, was sitting outside of her door keeping guard, my companion motioned suddenly to me for absolute quiet. Directly afterward I heard the thing for which he listened—the sound of a horse galloping out in the night. I tell you, I fairly shivered. Some five minutes passed, full of what seemed like an almost unearthly quiet. And then suddenly, down the corridor, there sounded the clumping of



a great hoof, and instantly the lamp was thrown down with a tremendous smash, and we were in the dark. I tugged hard on the cord and blew the whistle, then I raised my snapshot and fired the flashlight. The corridor blazed into brilliant light, but there was nothing, and then the darkness fell like thunder. From up the corridor there came abruptly the horrible gobbling neighing that we had heard in the park and the cellar. I blew the whistle again and groped blindly for the cord, shouting in a queer, breathless voice to Beaumont to strike a match before that incredible, unseen monster was upon us. The match scraped on the box and flared up dully, and in the same instant I heard a faint sound behind me. I whipped round, wet tense with terror, and saw something in the faint light of the match—a monstrous horse head—close to Beaumont.

"Look out, Beaumont!" I shouted in a sort of scream. "It's behind you!"

"The match went out abruptly, and instantly there came the huge bang of a double-barrelled gun—both barrels at once—fired close to my ear. I caught a momentary glimpse of the great head in the flash, and of an enormous hoof amid the belch of smoke, seeming to be descending upon Beaumont. There was the sound of a dull blow, and then that horrible, gobbling neigh broke out close to me. Something struck me and I was knocked backward. I got on to my knees and shouted for help at the top of my voice. I heard the women screaming behind the locked door, and directly afterward I knew that Beaumont was struggling with some hideous thing, near to me. I squatted there half an instant, paralyzed with fear, and then I went blindly to help him, shouting his name. There came a little choking scream out of the darkness, and at that I jumped plunk into the dark. I gripped a vast furry ear. Then something struck me another great blow, knocking me sick. I hit back, weak and blind, and gripped with my other hand at the incredible thing. Abruptly I was aware that there were lights in the passage and a noise of feet and shouting. My hand grips were torn from the thing they held. I shut my eyes stupidly and heard a loud yell above me, then a heavy blow, like a butcher chopping meat, and something fell upon me.

"I was helped to my feet by the captain and the butler. On the floor lay an enormous horse head, out of which protuded a man's trunk and legs. On the wrists were fixed two great hoofs. It was the monster. The captain cut something with the sword that he held in his hand and stooped and lifted off the mask—for that is what it was.



I saw the face of the man then who had worn it. It was Parsket. He had a bad wound across the forehead where the captain's sword had bit through the mask. I looked stupidly from him to Beaumont, who was sitting up, leaning against the wall of the corridor.

"That's all there is to the yarn itself. Parsket was the girl's would-be lover, and it was he who had been doing the haunting all the time, trying to frighten off the other man by acting the ghost, dressed in a horse mask and hoofs. So I cleared that up all right.

"'The Whistling Room,' one of my later cases, was a disagreeable business and nearly finished me. Tassoc, the chap who owned the place, sent for me. He half thought it was some of the wild Irish playing a trick on him, for it was generally known that one of the rooms gave out a queer whistling. I searched a lot, but found nothing, and I'd begun to think it must be the Irishmen after all, only the whistling wouldn't stop. So one night, when it was whistling quietly, I got a ladder and climbed up gently to the window. Presently I had my face above the sill and was looking in alone with the moonlight.

"Of course, the queer whistling sounded louder up there, but it still conveyed that peculiar sense of something whistling quietly to itself. Can you understand? Though, for all the meditative lowness of the note, the horrible, gargantuan quality was distinct—a mighty parody of the human, as if I stood there and listened to the whistling from the lips of a monster with a man's soul.

"And then, you know, I saw something. The floor in the middle of the huge empty room was puckered upward in the centre into a strange, soft-looking mound that parted at the top into an ever-changing hole that pulsed ever to that great, gentle hooning. At times, as I watched, I saw it gape across with a queer inward suction, as with the drawing of an enormous breath; then the thing would dilate and pout once more to the incredible melody. And suddenly, as I stared dumbly, it came to me that the thing was living. I was looking at two enormous blackened lips, blistered and brutal, there in the pale moonlight . . . .

"Suddenly they bulged out to a vast, pouting mound of force and sound, stiffened and swollen, and hugely clean cut in the moonbeams, and a great sweat lay heavy on the vast upper lip. In the same moment of time the whistling had burst into a mad, screaming note that seemed to stun me even where I stood, outside of the window, and then the following moment I was staring blankly at the solid,





*'two enormous blackened lips, blistered and brutal'*



undisturbed floor of the room, smooth polished oak flooring from wall to wall, and there was an absolute silence. Can't you picture me staring into the quiet room and knowing what I knew? I felt like a sick, frightened kid, and wanted to slide quietly down the ladder and run away. In that very instant I heard Tassoc's voice calling to me, from within the room, for help! help! My God, but I got such an awful dazed feeling and such a vague, bewildered notion that, after all, it was the Irishmen who had got him in there and were taking it out of him! And then the call came again, and I burst the window and jumped in to help him. I had an idea that the call had come from within the shadow of the great fireplace, and I raced across to it, but there was no one there.

"Tassoc!" I shouted, and my voice went empty sounding round the room; and then, in a flash, I knew that Tassoc had never called. I whirled round, sick with fear, toward the window, and, as I did so, a frightful, exultant whistling scream burst through the room. On my left, the end wall had bellied in towards me in a pair of gargantuan lips, black and utterly monstrous, to within a yard of my face. I fumbled for a mad instant for my revolver—not for it, but myself, for the danger was a thousand times worse than death; and then suddenly the unknown last line of the Saaamaaa Ritual was whispered quite audibly in the room. Instantly the thing happened that I have known once before—there came a sense as of dust falling continually and monotonously, and I knew that my life hung uncertain and suspended for a flash, in a brief, reeling vertigo of unseeable things. Then that ended, and I knew I might live. My soul and body blended again and life and power came to me. I dashed furiously at the window and hurled myself out head foremost; for I can tell you I had stopped being afraid of death. I crashed down onto the ladder and slithered, grabbing and grabbing, and so came some way or other alive to the bottom. And there I sat in the soft, wet grass, with the moonlight all about me, and far above, through the broken window of the room, there was a low whistling.

"That's the chief of it. I was not hurt. So, you see, the room was really haunted after all and we had to pull it down and burn it. That's another business I managed to clear up."

## *Bibliography*

William Hope Hodgson's total fictional output is relatively modest, with short stories, in a variety of 'genres', considerably outweighing book-length publications. The following listing is by no means a definitive one, being restricted to Hodgson's fantasy output published in volume form in the English language. In each case, with one exception, the edition listed is the first edition.

The information for this bibliography has been derived from two principal sources. Firstly, from the books themselves, either in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, or in my own personal collection. Secondly, from 'The Fiction of William Hope Hodgson: A Working Bibliography' compiled by Mike Ashley, with help from Richard Dalby, published in issue 15 of The Science Fiction Collector.

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