

In confidence she told herself that from the first she knew she could love and honour the noble Gerizam Gray, master mariner. And he did not require any prompting from a book to assure her that he would do all in his power to make her happy as long as he lived.

Directly he saw Mrs. Newton, he informed her that he wished to have a private interview with her. Miss Boyd disappeared.

"Well, Captain, you wish to speak to me?"

"Yes, Mrs. Newton," he replied boldly. "I want to talk to you about your niece, who has agreed to be my wife in four weeks' time—of course with your consent. I've bought the house and she has approved of it. We intend to rig up the furniture at once."

It was some minutes before the aunt replied. Gray thought it hours.

"So, Captain Gray," she said, "my niece has consented to be your wife?"

"Yes," said Gray, smiling. "And I'm proud of it, and she shall never have cause to regret it."

"I trust not, Captain. She is old enough to know her own mind. At the same time this has been very sudden."

"Perhaps so," responded the skipper. "When I get a fair wind, I make good use of it."

"Yes; I think you do!" replied Mrs. Newton laughing.

"Then you make no objection, Mrs. Newton?"

"No, Captain. If my niece is satisfied, it is all right. She is marrying you—I'm not."

"That's a fact," innocently answered Gray. "I never thought of that."

On his way home he again wondered what James would have to say about his engagement. There would be a scene, he was confident of that.

"Ah well," he soliloquised, as he thought of Mrs. Newton's remark, "he's not going to marry her, though—not if I know it. All the

same he can come to live with us after we're settled, if he likes."

The next day he had arranged to take his intended for a drive. He had been out to see that Dick was in good condition, and was sitting on the verandah reading, when he was greeted familiarly from the road by a man shabbily dressed. He looked up with surprise and saw a sailor who had sailed under him many years.

"Hullo, Backstay! What are you doing here?"

"On me beam ends, sir," answered the sailor, coming up to the verandah.

"What, haven't you left off the old game yet? I suppose as soon as you're paid off, you spend all your earnings in a few days?"

"'Shamed ter say that's what's appened, Capt'in."

"I thought as much. More fool you! What are you doing now?"

"Thinkin', sir, of tryin' a bit o' country life."

"How are you off for money?"

"'Ard up as can be, sir."

"Humph," grunted Gray. "Well, Backstay, I'll give you a job."

"Thank ye, sir."

"But remember, you must keep straight, or I'll have nothing more to do with you."

"Very good, sir," replied the happy sailor, touching his forelock.

"All right, said the skipper.

"Come inside and I'll rig you up a little decent. Had anything to eat?"

"Not fer some time, sir," quickly replied the sailor.

Captain Gray having "rigged him up with spic and span gear, and a good square feed," as he termed it, gave him some money and ordered him to return at 2 p.m. sharp.

Backstay was there to the minute, looking quite spruce.

"Now, said his commander, "I'm going to make you my coachman. Of course, I shall have charge of the steering gear, but you can stay aft and look after the anchors and so on."

"Ay, ay, sir. Yer give the