

out to sea a whole colony of glossy-plumaged black and white shags were fishing diligently. From the long surf-fringed curve of the Tera-whiti coast line on the one hand, to the dim blue ranges of the South Island looming low on the western horizon, the scene was enchanting enough to stir the admiration of the most unimaginative mind, and Fisherman Davis, peering dreamily out from under the brim of his old felt hat, presently caught some of the glamour of the surroundings, and harking back to old seafaring days, struck up the opening bars of "Blow the man down," in a voice that sent the solemn black-backed gulls sheering off to either side in consternation.

Heading against the full sweep of the flowing tide, the smack made slow work of her eight-mile run to the fishing-ground at the cape, an occurrence which did not seem to worry her navigators in the least. Indeed, just before fetching abreast of Ohau Bay, the "Pet" was put about and headed in towards the coast, a complete divergence from the usual course laid by Cape-bound smacks. Louie also, as if to complete the unusual appearance of things, cast the lashings off the little flat-bottomed dinghy that was carried amidships, and made all ready for launching it over the side. As the smack ran on towards the cliffs, at the feet of which the breakers lashed themselves in a fury of leaping spray, a long, brown kelp-matted reef appeared to detach itself from the rest of the coast, and reach out its gleaming fangs towards her. Round close under the lee of this Davis steered his craft skilfully, while Louie hauled down the jib and lowered the peak of the great brown mainsail, then, as the helm was put hard over, the smack shot round the smooth sea-washed end of a towering rock pedestal, and ran into the placid water of a sheltered corner among the reefs. Here the anchor was dropped, and next moment the two fishermen

were pulling shorewards along one of the narrow intricate lanes of water that marked the only passage in that direction. Under the shadow of the cliff they landed safely on the high shingle bank, and hauling the dinghy above the sweep of the breakers, made their way across the water-worn stones to where a narrow rift appeared in the smooth rocky face.

"Here we are, Louie," said Davis, pausing before it. "By George, the shingle has piled up with this last blow, there's only just room to crawl in now!"

He went down on hands and knees as he spoke, and crept in through the aperture. Louie followed close at his heels, and the next moment the two found themselves in a sort of deep twilight on the sandy floor of a lofty cave. A faint glimmer of light penetrated through the rift by which they had entered, and ahead of them a round-shaped aperture at the further end of the cave admitted a second pale illumination which lit up the wash and play of heaving water. As they paused a moment so that their eyes might become used to the darkness, the two were startled by a curious croaking noise coming from somewhere in front of them.

"How ees that?" whispered Louie in an awed voice.

"Dashed if I know," answered his companion in a melodramatic undertone. "Looks as if someone has sprung our plant, don't it, mate?"

"Sacrrre!" muttered the Frenchman. "If eet ees that Italian crew, we have heem safe!"

Davis's only reply to this comment was a sudden rush into the gloom ahead, and the next instant there rose the sounds of a great scuffling and wild outbursts of lurid language. Louie ran forward hastily, and, striking a match, discovered his mate struggling on the sand with some curious looking monster that fought desperately against him, giving vent at the same time to strange guttural cries.