

his hand to his head, and then swept it from him with the expressive gesture of one who sweeps away a noxious insect.

Then in a moment it flashed on me that he had been drinking, and I resolved to give the head steward a word of warning. My interest faded. Such cases were only too common, they wearied me. I ostentatiously returned to my work, hoping that he would take the hint and go. But he appeared to be interested, and bent towards me. I showed him the ship's course, and explained a few trifling matters. Suddenly he straightened himself and drew back.

I wished he would go away and leave me to my work, but he did not budge. I was getting tired of him, and expressed as much in my manner. He got up and moved restlessly up and down the limits of the narrow room. Suddenly he burst forth:

"I think I ought to tell you."

"Tell away, then."

"It's not easy. No, it's not easy, and you show so little interest!"

His tone had changed again, and was now full of an indescribable pathos which effected me strangely, though in my own mind I declared that he had only got into the maudlin



"THE SHIP IS DOOMED! DOOMED!"

"What does all that matter?" he said. "Follow what course you like, it will all come to the same. This ship is doomed, doomed!"

"Indeed!"

"Yes, we're all doomed! You, I, the whole world! Why should this ship escape?"

Certainly it was a bad case. We should have to keep an eye upon him till we got to Sydney. We had just left Wellington, and had a clear run of four days before us, and as we should touch at no other port during that time, we must make the best of our bad bargain, and keep him as short of liquor as we could.

and sentimental stage, and that a douche of cold water would be the best remedy.

"Captain," he broke out, "you're not attending! You think I'm drunk!"

"I think you have been drinking."

"I wish it was so, I wish it was nothing worse. But no! That's not it! I am mad! —I am mad!"

If the proverbial thunderbolt had fallen between us I could not have been more startled. I have had some strange experiences in my life. That was one of the strangest. I have stood at the edge of the grave, and looked into it unmoved. I was, perhaps, never nearer to it than at that moment.