

to see the handwriting of Mr. Hayden Norcross again."

"Ah, thank you," was the eager, beaming reply, the woman forgotten. "No doubt my son has written to tell me in what liner he has taken passage for home. A White Star boat, or a Cunarder, I presume."

THE storm had almost blown itself out, and the swollen seas that reared against a leaden horizon were sullenly subsiding. The Chilton Grange rolled as though weary of the battle for survival. Captain Nelson Sackett marked how slow and heavy was her motion, her natural buoyancy well nigh gone. His first mate stood beside him, a man whom life had whipped into uncomplaining fortitude. It was part of the scheme of existence, as he knew it, that mariners should be forced to go in unseaworthy vessels to earn their bread.

"Will she last through another night, sir?" he asked without emotion.

"I doubt it, Mr. Rhoades. When she settles a little lower we will try to get the boats away. I'm hoping something may happen along to pick us off before the poor old hooker founders."

"She never had a fair chance this voyage, sir. Crippled to begin with, and luck went against her."

"Right you are," said Captain Sackett, "and I feel sorry for her."

"Queer—awful queer, isn't it, sir, that the owner's son should have shoved himself aboard the way he did—and then the voyage turn out this way?"

"Strange it is, Mr. Rhoades, and perhaps not so strange. You and I believe in the judgments of God. They can overtake a man as powerful as Sir James Babb Norcross."

HAYDEN NORCROSS had climbed to the bridge and approached them unobserved. He heard the voice of Captain Sackett, solemn and devout, deliver this condemnation as one who knew whereof he spoke. White and shaking, but not with fear, the young man stepped between the two officers and cried:

"Why have you been hiding things from me ever since we left New York? What is the trouble with this ship? Is she haunted? What's this confounded nonsense about my father and the judgments of God?"

The mate sighed and went forward, methodical, unhurried, as always. Captain Sackett laid his hand upon Hayden's shoulder as he said:

"The Chilton Grange is dropping from

under our feet. I have tried to keep the truth from you because I could not fairly hold you responsible. But now you ought to know. If you come out of this alive, I want you to remember for the sake of other sailors."

"Remember what?" exclaimed Hayden Norcross, discerning that in this extremity there was no room for anything except the truth, naked and brutal.

"That your father sent this steamer to sea when he had the facts to prove she wasn't fit to go. He did it to save no more money than you fling away in a month. And jolly little he cared if we poor devils never saw Liverpool!"

"It's a lie! It must be a lie!" shouted young Norcross; but his voice faltered. "You are trying to cover up your own neglect. You have listened to the silly ravings of the crew. My God! to say such a thing as that about my father!"

FROM his salt-stained blue coat the shipmaster pulled out a copy of the report he had mailed to Sir James Babb Norcross and the cabled reply. Without anger he gave them to the son. The evidence required no comment. It was final, complete.

When Hayden Norcross had read it, slowly, unflinchingly, he forgot that death was so near. The expression of his face was no longer boyish.

"No wonder the men were cursing me!" he said after an abstracted silence.

"I am easing my own conscience before the ship goes under," quoth Captain Sackett. "I failed to warn you. Can you forgive me for that? It seemed like a decree that I had no right to meddle with."

"I can't hold it against you, of course," was the manly assurance. "You could have done nothing else. How long can we stay afloat? There are the boats, you know."

"Yes, there are the boats, Mr. Norcross; but only one is worth launching overside. The others are old and rotten. The paint holds them together."

Hayden winced and turned away. The captain resumed his last watch on the bridge of the Chilton Grange. The day wore on into a misty afternoon, which curtained the wallowing freighter from the sight of other steamers. The men were deserting their posts. The fires had been extinguished, and the pumps no longer throbbed. Armed and indomitable, Captain Sackett drove the seamen and stokers away from the one seaworthy boat.

In his heart was the supreme compul-

sion of duty. In the final issue Hayden Norcross was not his father's son, but a passenger intrusted to the master of the ship, his life to be saved at whatever cost.

SUDDENLY there raged in the more ruffianly of the crew the resolve to leave young Norcross behind to drown. The ringleader was a pallid Liverpool dock rat, who brandished an iron bar and screamed, as he led a rush toward the bridge:

"Serves 'im bloody well right, the blank son of a rotter of an owner that is makin' us swim for it!"

Shoving Norcross into the chart-room, Captain Sackett whirled to face the onset. They swarmed about him like wolves, wishing him no harm, but determined to wreak a blind vengeance for their miserable fate.

His warning shout failed to check them. With a feeling of pity, he shot the leader, and the mob broke, staring at the body that slid twitching into the scuppers. During this respite Hayden Norcross tugged at the Captain's arm and implored:

"Don't think of me. I ought to pay the price. Get away! Quick, man! She's almost under!"

Obedient and disciplined to the last, Rhoades and the second mate hauled the young man toward the boat, unheeding his frantic protests. The mob rallied and streamed after them. Captain Sackett raced on ahead, wheeled, and stood with his back to the boat, striving to repel the murderous rush. The Chilton Grange submerged her bows, and the stern rose swiftly.

The air pent up beneath the hatches gurgled like a dying leviathan. Blood trickled down the skipper's face and blinded his vision. The revolver was empty. The weight of numbers swept him aside.

He yelled to his officers to save themselves; but for him it was ordained that he should play the game to the finish. Without his passenger he would not leave the Chilton Grange.

IN the mournful obscurity of the mist there suddenly loomed the shape of a huge liner, eastward bound, which slackened way and began to drop her rescuing boats with magical celerity. The crew of the sinking tramp leaped into the sea before the suction could drag them down. Captain Sackett flung his passenger overboard and dived as his forlorn ship lunged and rolled in the closing moment of the trag-

edy. They fought clear of her, and were fished out by the seamen of the liner, an officer explaining:

"We had special orders by wireless to look out for you. A close shave, that."

"A miss is as good as a mile," cheerily replied the exhausted skipper. "But who the deuce cared enough to search for us? Not the owner!"

"The governor must have received my letter," gasped Hayden Norcross, sprawled in the bottom of the boat. "I fancy he thought I was worth saving."

WHEN the liner reached the Mersey a woman and a little boy were waiting on the landing stage. Apart from them restlessly walked a portly personage whose demeanor was not so pompous as aforetime.

Whenever Sir James stole a glance at Judith Sackett it was with an air curiously chastened and abashed. Ah, but she forgave him his sins, and her hatred was no more remembered when Captain Nelson Sackett, ruddy, intrepid, ran down the gangway and gathered her into his arms!

A drudging shipmaster, shabby and underpaid, fated to tramp the Seven Seas, he was richer than Sir James Babb Norcross; for faith and love were his possessions and duty its own reward.

THE shipping magnate was afraid to meet his only son, and his natural joy was profoundly shadowed. Hayden shook hands; but his mood was taciturn, and he was more like a stranger until they had quitted the crowd. Then he said, grave, inflexible:

"I have sailed with a man, father, a better man than you. He kept his crew from killing me. It was for the sake of other sailors. You can take your choice. I step into the business and change its methods—do you understand that?—or we part. I can never touch another penny of your money if ships are to be sent to sea to founder."

Sir James turned to gaze at Judith Sackett and her man and their only son as they passed from the harbor. Brokenly he muttered—for there was nothing else to say:

"I may have made mistakes, Hayden. If you think you can mend them—why, I need your help. We want no more disasters like the Chilton Grange. I—I too have suffered. Will you come home with me?"

"On those terms I will go home with you," was the verdict of the new head of the house of Norcross.



"As he whirled to face the onset they swarmed about him like wolves..."

...With a feeling of pity, he shot the leader—and the mob broke."