

The Doomed Man

By Dick Donovan

It was in the year 1847, as our family business and trade were spreading, that I opened a branch of our London house in Cuba, and placed a trusted and experienced manager in charge. Unfortunately this gentleman died in 1850 of yellow fever, and it became necessary that I should proceed at once to Cuba to look into matters, and appoint a successor to the deceased manager. A City friend recommended me to take passage in a sailing vessel called the *Pride of the Ocean*, belonging to a Liverpool firm, and then loading in the Liverpool docks, being chartered to proceed direct to Cuba. I thereupon applied to the owners, and engaged my passage in her. She was a full-rigged ship of about a thousand tons, and was reputed to be able to sail with a fair wind seventeen knots, being clipper built.

I arrived in Liverpool on the very day that the ship was advertised to sail. I was informed that she would leave the dock at midnight, when it would be high-water, and that two tugs would tow her beyond Holyhead. I did not reach Liverpool until the evening, and drove at once from the railway station to the vessel and got on board the ship as the dock gates were being opened. Being very tired I went straight to bed, and the next morning, as the sea was very rough, I could not get up, as I am a poor sailor, and generally ill for three or four days at the commencement of a voyage. On this occasion it was a full week before I found my sea legs and sea stomach, and one morning I took my place at the breakfast table for the first time, and was welcomed and greeted by the captain, whom I had not seen before. We were a very small party, as there were only three passengers beside myself, one being a Spanish lady who had been transacting some business in England on behalf of her husband, who was a Cuban planter.

The captain's name was Jubal Tredegar, a native of Cornwall. He was about fifty and had been at sea for over thirty years. He had a swarthy sunburnt face, very dark hair, and black eyes, with a full, rounded beard, but clean-shaven upper lip. In every respect he was a typical sailor, save in one thing—he was the most melancholy seaman I have ever come across. It is proverbial of sailors that they are a rollicking, jovial set; but this man was the exception to the rule, and he at once gave me the impression that he had something on his mind. My sympathies were consequence of this aroused, and I mentally resolved that I would endeavour to win his confidence, in the hope that I might be of use to him.

At first, however, I found that he was inclined to be taciturn, and resent any attempt to draw him out; but I learnt from the mate that Tredegar had commanded the ship for three voyages, and was highly respected by the owners. He was a thoroughly experienced navigator, and studied his owners' interests. There was one thing I could not fail to note; he showed a disposition to talk more to me than to any one else, and discovering that he played a good game of cribbage—a game I was particularly partial to—I got into closer touch with him, as one evening he accepted my invitation to a game, and after that we played whenever opportunity offered. But still he became neither communicative nor talkative, and no subject I could start appeared to have any interest for him.

We were playing one night in the cuddy after supper, when I noticed that he seemed more than usually depressed, and kept examining the barometer and casting an anxious eye up through the skylight.

'What does the glass say, captain?' I asked at last.

‘Well,’ he answered, ‘I think we are going to have a blow. There is dirty weather about somewhere.’

When four bells (ten o’clock) struck we finished our game and he went into his cabin, while I mounted the companionway to the poop, intending to smoke my usual cigar before turning in. I had run short of cigars, and the captain had promised to let me have a box of good Havanas, but not until I reached the deck did I remember that I had not a single weed in my case, so I went below again, and to the skipper’s room, intending to ask him for the cigars. Getting no response to my knock I pushed the door open and was surprised to see him seated at his table, so absorbed in gazing at the photograph of a lady that he had not heard my knock. On perceiving me, he hastily thrust the photograph into a drawer and jumped up. I noticed him pass his hands over his eyes and turn away as if ashamed, pretending to search for something on the top of a chest of drawers. I thought it was an opportunity not to be lost so I said to him:

‘Pray excuse my intrusion; I knocked but you didn’t hear me. I would also take the liberty of saying I respect your emotion. A man need not be ashamed of moist eyes when he gazes on the face of some loved one who is far away. It’s human. It shows a kindly heart, an impressionable mind!’

He turned suddenly and, putting out his hand to me, said:

‘Thank you, thank you, Mr Gibling! You are a good sort. A little sympathy sometimes is not a bad thing, and, hardened old shellback as I am, I suppose I’ve got a soft spot somewhere. But, excuse me, I must go on deck.’

I made known my errand, and having procured the box of cigars for me from his locker, I carried them to my cabin, and he went on deck, and when I had opened the box and taken two or three cigars out I followed him. The night was very dark. Nearly all the sails were set. There was an unpleasant, lumpy sea, and the wind was blowing in fitful gusts.

The captain ordered the watch to shorten sail, but before the order was entirely carried out a squall struck us, and the vessel heeled over tremendously and commenced to fly through the water, churning the sea around her into white, flashing, phosphorescent froth. Anyone who has ever made a voyage in a sailing ship knows the apparent, and often real, confusion that ensues when a sudden squall strikes the vessel. At such times the wind will frequently blow for a few minutes with hurricane force, and it is no unusual thing for sails to be split to ribbons—even for spars to be carried away. Given a dark night, a heavy squall, a rough sea, rent sails, and the land lubber who is unmoved must be made of very stern stuff. The rifle-like report and cracking of the long shreds of the torn sail are alarming enough to the inexperienced; but when you add to this the rattling of the ropes, the banging of blocks, the groaning of the ship’s timbers, the harsh creaking of the spars, the roar, swish and hiss of the waves, the great masses of boiling white foam that spread around, and the hoarse voices of men on deck to unseen men up above on the yard-arms in the mysterious darkness, there is at once a scene which tests the nerves of the landsman to a very considerable extent.

The squall that struck the *Pride of the Ocean* was very heavy, and the main topsail went to ribbons. The skipper, who was a perfect seaman, issued his orders rapidly, but with judgment and a display of self-possession, while his officers ably seconded him. Three or four times he came close to me as he shifted his position on the poop, the better to make his voice heard above the howling of the wind. I did not attempt to address him, knowing full well that at such a moment he required to concentrate all his attention on his duties. Once, when he came near me, I heard him mutter—‘My God, my God, have pity on me!’ It may be imagined to what an extent I was affected by this utterance. Had he said, ‘Have pity on *us*,’ I should at once have jumped to

the conclusion that we were all in danger, but the cry for pity was for himself alone. It set me pondering, and connecting it with his usual melancholy, and the sad and distressful expression of his face, I was not only puzzled but anxious. A few minutes later, as the ship did not pay off as rapidly as she should have done, Captain Tredegar ran to the wheel to help the helmsman to jam the rudder harder over, and as he glanced at the binnacle and his features were illumined by the light from the lamp, I was perfectly startled by his ghastly pallor. To such an extent was I moved that I rushed to him and asked if he was ill. With a powerful sweep of his right arm he moved me from before him, and in tones of terror exclaimed—‘There it is again! There, out there on the crest of that wave!’ I peered into the darkness, but could see nothing save the phosphorescent gleam of the tumbling sea.

By this time I was quite unnerved, for a dreadful thought took possession of me. I thought that the skipper was suffering from incipient madness.

In a few minutes, having got the wheel well over, he called one of the watch aft to assist the steersman, and he himself went forward to the break of the poop, and continued to give his orders. By this time the men had got the flying ropes and flapping sails under control, and, the dark scud in the heavens driving to leeward before the hurricane blast, the moon peeped through the ragged film and threw a weird, ghostly gleam of shimmering light over the swirling waters, while the track of the squall could be followed as it drove down the heavens.

As is often the case, at the tail of the great blast was a deluge. It was as if some huge door in the sky had been opened and the waters fell out in a cataract. I hurried below, as I had no desire to be soaked to the skin, and when I reached the cuddy I found the Spanish lady passenger seated at the table, looking very scared and unhappy.

‘Oh, Mr Gibling,’ she exclaimed, ‘is there any danger? What an awful storm!’

I assured her that all was well, and that the rain would probably bring a dead calm.

‘Did you see the captain?’ she asked, still displaying great agitation.

There was something in her manner and the tone of her voice that struck me as peculiar, and I replied:

‘Yes. I saw him on deck.’

‘Ah, but I mean here. He has just come down and gone to his room. I spoke to him, but he would not answer me. He looked awful. I am sure there is something queer about him. His eyes seemed bulging from his head, and if he had seen a ghost he couldn’t have been whiter. He is either ill or going mad. Do go to him.’

The lady’s words did not tend to allay my own fears and suspicions, but, anxious not to add to her alarm, I said with an air of assumed indifference:

‘The fact is, I suppose, he is over-anxious. Not that there is anything to fear, I am sure. We are in the squall zone, you know, but there is every prospect of making a good passage. However, I will go and talk to the captain.’

So saying, I left her, and made my way to the skipper’s state room. I knocked as usual, but again there was no response; so I pushed the door open, and found Captain Tredegar seated in his chair, his body bent over the table, and his face hidden by his arms. His cap had fallen off and was lying on the table, and I noted that his hands were opening and shutting in a spasmodic, nervous way. It was no time for ceremony. I should have been dull indeed not to recognize that the man was suffering. I therefore went to his side, and laying my hand on his shoulder said sympathetically:

‘Excuse me, Captain Tredegar, but you are not well. Can I do anything for you? Do make a confidant of me. Believe me I am not actuated by mere vulgar curiosity. Pray command my services if I can be of any use.’

He lifted his head up. I had never seen before in any human face such a pronounced look of nervous horror. His eyes wandered about the room; the corners of his mouth twitched, and he sobbed like a child that had cried itself into a state of physical exhaustion. I was positively alarmed, and my first impulse was to run for assistance. As if divining my thoughts he seized my wrist in his powerful hand, and said in a broken voice:

‘Pardon me, sir, you are very good. I am suffering from an attack to which I am at rare intervals subject; but I shall be all right directly. Please don’t make a scene. There is some rum there in that bottle, give me a little drop. It will set me up.’

Although I was doubtful whether rum was the proper remedy in such a case, I could not resist his appealing manner, and taking the bottle from the rack I poured into a glass about a table-spoonful.

‘Oh, more than that, more than that,’ he cried. ‘Fill the glass nearly.’

Perhaps at any other time I should have argued against his request, but I let the rum run from the bottle until the tumbler was quite half-full. He clutched it with trembling hand, and poured the contents at one gulp down his throat.

‘Thanks, thanks,’ he said, as he recovered his breath and placed the glass on the table. ‘That will put new life into me. I feel better already.’

He rose, shuddered as he did so, and took his sou’wester and oilskin from a peg. He put a hand on each of my shoulders, and looking me in the face, said with an impressive earnestness:

‘Mr Gibling, I am more than obliged to you. Add to my obligation, will you, by promising not to mention to anyone that you have seen me in one of my strange moods.’

‘Certainly I will,’ I replied. ‘You may trust me. And, as I have said, if I can be of service command me.’

‘Very well; some day I may put you to the test,’ he answered; ‘good-night, and God bless you.’

He left me, and I heard him clatter up the gangway in his great boots. As I crossed towards my own cabin the Spanish lady was still sitting at the cuddy table.

‘Have you been with the captain?’ she asked.

‘I have,’ I replied.

‘How is he?’

‘He is all right,’ I answered lightly.

She glanced about the cuddy as if to make sure no one was listening, and then, bending towards me as if inviting confidence, she said in a half whisper:

‘Do you know, Mr Gibling, when the captain came down from the deck a little while ago there was such a peculiar look in his face that I could almost have fancied he—’

She stopped suddenly in her speech, visibly shuddered, and put her pretty white fingers before her eyes. After an awkward pause I broke the silence by saying:

‘Almost fancied he—what?’

‘He had seen some gruesome and unnatural sight.’

I laughed, though I had an inkling of her meaning, for strangely enough a vague, phantom-like thought had been troubling me; but I could not define it, could not give it shape; now at her words it was clear enough, and an uncontrollable impulse impelled me to give it utterance:

‘Ghosts, you mean,’ and I laughed at my own words, for the idea seemed to me utterly ridiculous. But not so to the lady. Her face assumed a graver aspect, and her eyes betrayed that whatever my views might be her mind was made up.

‘What I mean is, he has seen a vision,’ she remarked, with awe in her voice.

‘Oh, nonsense,’ I exclaimed. ‘Hobgoblins and bogeys belong to the period of our childhood. When we come to years of discretion we should cease to be childish.’

My remark annoyed her. She rose and curled her lip disdainfully. ‘I am not childish and I don’t talk nonsense,’ she said, as she swept past me without so much as giving me a chance to apologize. I felt annoyed with myself for having been so tactless, but otherwise laughed mentally at what I considered the absurdity of the position.

A few minutes later I went on deck to finish my final smoke before turning in. The rain had ceased and the air was delightfully cool. The wind had gone, the sky was a mass of picturesque clouds with fantastic outlines. Here and there groups of stars were visible, and with chastened light, as if shining through gauze, the moon made a silver pathway over the face of the deep until it blended with the horizon in impenetrable blackness, which rounded off the weird scene. The captain had discarded his oilskins, which were lying on the top of a hencoop, and he was leaning on his elbows over the taffrail, complacently smoking a cigar, and absorbed apparently in the contemplation of the phosphoric display that flashed and glistened under the ship’s counter as she fell and rose to the swell. A man approached him. He straightened up, turned his back to the rail, folded his arms across his breast, and puffing at his cigar as he cast a scrutinizing eye aloft at the flapping sails, he said in a cheerful tone:

‘Quite a contrast to a little while ago, isn’t it, Mr Gibling? But it’s the sort of weather we must expect in these latitudes.’

I was struck by his changed manner. He seemed so cheerful and light-hearted. He wasn’t the same man I had seen down in the cabin half an hour ago.

‘Yes, I suppose so,’ I remarked, for the sake of saying something.

‘It’s not your first voyage to sea, is it?’ he asked.

‘No.’

‘Have you been to Cuba before?’

‘Oh yes.’

‘Ah! then you will know pretty well what kind of voyage it is.’

I told him that I knew fairly well what one might expect on such a voyage at that time of the year, and we continued to chat pleasantly for a little while until six bells struck (eleven o’clock). ‘All’s well!’ came in solemn tones from the look-out man on the fo’c’s’tle.

‘Well, I think I shall turn in,’ said the captain, as he threw the stump of his cigar overboard, glanced up aloft, then at the binnacle, and calling the second officer who was on watch, and telling him to keep the ship on the same course until the morning, he moved towards the companion-way, and I followed. When we reached the saloon he put out his hand. As I took it he said ‘Good-night,’ and immediately added in lower tones, ‘Don’t forget your promise.’

I turned in and tried to sleep, but for a long time tossed about, thinking of what had passed, and trying to account for the captain’s strange behaviour; but the more I thought the more I got puzzled, and I came to the conclusion there was some strange mystery about him. I saw through my port the sun beginning to redden the eastern horizon before sleep came to me. I did not waken until long after the usual breakfast hour, so I breakfasted alone.

When I went on deck I noticed the Spanish lady reclining in a deck-chair. She was reading a book, and perhaps that accounted for her taking no notice of me as I bowed and said 'Good-morning.'

The sun was shining brilliantly. The sky was cloudless save on the horizon, where there were woolly banks. A steady little breeze just kept the sails full, and the short, choppy waves danced and flashed in the sunlight. The captain was not on deck, and I was informed by the second mate that he had not turned out yet. Wishing to propitiate the Spanish lady passenger, I carried a camp stool to where she was sitting, and in the most fascinating manner I was capable of commanding I asked if I could sit beside her. She smiled sweetly, and accorded her gracious permission. We said some commonplace things about the weather; she descanted on the tropical beauties of Cuba, and criticized rather severely the English climate; while as for London, she spoke of it with scorn and much shrugging of shoulders.

When she paused, I embraced the opportunity to turn the trend of conversation by saying:

'I am afraid that I was a little rude to you last night,' but I hardly expected such a blunt reply as she made.

'Yes, you were exceedingly rude, and I hate rude men.'

'I hope you don't hate me,' I cried, laughingly.

'Oh no, not quite. You're a Londoner, you see.'

This was very severe. I confess I was hardly prepared for it, and I was tempted to say something cutting in reply, but checked myself, bowed, and merely remarked:

'Which is not my fault. Therefore pity me rather than blame me.'

'Certainly I do that,' she replied, with an amusing seriousness. But look here; answer me this. Why should you have been rude last night when I said what I did about the captain?'

'Madame,' I said, as I laid my hand on my heart and bowed, 'believe me I had no intention of being rude; but the fact is, I am a somewhat commonplace, matter-of-fact man, and I have no belief in anything that is said to be due to supernatural causes.'

'Supernatural or not supernatural,' she retorted, 'there are things going on around us which certainly cannot be explained by any known laws.'

'Possibly, and yet I doubt it,' I replied, with a sceptical smile.

'Well, your obtuseness is your own affair,' she said, with a shrug of her shoulders; 'but now, look here, Mr Gibling, permit me to make a little prophecy. Captain Tredegar has something awful on his mind. He sees visions, and will ultimately go mad.'

Her words startled me. For the first time I was inclined to regard her seriously, in one respect at least; that was the ultimate madness of the skipper. That thought had haunted me, but I had tried to put it away. Even to my somewhat dulled perception it had been made evident that a man who could act as Tredegar had acted on the previous night was a victim to some obscure form of mental disease which might ultimately destroy him. Now the lady spoke with such an absence of vagueness that I asked her if she had known the captain long, and if she was acquainted with his past history.

'Indeed, no,' she exclaimed. 'I never saw the man in my life until I joined the ship in Liverpool.'

'Then why do you speak with such an air of self-conviction?'

'I speak as I think. I think as I know.'

'But how do you know?'

'Well, you are stupid,' she exclaimed, with a show of exasperation. 'I know, because I have a sense you don't possess. I was born where the sun shines. I have beliefs you have not. I believe

that men who do evil in this world can be haunted into madness by the disembodied spirits of those they injure. Now you may laugh and sneer as much as you like, sir, but I tell you this: when Captain Tredegar came down to the cabin last night his face clearly indicated that he had been terrified by something not human, and I saw madness written large in his eyes.'

I should be wanting in common honesty if I failed to say that this woman's remarks put certain rambling thoughts of my own into shape, impressed me in a way that a short time previously I should have been ashamed to own to. They set me pondering, and I tried to recall every act, word, look and gesture of the captain's, with the result that I had to admit there was something strange about him. At that moment Captain Tredegar himself came on deck. His breezy, jovial manner, and smiling bronzed face, seemed to make the conversation about him ridiculous, and tended to confound the prophet who had talked of madness.

He bowed politely to the lady, and chatted to her pleasantly. He greeted me with a cheery 'Good-morning,' and expressed a hope that neither of us had been much alarmed by the squall of the previous evening. He said the passage was going to be a splendid one; one of the best he had ever made; and if, as he anticipated we should do, we picked up a good slant of wind when we had made a little more westing, we should reach Cuba several days before the time we were expected.

The mate now came on deck and he and the captain walked to the break of the poop. When he was out of earshot I turned to the lady and said:

'He doesn't look much like a man who is given to seeing visions and is doomed to madness, does he?'

'*You cannot see beneath the mask,*' she replied, with another contemptuous curl of her lip; and she added somewhat mysteriously, 'Wait, wait, wait,' repeating the word three times, with a rising inflection on each repetition. Then she turned to her book again, as if she wished me to understand that she would say no more. I took the hint, and making a show of stretching my limbs, I rose and began to pace up and down. The subject of the conversation between me and the lady continued to occupy my thoughts against my will, and the more I thought the more like a riddle did the captain appear to me. I was really astonished to find myself taking so much interest in him. If Captain Tredegar had been a relative of mine, my own brother, in fact, I could hardly have felt more anxious or more desirous to solve the mystery that seemed to surround him. His appearance that morning, and his appearance and behaviour of the night before, were in such violent contrast that to put it down to the merely varying moods to which we are all liable was not satisfactory enough. What puzzled me more than anything else was his behaviour during the storm. To suppose that he was a coward and lost his nerve in a passing squall was absurd on the face of it. In the very height of the storm he delivered his orders with coolness and judgment, as I could testify, but what did he mean by exclaiming: 'There it is again! There, out there on the crest of that wave'? Then again, why the appeal to God to pity him? Having perplexed and fretted myself until I felt quite confused, I found myself unable to alter the original opinion I had formed, which was that Captain Tredegar was liable to attacks of mental aberration, and that being so he was not a fit person to have charge of a valuable vessel and her living freight.

Viewing the matter from this point, I came to the conclusion, rightly or wrongly, that it was my bounden duty as an honest man to make representations to his owners as to the skipper's state of mind; for surely no one would say that a man liable to attacks of temporary mania was the proper person to be in charge of a ship. As I came to this decision I heard the captain call out from the break of the poop:

'Make eight bells.'

The boatswain struck the hour on the bell, and 'eight bells' was roared out by the men about the decks. I was recalled to a sense of my surroundings and as the skipper passed me, he said cheerily:

'Well, Mr Gibling. It's time to splice the main brace, isn't it?'

I may explain for the benefit of those who have not made a voyage to sea that it is customary in most passenger vessels for the passengers to partake of a glass of liquor of some kind at noon, eight bells. This, in nautical phraseology, is termed 'splicing the main brace'. It is the most interesting period of the twenty-four hours to lands-people, because the captain and his officers having taken their sights, as it is called, they proceed to work them out, in order to discover the position of the ship; that is, her latitude and longitude, and that being done, it is marked on the chart.

As I accompanied the skipper to the cuddy, I began to think that perhaps after all I was doing him a wrong, and it would be unfair to say anything to his owners until I had received stronger proof that my suspicions were well founded. Certainly, as he sat at the table making his calculations and working out the position, he not only seemed the perfection of physical fitness, but fully endowed with keen and sound intelligence. As I noted this I came to the conclusion that it was no less my duty to suspend my judgment—than to watch closely and wait patiently.

I wish it to be distinctly understood that at this period of the voyage I was halting between two opinions. On the one hand, I considered Captain Tredegar peculiar in many respects—a man of mystery, in short—and on the other, I was painfully anxious not to do him an injustice. It will also be noted that the conclusions arrived at by the Spanish lady, who was an emotional and superstitious woman, were not in accordance with my own. For according to her views, the captain's strange behaviour was the result of seeing visions; according to mine, he suffered from intermittent mania, which was probably traceable to a too free indulgence in rum or other potent liquors. Not that I had ever seen him the worse for drink, but he took a good deal more than was good for him, in my opinion, though it did not affect him as it would have done others who were not so case-hardened.

For the next few days our progress was not very satisfactory, owing to the light, variable winds. For a steamer it would have been almost ideal weather, but dependent as we were on the winds, it was very tantalizing. During this time the skipper continued in his bright, cheery mood, and every evening at a fixed hour we sat down in the cabin for a game of cribbage. I took to studying him very closely, and from many little signs I saw I felt pretty certain that a great deal of his light-hearted manner was assumed. Occasionally I noted a strange wild look came into his eyes, and his cheeks paled as though some deadly fear had seized him. A mere casual observer would have failed to notice these signs, but my perception had been quickened. I was ever on the alert, on the watch, and there was not much that escaped me.

A change came at last. One evening when I expected the skipper to take part in the usual game of cribbage he brusquely and rudely refused, and I saw the half-sullen, half-terrified expression in his face again. I thought it very peculiar that his mood should synchronize with a change in the weather. The barometer had been falling all day, and it was only too evident that we were going to have a dirty night. As the sun got low in the heavens, heavy banks of clouds came up, and the wind rapidly strengthened, until we had to shorten sail to such an extent that very little canvas remained set. The captain seemed extremely anxious. He walked up and down the poop in a restless, nervous way. Occasionally he stopped to gaze windward, and sometimes he muttered to himself. I resolved at last to speak to him, anxious and preoccupied as he was. So I went boldly up to him and said:

‘We are evidently in for a change, don’t you think so?’

He turned upon me with a dark, lowering face, his brow knit, and his whole manner that of one straining under suppressed passion.

‘Yes, I do,’ he answered excitedly, ‘damn you. Anyway, I’m a doomed man.’

He walked rapidly away without another word, and I stood for some little time dumbfounded. Anyone who could speak in such a manner was surely mad, and I seriously considered it was my business to take counsel with my fellow passengers, if not with the officers of the ship, for a mad captain ought to be relieved of his responsible duties in the interest of every soul on board. But before I could stir away the man himself came back to me, and said in a most pathetic and appealing way that went to my heart:

‘Pray pardon my rudeness, Mr Gibling. You don’t know how I’m troubled. I am suffering dreadfully, and if you knew all you would pity rather than blame me.

‘Why not place me in possession of the information, then?’ I asked. He put his hand to his eyes for a moment or two and shuddered.

‘It is so dreadful, so horrible,’ he muttered mysteriously, speaking rather to himself than me.

‘All the more reason, then, why you should take me into your confidence,’ I said.

‘Yes—perhaps you are right. I will. Come to my cabin in half an hour and I will tell you the awful story.

Further conversation was interrupted by the bursting of a squall accompanied by heavy rain, while a long swell that came up was a sure precursor of the coming gales, of which squalls were only the heralds.

I at once descended to the cabin to get out of the rain, but quite half an hour passed before the captain came down. He passed me without speaking, but called the steward and ordered some tea to be taken to his cabin. And when another half-hour had elapsed the steward brought me a message to the effect that Captain Tredegar wished to see me in his room. The weather had now become very bad and the ship was labouring heavily. I found the captain seated at his table with a small Bible open before him, but which he closed and tossed into his bunk as I entered. He looked pale, ill, and careworn. He asked me to sit down, and remarked:

‘You have shown much interest in me, sir, and instinctively I feel I can place confidence in you. The time has now come for me to speak, or be dumb for evermore. I am a doomed man. My fate is sealed, and it is that fearful certainty that weighs upon me like a ton of lead.’

His words and manner seemed to me unmistakably to indicate insanity, and I could not repress a feeling of alarm. He must have guessed my thoughts, for he said quickly:

‘Don’t alarm yourself, and bear with me patiently; my brain is perfectly clear, and I know what I am doing, although a stranger might be disposed to think I was labouring under a distempered imagination. But it is not so. An awful fear takes possession of me and unmans me. It paralyses my faculties and renders life a curse instead of a blessing.’

‘A fear of what?’ I asked.

‘Of the dead,’ he answered solemnly.

I looked hard at him again. That surely was not the answer of a sane man.

‘What nonsense,’ I said a little sharply. ‘What harm can the dead do to the living? I gave you credit for being stronger minded than that. It is clear to me now that you are allowing yourself to sink into a morbid, nervous condition, that must end disastrously. Why on earth should you embitter your existence by imaginary evils? Shake yourself free of morbid, gloomy forebodings; be a man, and if you are a just one you need fear nothing, not even the living, let alone the dead.’

He did not attempt to interrupt this little outburst on my part, which perhaps was hardly justified. But I could not restrain myself. I was compelled to give vent to my thoughts.

‘You mean well, Mr Gibling,’ he remarked, with perfect self-possession, when I had finished speaking, ‘and I understand your feelings; but before condemning me, before allowing your wrath to run away with your judgment, be patient and listen to me as you promised to do. This may be the only opportunity that will ever occur for me to tell you my story.’

‘Pray proceed,’ I remarked; ‘perhaps I have been somewhat hasty; you will find, however, that I am a good listener, and under any circumstances you may count on my sympathy.’

He remained silent for some minutes, his elbows on the table, his hands clasping his face, his eyes seemingly fixed on vacancy. He started and came to himself again.

‘Mr Gibling,’ he began, ‘I have a very strange story to tell you if you care to listen to it. Whatever your feelings are now, however sceptical you may be, I fancy your views will undergo a change by the time I have done. I repeat that I am a doomed man. My sands have nearly run out, and I must say what I have to say now or never.’

‘Please go on,’ I said as he paused, evidently waiting for me to speak.

‘Very well,’ he continued, ‘I’ll begin at the beginning. As you know, I am a Cornishman; I come from a race of seamen; the salt of the sea flows in my veins. What education I received was got at a school in Devonshire, where I passed nearly nine years of my life. At that school I had a chum. We were inseparable. We were more like brothers. His name was Peter Gibson. He was three or four years my senior, and was a rough, wild, boorish sort of fellow; not good at picking up the routine knowledge of a school training, but as sharp as a needle, with an insatiable thirst for stories of fighting and adventure. In this line he would read everything he got hold of, and one day he said to me: “Jubal, I intend to go to sea, and I’m going to be a devil; will you stick to me?” he asked.

‘“Yes,” I answered in a moment of boyish enthusiasm. He had great influence over me. I looked up to him as my superior, and regarded him as a leader.

‘“You swear it?” he demanded.

‘“Yes,” I said again.

‘Whereupon he made me go down on my knees, hold both my hands up to heaven, and take a solemn oath that I would stick to him, go with him wherever he went, and do whatever he did.

‘Now you must remember I was a youngster at this time, and what I did was only what a boy might be expected to do. Gibson certainly had a good deal of influence over me. He was a masterful sort of fellow, with a great, bulky, powerful frame, while his pluck won my admiration. He funked at nothing, and could lick every boy in the neighbourhood.

‘We left school about the same time, and though his father, who was pretty well off, wanted to put him in business, Peter declared he would go to sea. I had been intended for a seafaring life from my cradle. The males of my family always went to sea. The result of his determination was that he and I found ourselves fellow apprentices on board a full-rigged vessel going out to the East Indies. She was a trader, and during a voyage of nearly four years we visited a great many places in the East; saw a great deal of the world, and experienced fair and foul weather from the very best to the very worst. As might have been expected, Peter picked up seamanship very rapidly, and became one of the smartest sailors on board. My regard for him and his liking for me had never altered, and when we returned to Liverpool we were as much chums as ever.

‘We were only at home two months when we were transferred to another ship belonging to the same owners, and rated as A.B.’s. This voyage we sailed to Vancouver round the Horn, and from there we came down in ballast to Monte Video, and loaded up with a general cargo for home. At

this time there was a civil war going on in the Argentine Republic, and of course at Monte Video we heard a great deal of talk about it. Gibson used to get very excited over the war news, and over and over again he tried to persuade me to clear out from the ship and go with him to do some fighting. He'd no sympathies with either one side or the other, and I don't think he even knew what the row was about, but he wanted some fighting; fight was in his blood, and he was pining for what he called fun. I preferred, however, to keep a straight course, as my people before me had done. I wanted to gradually mount the ladder until I reached the top, and I knew that the quixotic expedition he proposed would have defeated my object. I therefore declined to fall in with his views. It riled him for a time, but at last he admitted that he had no right to try and persuade me against my will; but as far as he was concerned he was going. And go he did, much to my regret, I must confess. Although it went somewhat against my grain, I helped him to secretly get on shore, and some money that I had I handed over to him.

'We spent our last night together at a *café* in Monte Video; and when the time came for us to part he wrung my hand, and I was cut up in a way I had never been before. After that I saw no more of him, nor did I hear anything of him for ten years, when we met again under very extraordinary circumstances.

'I was then mate of a splendid barque called the *Curlew*, hailing from Bristol. We had taken out a cargo of iron to Bilbao; there the ship was chartered by the Spanish Government to convey five hundred soldiers and a quantity of specie to Havana. The *Curlew* was an exceptionally fine vessel, with unusually good 'tween deck space, and therefore very suitable as a transport. We made a good passage to Havana, landed the troops, but were told we should have to retain the specie for a few days until some grandee or other came to receive it. He happened then to be up the country, but was expected back in the course of a week. As we had made a quicker passage than was expected, it had thrown him out in his calculations. Well, of course, it didn't matter to us much, as our charter provided for our return to Bilbao; and, equally of course, so long as we were employed by the Spanish authorities we sailed under the Spanish flag.

'The second night after our arrival I went on shore, and in strolling through the town my attention was arrested by a sign over the door of a drinking-place. It read, "Old England, kept by Will Bradshaw." This and the sound of English voices induced me to enter, and I found the place pretty well crowded with sailor men and Spanish women of a disreputable class. I saw at once the sort of house it was, and as I did not consider it advisable for me as chief mate of a Government vessel to be seen there, I was for clearing out again when I noticed a big, brawny, powerfully-built fellow mixing drinks behind the bar. He was unmistakably an Englishman. His face was burnt brown. He had a dark, bushy beard, and looked like a man who had a large spice of the devil in him. Despite the beard the face seemed familiar to me, and when I heard him call out an order to one of his waiters, the voice left me no longer in doubt. It was the voice of Peter Gibson. So I pushed my way through the crowd to the counter, for it was not likely I could leave without renewing acquaintance with my old chum, and I asked, "Isn't your name Peter Gibson?"

' "No, it isn't," he yelled. "I'm Will Bradshaw, the boss of this place." I was taken aback for a minute, for I was sure I couldn't be mistaken. Then it flashed on me that Peter had a reason for being known as Will Bradshaw; so I pulled out a pocket-book, wrote my name on a leaf, tore it out, and handed it to him. I saw a look of surprise come into his eyes and his face change colour. Then he grasped my hand and wrung it, told an assistant to look after the place, and asking me to follow him, he led the way by a side entrance to a large garden at the back of the house, where seats were placed under the palm trees, and a few coloured lamps were hung up. Nearly every seat was occupied by men and women, and negro waiters were attending to their wants.

‘Peter took me to a remote corner of the garden, where there was a sort of summer-house on a knoll.

‘ “We can have a quiet yarn here,” he said. Then he called one of the negroes and told him to bring a bottle of wine, and that done, he began in his old masterful way to ask me questions about my career during the past ten years. I told him straight; but when I questioned him he shirked my questions, simply saying, “Well, I’ve had a lot of roughing, old chap, and have been in some queer corners. I drifted down here about two years since, just as the former proprietor of this shanty went off the hooks with Yellow Jack. I made a bid for the place and got it, but had to give bills for the greater part of the purchase money, and I’ve still got a lot of millstones round my neck. I’m rather sick, and think of chucking it and going on the rampage again.’

‘We yarned away for two hours, when I had to go, and naturally I asked him to come and see me on board the vessel. He turned up the next day, and the day after that; and I told him as an item of news that my skipper was going into the country on the morrow for a few days to shoot with a party of friends, and that I should be in charge; and I invited him to come on board and have dinner with me in the evening, an invitation he readily accepted.

‘When he turned up he had a friend with him, a Spaniard who spoke good English, and whom he introduced to me as Alonzo Gomez. He said he wanted me to know this man, as he was a good sort, and might be of use to me. He was described as a planter, but I couldn’t help thinking there was a good deal more of the loafer than the planter about him. However, he was very polite, as most Spaniards are, and as he seemed to be rather an amusing cuss, I thought I had judged him too harshly. Of course, I gave my guests a good feed, and made the steward open some champagne. During the dinner Peter asked me a lot of questions about the ship, and how much Spanish money we had on board, and where it was kept. If it had been anyone else, and at any other time, I should have resented these questions, but I felt there was no harm in answering my old schoolfellow and shipmate.

‘When the dinner was over Peter said that for old acquaintance sake we must have a jorum of rum punch, and that he would make it. So I told the steward to get the necessary ingredients, and Peter set to work to concoct the liquor. I don’t remember much more after that. I didn’t come to my senses until the next morning. I found on turning out that the steward was ill, and on my going to him he told me that my friends had given him some of the punch. It had made him sick at first, and afterwards he fell into a heavy sleep from which he had not long awakened, and that he was then suffering from a frightful headache and a heavy, drowsy feeling. That was precisely my condition; but I attributed it to not having drunk wisely, but too well. The second mate, who had been on shore the previous night, undertook to do certain work I had to attend to; and having given the steward some medicine from the medicine chest, I went and turned in once more, and slept pretty well the whole day. Anyway, I did not turn to again until the following morning.

‘In the course of that day, the high official who was to receive the specie came on board with an escort, and commanded the strong room in the afterpart of the cabin to be opened, and the specie brought out. I at once procured the keys from a safe in the captain’s cabin, and on going to the strong room, I was surprised and alarmed to find that the various seals put upon the door at Bilbao were broken, and they had been broken quite recently, as two or three days before I had examined them and found them all right. My alarm and confusion increased when, having got the door open, we discovered that two of the boxes, one containing Bank of Spain notes and the other gold dollars, had been burst open, and partly rifled of their contents. Altogether a sum in notes and gold equivalent to twenty thousand pounds had been stolen.

‘The big-wig was in a great state, and at once sent on shore for a magistrate and a lot of military officers, and began an inquiry there and then; and I, having been in charge of the ship for some days, was practically put on trial.

‘Perhaps I needn’t tell you that I felt I could at once name the thief. His name was Peter Gibson, alias Will Bradshaw. He and his Spanish chum had drugged me and the steward; of that I had no doubt then, and as all the crew had gone on shore except the boatswain and the cook, and two of the hands who were on duty at the gangway, it was easy for the rascals to carry out their nefarious scheme of getting at the specie.

‘Now, I’m not talking mere words to you when I tell you that it went against my grain to denounce my old schoolfellow and shipmate, and at first I resolved that I wouldn’t. But, after all, a chap’s own interests have to be counted first, and as Gibson had been mean hound enough to drug me and carry off money under my care, I didn’t see why I should screen him. So I denounced him, and in a very short time he was under arrest. But even then he might have escaped conviction had it not been for his stupidity in keeping the bank-notes. His friend, who was also arrested, turned out to be a notorious character with a most evil reputation, and was looked upon as an expert in picking locks. The task they had set themselves of stealing the money was comparatively easy, as all the conditions were in their favour, and I fell a too easy victim to their cunning.

‘Well, of course, I had to attend the trial and give evidence. The crime was considered very serious indeed, as Government property had been stolen and Government seals unlawfully broken. The offence was called a first-class one, and the penalty was death. No such sensation had been provided for Havana for many a long day. It was considered better than a bullfight.

‘To make a long story short, the result of it all was that the two rascals were convicted and sentenced to be shot. The verdict cut me to the heart, and as only a short shrift was allowed the culprits, as the sentence was to be carried out in twenty-four hours, I obtained permission to visit Gibson. I found him in rather a dejected state, seated in a courtyard of the gaol which was guarded by soldiers. As soon as he saw me he seemed to go mad, reviled me in language that was of would haunt me and drive me to madness by appearing to me a pretty fiery character, then cursed me and swore that he on dark nights at sea. “You are a doomed man,” he said, “and will come to a sudden and terrible end. I leave my curse to you.”

‘I tried to reason with him, but I might as well have tried to reason with an enraged wild cat in the jungle. He did nothing but utter curses on me, and recognizing how hopeless it was to try and appease him, I withdrew, and the next morning he and his pal were shot at daybreak.

‘Although I was much cut up by the way he had treated me, I did not attach any importance to either his curses or his threats. I wasn’t altogether free from superstition, what sailor is, but I quite believed that when a person was dead he was done with. I soon began to find out, however, that I was wrong, for some weeks later, when we were on our passage back to Bilbao, I had the middle watch one night, just as we got into the Bay of Biscay. It was a wild night, and we were close hauled under double reefed topsails. Suddenly out of the waves came a glowing figure. It was Gibson’s spectre. He shrieked at me, and I heard his curses again, and again he told me I was doomed.

‘Since then I’ve seen him often. He has kept his word. He has haunted me, and is driving me mad and hounding me to death. Yes, I am doomed. I feel it and know it. Nothing can avert the doom.

‘You know my story now. Don’t ridicule it; don’t laugh at me; for to me it’s a terribly serious business, and I feel that I shall never see the dear woman I love again.’

He ceased speaking, and I noticed the wild, scared look in his eyes which I had seen before. The perspiration was streaming down his face, he appeared to be suffering great mental agony. I tried to soothe him, but it was no use, and he kept on repeating that he was doomed.

Now let me say here at once that I did not believe the captain had seen any real supernatural appearance. I regarded him as a highly imaginative and sensitive man. On such a man Gibson's curses and threats would be sure to make a very deep impression. It could hardly be otherwise, seeing that the two men had practically grown up together. They had been schoolmates and shipmates, and Gibson's violent end must have affected his once friend in no ordinary degree. Long dwelling upon the dramatic scene in the prison at Havana, the day previous to the execution, had taken such a hold on the skipper's imagination that he had worried himself into a belief in a mere chimera of the brain. To him, no doubt, the visions were real enough, although they were nothing more than disturbed brain fancies.

Such was the theory I consoled myself with, and I determined there and then to use every possible endeavour to get the captain out of his morbid condition, and prove to him by gentle reasoning that he was simply a victim to his own gloomy fears. I was so far successful at that moment that I induced him to turn in, having first of all called the mate down and given him certain instructions; then I compounded him a simple soothing draught from ingredients in the medicine chest, and at his own request I sat by him and read certain passages in the Bible, until he fell into a sound sleep.

I was considerably exercised in my own mind as to the proper course I ought to adopt, and I was tempted at first to take the Spanish lady into my confidence, and discuss the matter with her. But this idea was put out of my head at once, for she was sitting in the cuddy, as she usually did in the evening, where she passed her time either reading or in doing needlework. She saw that I came from the captain's cabin, and tackled me.

'How is the skipper?' she asked.

'He is a little indisposed tonight, but will be all right tomorrow, no doubt,' I answered.

'Not he,' she exclaimed. 'I tell you that man's a haunted man, and will either go mad or commit suicide.'

Remembering how dogmatically she had expressed herself on a previous occasion on the subject of supernatural visitations, I deemed it desirable not to enter into any discussion, and I also made up my mind that it would be a fatal mistake to let her know the captain's story, so I merely said, in answer to her statement, 'I hope not,' and passed to my cabin.

Now I want to repeat here, and for very obvious reasons, what were the views I held at this stage. I considered that the captain was suffering from a distressing nervous illness, the result of long pondering over an incident which could not fail to make a tremendous impression on him. But not for a moment did I entertain any belief in the supernatural. Necessarily I was exceedingly anxious, for there was no doctor on board, I had no medical knowledge myself, and we could not hope to reach our destination for another three weeks. There was every prospect then of the prognostications about a fine and rapid passage being falsified. The barometer had been steadily falling for some time, and all the indications were for bad weather. I knew that in that latitude, at that time of year, heavy storms were not uncommon, and it seemed likely that we should experience them. The anxious state of my mind kept me awake for some time, revolving all sorts of schemes, but nothing that seemed to me satisfactory. Eight bells midnight sounded, and I heard the mate come out of his room and go on deck to take the watch. I slipped out of bed,

put on my dressing-gown and slippers, and stole over to the captain's cabin. To my intense relief I found he was sleeping soundly.

As the motion of the vessel made it evident there was a heavy sea on, I went up the companion-way to see what the weather was like. It was a wild, weird night. A south-west gale was blowing and a tremendous sea running. There was no moon, but the stars shone with a superb lustre wherever the ragged, storm-driven scud allowed them to be seen. I passed a few words with the mate, and asked him what he thought of the weather.

'It's a bad wind for us,' he answered, 'and the heavy squalls that come up every now and then prevent our setting much sail. But if I were skipper, I would crack on and let things rip. I'd drive the ship even at the risk of losing canvas.'

'Why don't you do so, as it is?' I asked. 'You've got charge of the deck for the next four hours, and have practically a free hand.'

'No I haven't,' he answered. 'I've got to obey orders, though I think sometimes, between you and me, sir, that the old man's got a bee in his bonnet.'

'What makes you think that?' I queried, my interest in the skipper making me anxious to hear what the mate had to say.

'Well, I think it's because he's given to seeing the devil, or something as bad.'

I laughed, although I was serious enough; and being anxious to draw the officer out, I remarked:

'Well, I shouldn't say it's quite as bad as that; but he is ill, there is no doubt about it, and wants looking after.'

'I should think he does,' was the reply, given with peculiar decisiveness. Then, bending his head towards me, the better to make himself heard without raising his voice too much, for the howling of the wind made it difficult to hear sometimes, he added, 'Look here, Mr Gibling, will you give me your promise that, if I express an opinion, it won't go any farther?'

'Yes, I think you may trust me,' I answered.

'Well, look here, sir, if you have any influence with the old man, you should persuade him to keep his room for the rest of the passage. And if he won't, I say that in his own interest and the interest of everyone on board this craft, that he should be made to stay there.'

Never before had the mate been so outspoken to me, and it was further evidence, if I needed any, that the skipper's condition had not escaped the observation of others; and I seriously determined to act on the suggestion, and use every effort to induce the captain to keep his room.

As a slight shift in the wind here necessitated the mate ordering the watch to trim the yards, I went below, and, feeling thoroughly exhausted, I drank a glass of whisky, and turning in, fell asleep. I must have slept between three and four hours, when I awoke with a start, for overhead was a tremendous hubbub. The tramping of heavily-booted feet, the rattling of cordage, the shaking of sails; while the ship, which was heeled over at an unusual angle, was quivering. I hastily donned my dressing-gown, and rushed on deck. A very heavy squall had struck us, and had torn the main-sail out of the bolt ropes. 'All hands' had been called on deck, and what with the shrieking wind and roaring sea, and the hoarse voices of the sailors, the situation seemed alarming enough to a lands-man like myself. A lurch of the ship drove me down to the lee rail against the mizzen shrouds, which I clung to for dear life. Suddenly I felt myself gripped round the waist, and a body seemed to fall at my feet. I realized in an instant that it was the captain. He had only his shirt and trousers on. His feet were bare, his head was bare. So much I was able to make out in the darkness that wasn't altogether darkness, for a few stars still shone.

‘For the love of God, for the sake of the Christ that was crucified, save me!’ shrieked the unhappy man, as he crouched on his knees and linked his hands round my body.

‘Don’t give way like this,’ I said, feeling almost distracted myself. ‘Come, let me lead you down to your cabin. The mate will look after the ship. She is in good hands.’

It seemed as if the unhappy man did not understand what I had said to him, for pointing to the sea, he cried in a voice of acute terror:

‘There, there, don’t you see it? there on that wave? Oh, my God, it’s awful!’

Mechanically I turned my eyes to where he pointed, and to my astonishment I saw what appeared to me to be a pale, lambent flame, shapeless and blue and nebulous. But I was conscious of thinking to myself that this was some natural phenomenon, like the well-known St Elmo’s fire. Slowly, however, even as I watched (for my eyes were riveted on that light by some strange fascination), I saw the shapeless mass grow brighter. Then for the first time it seemed to dawn upon me that I was gazing upon something unearthly. My heart leaped to my mouth at the conviction, and a cold shivering thrilled through my body. I tried to shut out the vision, but my eyes would not close; I was under some spell, against which I had no power of resistance.

As I gazed, the flame assumed shape; the shape of a human being. I distinguished a face, wan and ghastly. The eyes were lustreless and fixed, like those of a dead man. In the naked body were many wounds, and from these wounds blood spurted out in streams, and as it seemed to me made the sea around crimson. I shuddered with horror at this dreadful sight; my knees bent under me, and I was on the point of sinking down, when I made a supreme effort and rallied. For the skipper was still clinging to me. I felt his weight, I heard his groans, but I saw nothing save that spectral figure with the gory streams pouring from its body.

Panting and breathless, a cold perspiration bursting through every pore, and with a feeling as if the scalp of my head was shrinking to nothing, I continued to gaze. The figure remained motionless, but its dull, glazed, dead eyes riveted themselves upon me and I could not endure their gaze. I felt my brain maddening with terror; driven to frenzy I made a supreme effort to lift the captain in my arms and carry him bodily down to his room. But he broke from me. He made a flying leap from the poop to the waist of the ship; then another flying leap over the rail into the dark seething waters. I heard the heavy splash his falling body made. One long, piercing shriek filled the air as he floated astern.

I remember little more. There was a cry of ‘Man overboard!’ a wild rush of feet; a hasty cutting away of lifebuoys; hoarse voices mingling with flapping sails. How I got below I don’t know, but I found myself lying in my berth with the Spanish lady standing over me, putting eau de cologne on my temples.

‘Do you feel better now?’ she asked in a not unkindly way. ‘Yes, thank you,’ I answered, feeling confused; ‘but tell me, what does it mean? What has happened?’

‘Why, don’t you know?’ she exclaimed; ‘the captain has jumped overboard. I told you what would happen. He was haunted and went mad, I suppose. Anyway the poor fellow’s gone.’

‘And how did I get here?’ I asked, with a dreadful sinking sensation at the heart and a dazed numb feeling in the brain.

‘Well, you tumbled down the companion-way and were insensible when the stewards picked you up. You fainted, I suppose, with fright, eh?’

‘I don’t know, I don’t know,’ I murmured. ‘It’s all a dream.’

‘Now tell me and speak the truth,’ she said, in a commanding tone. ‘Did you see anything?’

‘Yes.’

‘What?’

‘The vision of a bleeding man.

‘Ah!’ she exclaimed triumphantly, ‘How about your scepticism now, eh?’

I had to confess that, according to my belief, I had seen the spectre of a man bleeding from several wounds; but still I thought it was nothing more than a delusion.

‘But the captain was with you?’

‘Yes.’

‘And he saw it?’

‘I have reason to think so.’

‘Then were you both deluded? Anyway, poor fellow, he was deluded to his death. For he has perished.’

I could not enter into any argument. I felt too ill and distressed. I thanked her for her attention, and begged that she would leave me, as I thought I could sleep. She complied with this request, but I tossed and dreamed nightmare dreams, and dreamed and tossed for hours. It took me several days to recover from that awful shock to the nerves; indeed, I don’t think I have ever quite recovered, or that I ever shall. I need scarcely say that from the moment the poor demented captain took that flying leap into the sea nothing more was ever seen of him, and an entry of his suicide was made in the log-book, and I signed it. On our arrival at Havana an inquiry was held by the British Consul, and I was called upon to state what I knew. I confined myself to saying that the captain believed that he saw a vision occasionally. He was very greatly affected, and I presume his brain gave way. I did not attempt to speak of my own awful experience. It was not necessary. Even if I had done so how could I have hoped to be believed? And yet I had seen with my own eyes. I, a scoffer in such matters, had been convinced, and what I have written here I solemnly declare to be true. Perhaps somebody cleverer than I, and more learned than I, may be able to explain away the mystery, but for me it will remain an awful, appalling mystery until I cease to breathe. Then, perhaps—who knows?—I may be able to solve it.