

had come to a difficulty we should have stopped to consider; now we were being dragged irresistibly along, by a force with which we had no possible communication.

"I say," at length remarks Miss Peggy, who is standing on the steering thwart, and holding on to the iron rod, "do you see those two small lights far away along there?"

"I should hope so. They're all I've got to go by."

"Well, but if you take your eyes off them for a moment you'll see other two lights in the dark, of a curious pale purple."

"I suppose you know what complementary colors are!"

"This is a far more ghostly place than the other; I wish we were well out of it," she says.

Suddenly, into the hollow-sounding vault, there springs a shrill, high, plaintive note; and we find that one of the younger barge-men has begun to relieve the tedium of this mediterranean passage by a pathetic ballad. So silent is the tunnel—for there is only a dull throbbing far away of the engine of the steam-launch—that every word can be distinctly heard; and by guessing here and there at peculiarities of pronunciation, one can make out easily enough the main current of these stories. For it is not one, but many pieces, that this Brummagem Orpheus, descended into the deeps of the earth, has in his repertory; and generally they are found to deal with the trials and experiences and sorrows of a young man:

"My father died a drunkard,
And I was left alone,
To fight the world all by myself,
With ne'er a house or home."

Or again the high, shrill, nasal voice would tell how this hapless young man was entrapped into going to sea:—

"The captain said as I was bound
To go for seven years."

There was very little love-making in these ditties; indeed, in the only one that partly touched on this topic there was a most un-gallant reference to the maids of merry England. It ran somewhat in this fashion:—

"It was a lass of Coventry,
As fair as fair could be;
And on a Sunday evening,
She walked along o' me;

"I asked her then, she gave consent,
She was as good as gold;
How little did I ever think
That she should grow so cold!

"Now, Jane, fulfil your promise,
The promise you gave me,
Or I will turn a sailor,
And sail away to sea;"

"O Tom," she said, a-crying,
'My heart will burst in two,
For I love Jim the carpenter
As once I did love you.'

"Now all you gay young mariners
That sail upon the main,
I pray you keep yourselves abroad,
And ne'er come home again;

"From port to port you'll meet with girls
That are both kind and free;
But the girls of this old England
They'll ne'er get hold o' me."

The door of the saloon is opened, and a dark, small figure appears against the dull glow.

"Peggy," says Queen Tita (who has been at the forward window, vainly peering out into the blackness), "isn't this dreadful? I can see no sign of anything; and the boat will be smashed to bits before we get out. Can you see anything?"

"Nothing but the two small lights in the distance—two lamps, I suppose. I'm afraid we're not near the end yet."

"But the tunnel is only a mile and a half long: even with this crawling we should be through in three quarters of an hour at the most."

"I'm afraid we haven't been in the tunnel anything like that," says Miss Peggy; and she is right.

"May I come up beside you?"

"Oh, no, please don't!" the girl says at once. "I can't see where the board is; you might slip. I dare not move hand nor foot."

"I hope it will be my last experience of the kind," the other says, with some decision, and she goes back into the saloon, to stare anxiously through the window-pane.

And still our unknown friend with the high and nasal voice