


## NIGHT ON THE GREAT SHIPWAYS

but it had become a dull point of red, no longer the one sharp flick of vitality on the deadness of the landfall. The lighthouse itself was plainly in sight, and the houses that now cluster all along the Foreland. The whole of it lay solitary and deserted. The seascape had a certain austerity of cold beauty which was very impressive. And there was a great loneliness.

This shore and cliff-line, which, seen from the sea in high summer, are so crowded and busy, were asleep. The lighthouse was abeam at 4.30; we had left the red sector now, and the light which occulted every half-minute was white. Broadstairs Bay was opening itself out a few minutes later, and we were scudding southward in the smoother water under the shelter of the Foreland cliffs. We had beaten the sun to the North Foreland; we had reached the coast of Kent before sunrise.

## CHAPTER III

### *Inshore of the Goodwins*

 HERE WERE SOUNDS FROM THE CABIN as of one who stretches his limbs mightily, and delivers himself of one monumental yawn. The figure in the bunk was recumbent no longer.

“Where are we? How far have we got?” He was out in the cockpit beside me, and was telling the silent elements what he thought of the temperature outside. He convinced himself of the justice of his comments by a genuine shudder—it was much too effective to have been a sham. That dawn-chill went to the marrow, for the sun was not yet up.

Broadstairs, which invades the North Foreland with disfigurement of houses, lay abeam. Jetty, beach, cliffs, roads and gardens were deserted utterly. Crispily-lined, the town was all corners and angles, its hard edges lay stark naked to a dawn-light that was searching. The cliffs were blue with cold, and the water that heaved below them was a seaway of leaden blue. So we scudded on.

“Shall I take over?” he queried with another yawn more modest now. “Or make a cup of tea?”

Lingering intonation gave me my cue, and he vanished to set the stove going. Course was maintained meanwhile for the North Brake Buoy, and so towards the Gull Stream, landward of the Goodwin Sands. The North Goodwin (or North Sand Head) Lightship was away on the eastward horizon.

Ramsgate was another city of the dead, but was a little remote. We were passing two miles seaward of the town, outside of the Dike and Quern shoals, treacherous places where the depth of water at low tide is little more than a couple of feet. Ramsgate lies beset by shoals; and the Old Cudd Channel, fairway for ships approaching

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from this direction, is only 300 yards wide, where it leads between shoal and shoal.

We sailed no longer quite alone on this forsaken sea, for a tramp steamer was plugging resolutely along astern of us, having rounded the Foreland; she—like ourselves—was shaping course for the Gull Stream. We were driving forward at a round pace with this full breeze, for it took the steamer all her time to overhaul us; she forged up astern of the yacht with the white water breaking away from the even thrust of her bows, and her propeller thud-thud-thudding as it forced her forward. She was now darkly lined against the dawn and was drawing even.

Then the red ball of the sun appeared, breaking cover over that all-treacherous expanse of shoal-sea, the sea which hides the wicked Goodwins. Under our lee lay the great shoal, grimly hidden, unseen. We swung on toward the Gull Lightship, and the protective Thanet shore had receded into Pegwell Bay; the wind came down more freshly upon us and was knocking up a froth of sea. The yacht rolled sharply to it, with that same movement of which the cover of the Foreland had previously cured her. The long blue wave would bob up right beside, give her a twist and a wrench, and then —throwing her over on the windward roll—it would slip away seaward from under her. And then along came the next.

Neither the history nor the composition of those tide-covered Goodwin Sands to leeward can, it is said, be established with any degree of certainty. The story that the shoal was once an island, owned by Earl Godwine, is picturesque enough, but history looks askance at it. Legend has indeed saddled the Saxon Earl with responsibility for the whole affair; he neglected Tenterden church steeple, and Heaven sunk his island in anger, so that it became a desert and a grave of mariners. But the incident is unknown to serious history.

It is true that early writers mention three islands, one of which is now Thanet and the second Richborough. The third, Lomea, was quite possibly the site of the present Goodwin Sands. In that case (and it is perfectly credible) Lomea was probably submerged by an earth-

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quake. The solid fact remains that here the grim shoal lies, nearly ten miles long by four miles broad, and—for centuries past—it has swallowed and destroyed ships and men innumerable.

Its shoal character, a danger lurking in wait and seldom openly declared, has lent it a sinister air of mystery. The writer of *A Perambulation of Kent* in 1570 was conscious of it. He said that the shoal “is become withall a most dreadfull gulfe and ship swalower, sometime passable by foote, and sometime laied under water, so as it may be said either sea or land, or neither of both.”

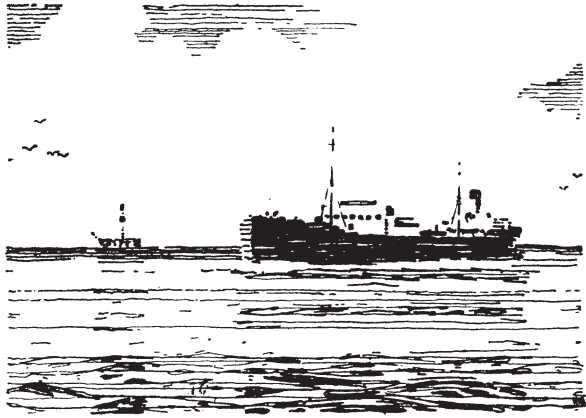
Shakespeare calls the Goodwins “a very dangerous flat and fatal, where the carcasses of many a tall ship lie buried.” The whole sand indeed must be packed full of relics. Now and again an accidental sample is brought to light. At one time, it may be an old Portuguese brass gun, dating from 1370, and at another perhaps Roman pottery and coins. Once the gaunt sea and sand suddenly produced (almost as in jest) a respectable post-chaise, with wheels complete. Cargo it was, no doubt, from some unfortunate foundered vessel.

At the present moment, with the breeze whitening the crests of the blue water, the whole outlook was an ordinary seascape. The sands might be a fiction; apart from the lightships, there was never a sign nor a token of them. It is under the dead grey skies and at dead low water that their evil face wears its true character of desolation. Miles of grey-brown flats stretch toward the horizon, utterly forsaken, and broken only by pools and plashy gulfs and wreckage.

The upper surface of the shoal is a covering of clean sand, free of mud. Loose enough on those tidal creeks and hillocks at low water, this same sand at a depth of ten feet lies packed so closely that an iron boring tool—in literal fact—will be twisted and broken by the hardness of it.

Exploration has nevertheless been pushed to a depth of seventy-eight feet with the help of iron cylinders and atmospheric pressure. Pure chalk was there encountered. Through layers of clear bright sand, bluish sand, stone, shells and bits of chalk, and then through layers

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•TANKER • IN • THE • GULL • STREAM •

of broken shell, sea-coal, pebbles, dark foetid sand and black clay, the rock bottom of pure chalk was at last established.

Attempts innumerable to erect permanent beacons and lighthouses on the sands were made in the past; but beacons and lighthouses alike—in the Trinity House phrase—have “disappeared.” The final result has been that these four Light Vessels now ride to their anchors, and buoys roll and wallow in the steep cross-seas. Of fixed beacons there are none.

“What about a nap?” my companion asked me; he was now at the tiller.

I had escaped dawn-drowsiness, and was feeling as fresh as if I had slept all night. The sun was shining and the day was with us. I had no inclination for sleep in so inspiring a world. The yacht was still romping through the water, and Deal had been hauled abeam, about two miles distant, at half-past six.

We had entered the Downs. The cliff-face of Old Parker’s Cap, sunlit white, stood up over the bows, the beginning of the chalk mass which builds itself up into the South Foreland. The foam-flecked sea washed about us, a turbulent and living green.

There Deal lay. That long low array of houses above the shingle-beach was Deal. A few vessels rocked at an-

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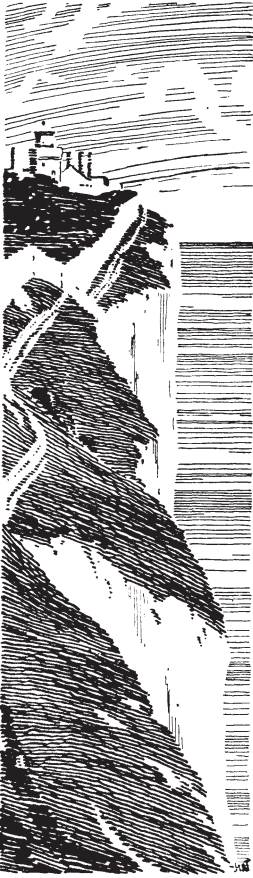
chor just off the pier, but the town for the most part was fast asleep. Though without harbour facilities, Deal has been for centuries the port of the Downs, especially in the old days of sail. Passengers were there landed and embarked; it was a place of greetings and farewells. The East-Indiaman spread her white canvas and made away southward. And in years earlier, the old ships with quarter-galleries and great stern-windows were anchored here; or ships more ancient, with castellated poops and armour on their high sterns. The Deal galley-punt plied among them all.

From that steep shingle-beach at Deal the hovellers launch their luggers in calm or storm. Smugglers in the old days to a man, they are now for the most part experts in salvage and pilotage. No risk deters them in boarding wrecks, even wrecks over-washed with immense breaking seas, in order to salve anything of value. In heavy weather they thresh staggering about, under close-reefed sails, on the look-out for a job; on the gaunt seas about the sands they are tossed and buffeted, wet to the skin, but expectant. And often, even after hours of vigilance, they return empty-handed. But always—as small-boat sailormen—they have been superbly efficient; the mastery is in their blood, they come of generations which—almost with effrontery—have defied the worst of seas in their small open boats; they remain masters.

Every rope on board the yacht was taut; the sails bellied strongly as she heeled from the wind and each sail was pulling hard. The sunlight was bright on the cabin-top and skylight and on the neat coils of rope, as she surged forward with a lift and dip and a long even roll.

Here in the Downs the sense of history becomes vague through sheer congestion. The fleets that anchored here, the actions with the French and the Dutch, the adventures of pirate and smuggler—each subject would form a separate history. The outstanding association is a memory of anchored shipping. Fleets of merchantmen or King's Ships lay wind-bound in the Downs; through all the centuries the anchorage was crowded

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• SOUTH-FORELAND. •

and populous. And Deal lay on the long shore opposite, and prospered.

Guarded by the Goodwins and the shore, the anchorage afforded notable shelter; yet sometimes it proved unequal to its trust.

One evening in the reign of Queen Anne, in the year 1703, one hundred and sixty ships of sail lay anchored in the Downs. A great gale sprang up, a wind roaring and destructive out of all knowledge; in the morning only seventy ships were left, and many of these were merely floating hulls, all their masts gone by the board.

Year in, year out, the roadstead teemed with shipping. There Deal lies still, but the roadstead is empty. No longer, in calm or storm, are the great sailing ships brought up here in fleets—a city afloat. Here this morning the great roadstead, over which the yacht was skimming southward in the sunshine, lay naked and deserted. If any place can look sorrowfully out upon a scene of departed glories, that place is Deal.

Bending away south-easterly, the shoal-line of the Goodwins was still seaward of us. With this fair wind we were making good speed through the Downs.

“Wadju calc’late ’s the *good* like, of them there san’ banks?”

It was an old fellow ashore who once posed me with this question. There was a far-off look in his eyes as he gazed out seaward. He had not actually followed the sea since boyhood, but he had seen more than half a century of wrecks and destruction from the shore.

“Why did Providence ever put the Goodwins there?” I hazarded, for his meaning was not clear.

“Jes’ that.”

I was not equal to the occasion. As he appeared mystically inclined, I touched vaguely on the poet’s idea that everything “subversed some other’s gain.” But I felt that it was a poor effort.

His eyes left the horizon, and focussed on my face. The expression, rapt no longer, was boyish.

“Put there a-purpose to larn us summat? Same ’s bugs and ticks larn us to scratch?”

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Then the smile faded in an instant. "Reckon some pore blokes didn't want to be larned much, not *this* side, arter they'd found a berth up top there wot they didn't want. Howlin' wind, some cussed black night, an' riggin' all a-frozen. A dozen blokes hangin' there, all got wives an' fam'lies ashore. Come a great wave out the blinkin' dark, and there ain't but only six."

He turned squarely from me—and spat.

As we scudded southward, the chalk cliff-land built itself up to higher levels beside us. We were really leaving our immediate subject over the stern of the yacht, for we were now definitely forsaking the shoalwaters in favour of good straightforward sea. Yet it may be worth while to carry on with her to Dover. Between the North Foreland and Harwich one's anchorages are in the natural creeks and inlets; beyond the North Foreland, the places of shelter are artificial harbours. Before returning to the shoals and creeks, we can take, by way of contrast, a little interlude beside the upstanding solidity of great cliffs and stone-built harbour walls.

The Goodwin Sands lie to seaward of a dead flat stretch of coastland. Opposite the flat land lies the shoal. But, at each end of the levels of Deal and Sandwich, the shore rises to bluff chalk forelands, North and South. Concurrently, and opposite the same two spots, the shoal-level of the Goodwins drops down to healthy soundings and honest sea.

Thus as the chalk cliff-land rose to bolder levels beside us, we were abreast of the lightship at the South Sand Head, and clear of the shoal. St. Margaret's Bay was soon abeam, with sunlight bright upon its perpendicular chalk cliffs, and on the dark green trees which nestle in the curved recess. Then up climbs the cliff-line again nearly to 400 feet, to the South Foreland lighthouse. The wreck of the great sailing-ship *Preussen*, cut as if with a knife, lay at base of the chalk boulders, with the waves breaking upon it.

The yacht was spinning through the water; she was moving really fast. Above and beside her, on the starboard hand, towered those superb faces of chalk, while



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over the starboard bow was the eastern mole of Dover Harbour, also the detached mole, end on. White against blue, the harbour walls and lighthouses were cut with a snap in the sunlight, clean white above blue water.

With her long track of foam, the Calais packet was shaping course for Dover, right across our bows, and she entered the harbour by the eastern entrance. We cut through the diminishing white lather; then, after catching a brief glimpse of quieter water and anchored vessels inside the harbour, we were rollicking merrily on, at seaward side of the detached mole. It was a morning alive with wind and sunshine and the wash of breaking water.

“Twenty to eight—7.40. What time was it that we left Brightlingsea last night?”

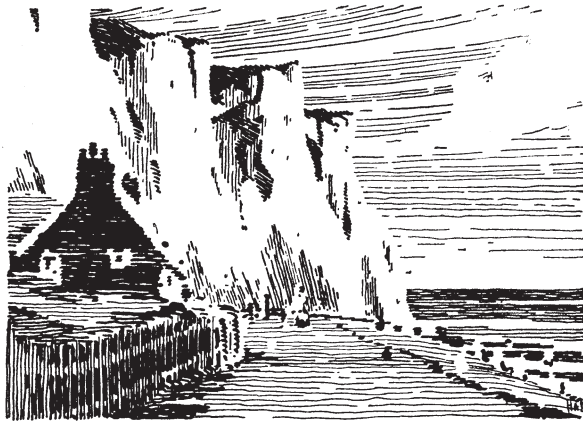
The time was jotted. It had been at five o’clock yesterday evening that we left Brightlingsea; the passage had occupied less than fifteen hours, which—considering that we had been becalmed part of the time—was reasonably good.

So the yacht reached snugly along to Folkestone, and on toward Dungeness. After a day of sea and sunshine, she was back at Dover in the afternoon, and beat into the harbour by the western entrance. She came to anchor close to the Promenade Pier.

Blinking into wakefulness after a short sleep, we found a bright but unquiet world about us. Sunshine was clean and brilliant, but the wind was hard from the north-east, and the yacht was dipping bowsprit under. Dover Outer Harbour is really no place for a small yacht, and we had decided to spoil our night’s rest again by putting her into the Inner Harbour on the night tide. She would be at Dover for some days. For the present the yacht dipped and splashed in the strong blue water, and the white cliffs and the keep of Dover Castle towered above us on the landward side.

When night had fallen, the recurrent greenish flash of Gris Nez was visible through the harbour entrance. Close upon midnight, we had broken out our anchor and hoisted sail; we were sailing out toward the end of

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ST. MARGARETS BAY.

the Prince of Wales Pier. The wind had calmed down to a light breeze, but it was still plenty; it pushed us comfortably over the tide which just now was setting strongly into the harbour (the drift changes from hour to hour inside), and we were almost level with the pier-head. Then the wind, with a perversity almost laughable, dropped dead flat all in an instant, and the tide sent us flying through the night, stern-first, shoreward. We got the sweep out and slashed the water with it; we towed with the dinghy and we strained and we sweated, and we pulled and we whistled.

If that breeze had but been staunch for two minutes longer we should have been spared nearly an hour of sweat and fury. Having tumbled into the dinghy in the darkness, and got the tow-rope fast, I was pulling hard.

“No good against this tearing tide,” I panted. “Not a blessed breath. Can’t move her. This blinking sweat runs into my eyes. Dock-gates ’ll be shut. Yes, keep her straight.”

The lights of Dover front trembled and quivered in the dark water, and the starlight glittered, crystal-clear, above. I panted and sweated still, and bubbled with disjointed vehemence.

“We shall have to let go. Have the anchor ready. Half a minute. Yes, yes, she’ll do it; the sails are pulling. Come

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on, blow, blow, little breeze. Not a bit; back she goes. Bad as ever.”

At last, however, we rounded the green pierhead lights and were slipping up the dark harbour-way toward the dock. Lights, red and white, were close ahead.

“Name of vessel?”

A deep voice from some neighbouring haunt of darkness boomed over our heads; and I was put through an inquisition as to port of origin, destination and cargo, while we slid smoothly through velvety gloom. It was very dark. Our mainsail, high up in the night, was invisible against the dark background of the sleeping town. The harbour-water caught up the yellow lights, and danced them about in a maze of reflection. Black pier-heads jutted here and there. The place was a little confusing in the night; but a hoarse voice, from some quarter unseen, indicated the red lights as those between which we had to steer. In we went, and were berthed up beside a timber-schooner in the Granville Dock shortly after 2 a.m. We slept.

Piled up above us in the darkness were the cliffs of Dover; around us was the dark town. Dover—like the Downs—is too full of history for just appreciation, but also—like the Downs—it has one master association. Dover is the key and entrance of England.

Somewhere in the dark above us were the remains of the Roman lighthouse, which led into a natural harbour of immemorial age. Then the Saxons fortified the great cliff commanding the entrance; William of Normandy captured the fortress without striking a blow, and his successors built the gaunt Keep as warden of the port. King after king has embarked here, Richard Coeur-de-Lion for his great crusade or Henry VIII on the *Great Harry*; and a score of crowned kings beside. And their queens, brought to haven here, had come to their new home and adopted kingdom.

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It was more than a week later when, stretched in my bunk in the cabin in the dull twilight of early dawn, I listened—with protest and aversion—to the frenzy of the

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alarm clock. Bed never felt snuggler. It was five o'clock on a dull damp summer morning; we were fully provisioned, water and paraffin had been put on board; and we were bound Thames-ward to-day.

Even at this early hour the inevitable knot of loiterers assembled to gaze down at the yacht's deck with patient curiosity. It was the same yesterday when, with bucket and mop, I was cleaning the Dover dirt from her; they almost jostled for places. Pleasant fellows they were; and when I asked them to cast off the warps, they tumbled over one another in their willingness and goodwill.

Our sails were up and we were crossing the dock. The yacht looked for a moment like bumping one of the piers, as the wind came in gusts, but she slid through, and the cheery Harbour Foreman looked down from the wall, wishing good luck. She cleared the gates and the tidal harbour was before her.

The tidal harbour was before her, but something else was also before her upon which she had not counted. A rope was stretched clean across the fairway. A big ketch yacht was intending to enter, and her crew were laying out a warp to a mooring-buoy. Both parties, both they and ourselves, were a little startled.

"Go to loo'ard of it! Go to loo'ard of it."

Three men were bellowing at once. The red-faced skipper of the yacht was brandishing his arms, and a hand in the yacht's dinghy over at the mooring-buoy was doing the same.

We, leaving the harbour, had the right of way; and was it likely that I should throw away all my hoarded windward space and foul the piles on the lee side? I had no hesitation (there was no time for it) and I sent them back three words:

"Drop the warp."

The man in the dinghy took one look at the white foam round the yacht's bows, and he acted with decision fully equal to my own. He dropped it. He dropped that rope overboard as if it burned him. The skipper grinned after us in a friendly way; he had tried to bluff, and respected us for not being fooled. So down we went and rounded the

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Prince of Wales Pier, brought the wind aft, and shaped course across the harbour for the eastern entrance.

Morning was very overcast, but there was a stiff breeze, south-west; in direction it was thoroughly fair, provided that it was not bringing too much sea. We were ready for a tumble in the cross-sea just outside the entrance—everything was snug below and the dinghy was on two stout painters. The waves were heaping themselves as they ran along the detached mole; then, as they curved landward with the curve of the wall, they rolled straight to shore across the eastern entrance. For that, one was ready. We could not turn to head the waves without gybing, and—if we gybed and changed course—we might get blanketed by the harbour wall and fall out of control. Clearly it was best to push on and take things as we found them. The margin of smooth water was narrowing; the high harbour walls were on each side of her; she was through.

The first toppling wave-crest took her, rolled her honestly and dropped her; the next we could see coming—it was just upon us. It was an uncommon giant, double the size of the others as it licked along the Mole, and a second wave was carried along with it, humped upon its shoulder. The wave was breaking as it came, and it had us on the beam almost as soon as we saw it. We hunched our shoulders against the expected deluge.

It came. There was perhaps nothing serious in the matter of green water on board of us, but it looked solid enough as it went streaming and washing about the decks. Instinctively we looked astern for the dinghy, half expecting to see it swamped, but—as usual—the little egg-shell came up smiling. It flicked jauntily through the tumbling white bubbles, and went slithering down into the trough not a penny the worse. This was the only wave that troubled us; standing a little off shore, the seas were brought aft as soon as we shaped course for the Downs, the breaking seas heaped up behind us—but, squarely astern, they were no trouble.

Here again was St. Margaret's Bay—no land of sunlit cliff and golden turf to-day, but sombre land, drab-coloured. We gybed and held on coastwise; it was good go-

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ing; past Kingsdown and Walmer, we were soon off Deal Pier. This fine full-bodied wind rounded and bellied our canvas, but the land was now to weather; sheltered thus, we were in smooth water as we headed for the Ramsgate Channel, the channel which leads not only landward of the Goodwin Sands but landward of the Brake Shoal also. Out in the Gull Stream we could see the white caps of the waves, beyond the shelter of the weather-shore. Still further out lay the Goodwins.

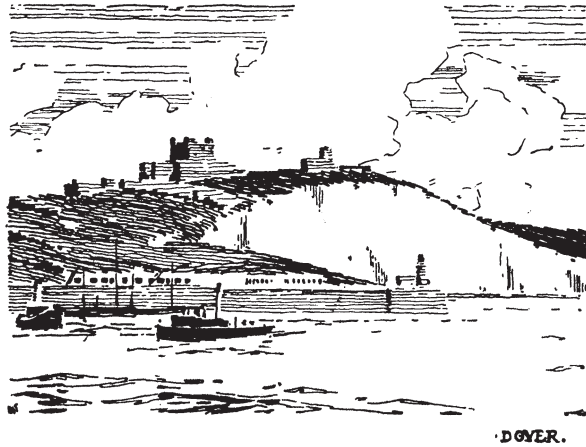
“I’ve heard tell of blokes ashore there, walkin’ about on the Sands—see ’em from shore at low water. Howlin’ gale a-blowin’, an’ seas a-smashin’ over top o’ some vessel agroun’ there, wot’s gone to bits. *See* ’em walk about at low water, *see* ’em from shore. And no boat couldn’t git nigh the sand, couldn’t live in the sea. *Watch* ’em walk about, and know them good as dead. Come the sea high-water—all washed clean. Gone.”

It was the same man who had spoken before. Whether there have been authenticated instances I am unable to say, but it is very probable. A case of the kind was quoted by Defoe, but in that instance—contrary to expectation—the men were ultimately saved.

Over the bows of the yacht was a regular medley of shoal. The Downs are like a deep-water bay in the system of sands, and all is shoal to northward; but two channels lead through—the big Gull Stream and the little Ramsgate Channel. Quite apart from the excellent system of buoyage—the leading marks on shore can put a vessel safely between the banks. For the Gull Stream, the ship keeps the South Foreland lighthouse faithfully in the middle of Old Stairs Bay all the time, and through she goes. Shoal is hungry and wicked on both sides, but the deep water never fails. The Goodwins of late years are said to be shoaling landward, and pilots incline to keep the lighthouse on one side of the bay rather than dead in the middle; but the principle is the same.

The little Ramsgate Channel is much narrower. It makes its small and resolute slit through the banks on landward side of the Brake Shoal—a sandbank which does not actually uncover, but comes very near the sur-

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face at low water, so that a bather could stand there without getting his bathing-dress wet. The Channel gives a steady ten feet. When the Goodwins are visible on the horizon, a grey-brown desert to seaward, and the Brake is lying in wait on one side and the Sandwich Flats on the other, the yacht can lay her course between them with complete confidence.

The leading marks for this Ramsgate Channel are eminently clear. The white cliff of Old Parker's Cap, on with the end of Deal Pier astern, leads right away through. A lather of dangerous shoal-sea may be breaking on either hand, but the Channel is sure. A child could hit it off.

Through the grey sea the yacht held course toward Ramsgate. The coast-line began to fall away from her, in toward Richborough to westward. There lay Pegwell Bay, once the great tidal estuary upon which the Roman Portus Rutupinus stood. The site of Sandwich (now inland) was then covered by the sea, and Richborough was an island. Sandwich, one of the Cinque Ports, became a place of note. It was "diched and mudde-waulled" and it had a broad tidal estuary. But it never recovered from the effect of the great carrack sunk in the fairway "in Pope Paulus' tyme." The foolish inhabitants let it lie. Sand and mud silted round it and created a bar, and the port was gradually ruined.

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In Roman times a deep-water channel led right through into the Thames estuary to the westward of Thanet, and Thanet was a real island. It is a far cry to the days of Roman Empire, but sometimes one can fancy the old Kent cliffs standing up, free of houses and of railways and tramways, and the blue water stretching past a harbourless Ramsgate shore—all virgin cliff-land and green turf—into the great inlet. The Roman war-galleys and transports would be anchored in the Sound.

An hour after passing Deal we were off Ramsgate Harbour, and passing close to the grey stone piers. The place is said to have possessed a harbour of some sort since the days of Henry VIII, but its first serious attempt dates from 1749. The early harbour silted so badly that it seemed likely to become useless, and Smeaton, on being called in, installed sluices which cleared the mud. Of later years the Ramsgate tug, with steam always up, has been of unmeasured use in assisting shipping round about the shoalwaters, evil places in storm.

There was ample water here for our light draught, and we stood close inshore beside the white Thanet cliffs which lead to the North Foreland. With no weather-shore, the water was rough. But the wind was breaking up the clouds; slanted gleams of sunshine silvered the grey water here and there, and then the clouds broke clean apart and left great spaces of blue. Sunshine sprang into being, and lit up the low white landfalls; it was a bright and breezy coast. And the dark sea romped about us.

Broadstairs (no forsaken grass pasture-land of Roman days, nor city of the dead as in the early dawn) was teeming with life and colour. With a broken white wake astern the yacht drove through the broken blue. The North Foreland lighthouse was passed, and the mainsheet had been hauled in as we stood for the Longnose Buoy. The long ledge of chalk rock stretches seaward of the Point, and the sea-gulls were circling and settling on the water above it.

Off the North Foreland our comfortable speed was bound to suffer eclipse. The ebb tide was pouring down



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seaward past Margate and the wind was veering westerly, thoroughly dead foul for the Thames. It is less than three sea-miles from the Buoy to Margate Jetty, but we—close-hauled to the wind and thrashing to and fro shoreward and off-shore—took almost three hours to accomplish it. We did not grumble. After the cold grey seaway of Dover, this summer-blue was genial and indulgent; time was of no consequence.

The wind, as it veered, was taking off, and the sea was settling down. The tide would soon be coming to help us, and the crowded sea-front of Margate would then drop away astern of us, becoming gradually a thing of the past.