

THE BLACK SPECK

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649075034

The Black Speck by F. W. Robinson

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F. W. ROBINSON

**THE
BLACK SPECK**

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“WHAT, A SAILOR AND DON'T DRINK!”—See page 17.

THE BLACK SPECK.

3 Temperance Tale.

BY

F. W. ROBINSON,

AUTHOR OF "GRANDMOTHER'S MONEY," "NO CHURCH,"
"MATTIE, A STRAY," "POOR ZEPH,"
ETC. ETC.

"As the Arabs say, there is a black speck, were it no bigger than a bean's eye, in every soul; which, once set it a-working, will overcloud the whole man into darkness and quasi-madness, and hurry him balefully into night."

THOMAS CARLYLE.



LONDON:

R. WILLOUGHBY,

27, IVY LANE, PATERNOSTER ROW.

1881.

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THE BLACK SPECK.

CHAPTER I.

WAITING FOR THE MORAL.

"THIS looks uncommon like home, Dick."

"Ay, ay, Jem; and there's nothing like it, after all. Doesn't the poet say so—doesn't a man's heart?"

"At times," was the doubtful answer. "But then there are all sorts of hearts, and," Jem added, with a little sigh, "all sorts of homes."

"You've been precious quiet about yours, Jem, and yet how I have raved about mine!"

"Yes, you *have* raved."

"Well, fancy it," said Dick, enthusiastically; "a home on the slope of a hill, in dear old Devonshire; roses clustering over the porch as big as summer cabbages; roses in the front garden, a trifle bigger, Jem; a loving sister standing at the gate, and watching down the sunlit road for me,

and presently clapping her hands and crying with joy at the sight of me, an old scape-grace who ran away to sea! Isn't that a fair picture to draw—isn't that worth coming back to England for?"

"You ought to have been a painter, Dick, not a sailor," cried Jem, with a hearty laugh at his companion's raptures, "though you do paint roses rather large."

"Are they not as large where your home is?" was the rejoinder.

"I can't say they are," answered Jem, and the face lost its smile so suddenly, that Dick ceased his badinage, and glanced askance at his companion.

The two men whose conversation opens the pages of our story were seamen of the *Rover*—an A 1 sailing-vessel, gorged with spices from the East—and it was on the deck of the *Rover* that the speakers were standing and talking of their homes. The *Rover* was waiting for many things—for orders from its owners, for the turn of the tide, for the busy little tug to drag its giant form to the docks, for the captain who had gone ashore, for custom-house folk who were still curious to know whether or not goods contraband had found their way on board, for half-a-dozen other matters which to sailors close upon their journey's end