The Open Boat
A Tale Intended to be after the fact. Being the experience of four men
from the sunken steamer "Commodore"

None of them knew the color of the sky. Their eyes glanced level, and
were fastened upon the waves that swept toward them. These waves were of
the hue of slate, save for the tops, which were of foaming white, and
all of the men knew the colors of the sea. The horizon narrowed and
widened, and dipped and rose, and at all times its edge was jagged with
waves that seemed thrust up in points like rocks. Nervy a man ought to
have a oath-too larger than the boat which here rode upon the sea. These
waves were most wrongfully and barbarously abrupt and tall, and each
itch-top was a problem in small-boat navigation.

The cook squatted in the bottom and looked with both eyes at the six
inches of gunwale which separated him from the ocean. His sleeves were
rolled over his fat forearms, and the two flaps of his unbuttoned vest
dangled as he bent to haul out the boat. Often he said: "Gawd! That was
a narrow clip." As he remarked it he invariably gazed eastward over the
broken sea.

The oiler, steering with one of the two oars in the boat, sometimes
raised himself suddenly to keep clear of water that swirled in over the
stem. It was a thin little bar and it seemed often ready to snap.

The correspondent, pulling at the other bar, watched the waves and
wondered why he was there.

The injured captain, lying in the bow, was at this time burled in that
profound desolation and indifference which comes, temporally at least,
even to the bravest and most enduring when, willily nilly, the firm falls,
the army loses, the ship goes down. The mind of the master of a vessel
is rooted deep in the timbers of her, though he commanded for a day or
a decade, and this captain had on him the stem impression of a scene in
the great of dawn of seven turned faces, and later a spurt of a topmost
with a white ball on it that slashed to and fro at the waves, went high
and lower, and down. Thereafter there was something strange in his
voice. (Although steady, it was, deep with mourning, and of a quality
(beyond oration or tears.)

"Keep yer a little more south, Billie," said he. "The oiler." The captain

"A little more south, sir," said the oiler in the stern. The oiler respects the captain:

A seat in this boat was not unlike a seat upon a bucking broncho, and by
the same token, a broncho is not much smaller. The man pranced and
reared, and plunged like an animal. As each wave came, and she rose for
it, she seemed like a horse making at a fence outrageously high. The
manner of her scramble over these walls of water is a mystic thing, and,
moreover, at the top of them were ordinarily these problems in white
water, the foam racing down from the summit of each wave, requiring a
new leap, and a leap from the air. Then, after scornfully pumping a
crest, she would slide, and race, and splash down a long incline, and
arrive bobbing and nodding in front of the next menace.