

The black in front of you is not black. What is the white you are talking about

What was he to say in answer to applications so flattering and so pressing? He would have said nothing, had that been possible, but he felt himself obliged to reply. He replied very weakly — of course, not justifying himself, but declaring that as he had gone so far he must go further. He must vote for the measure now. Both his chief and Barrington Erle proved or attempt to prove, that he was wrong in this. Of course he would not speak on the measure, and his vote for his party would probably be allowed to pass without notice. One or two newspapers might perhaps attack him; but what public man cared for such attacks as those? His whole party would hang by him, and in that he would find ample consolation. Phineas could only say that he would think of it — and this he said in so irresolute a tone of voice that all the men then present believed that he was gained. The two ladies, however, were of a different opinion. “In spite of anything that anybody may say, he will do what he thinks right when the time comes,” said Laura to her father afterwards. But then Lady Laura had been in love with him — was perhaps almost in love with him still. “I’m afraid he is a mule,” said Lady Cantrip to her husband. “He’s a good mule up a hill with a load on his back,” said his lordship. “But with a mule there always comes a time when you can’t manage him,” said Lady Cantrip. But Lady Cantrip had

never been in love with Phineas. And suddenly, out there where a big smoker lifts skyward, rising like a sea-god from out of the welter of spume and churning white, on the giddy, toppling, overhanging and downfalling, precarious crest appears the dark head of a man. Swiftly he rises through the rushing white. His black shoulders, his chest, his loins, his limbs—all is abruptly projected on one's vision. Where but the moment before was only the wide desolation and invincible roar, is now a man, erect, full-statured, not struggling frantically in that wild movement, not buried and crushed and buffeted by those mighty monsters, but standing above them all, calm and superb, poised on the giddy summit, his feet buried in the churning foam, the salt smoke rising to his knees, and all the rest of him in the free air and flashing sunlight, and he is flying through the air, flying forward, flying fast as the surge on which he stands. He is a Mercury—a brown Mercury. His heels are winged, and in them is the swiftness of the sea. In truth, from out of the sea he has leaped upon the back of the sea, and he is riding the sea that roars and bellows and cannot shake him from its back. But no frantic outreaching and balancing is his. He is impassive, motionless as a statue carved suddenly by some miracle out of the sea's depth from which he rose. And straight on toward shore he flies on his winged heels and the white crest of the breaker. There is a wild burst of foam, a long tumultuous rushing sound as the breaker falls futile and spent on the beach at your feet; and there, at your feet steps calmly ashore a Kanaka, burnt, golden and brown by

the tropic sun. Several minutes ago he was a speck a quarter of a mile away. He has “bitted the bull-mouthed breaker” and ridden it in, and the pride in the feat shows in the carriage of his magnificent body as he glances for a moment carelessly at you who sit in the shade of the shore. He is a Kanaka—and more, he is a man, a member of the kingly species that has mastered matter and the brutes and lorded it over creation. “Let us do it,” we said . . . in fun. So I aver, it was not Roscoe’s fault. He was like unto a god, and he carried us in the hollow of his hand across the blank spaces on the chart. I experienced a great respect for Roscoe; this respect grew so profound that had he commanded, “Kneel down and worship me,” I know that I should have flopped down on the deck and yammered. But, one day, there came a still small thought to me that said: “This is not a god; this is Roscoe, a mere man like myself. What he has done, I can do. Who taught him? Himself. Go you and do likewise—be your own teacher.” And right there Roscoe crashed, and he was high priest of the Snark no longer. I invaded the sanctuary and demanded the ancient tomes and magic tables, also the prayer-wheel—the sextant, I mean.